

Ju'i Lobypli

Number 11 - March 1990

Copyright 1990, The Logical Language Group, Inc.
2904 Beau Lane, Fairfax VA 22031 USA (703) 385-0273

Permission granted to copy, without charge to recipient, when for purpose of promotion of Lojban.

Ju'i Lobypli (JL) is the quarterly journal of The Logical Language Group, Inc., known in these pages as la lojbangirz. la lojbangirz. is a non-profit organization formed for the purpose of completing and spreading the logical human language "Lojban". la lojbangirz. is a non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. Your donations (not contributions to your voluntary balance) are tax-deductible on U.S. and most state income taxes. Donors are notified at the end of each year of your total deductible donations. We note for all potential donors that our bylaws require us to spend no more than 30% of our receipts on administrative expenses, and that you are welcome to make you gifts conditional upon our meeting this requirement. See news below regarding contributions and donations via credit card, or via checks drawn on non-US banks.

Press run for this issue of Ju'i Lobypli: 350. We now have over 650 people on our active mailing list.

Your Mailing Label

Your mailing label reports your current mailing status, and your current voluntary balance including this issue. Please notify us if you wish to be in a different mailing code category. Balances reflect contributions received thru 4 April 1990. Mailing codes (and approximate annual balance needs) are defined as follows:

- Level B - Product Announcements Only Level R - Review Copy for Publications
- Level 0 - le lojbo karni only - \$5 balance requested
- Level 1 - le lojbo karni and Ju'i Lobypli - \$15 balance requested
- Level 2 - Level 1 materials and baselined/final products - \$20 balance requested
- Level 3 - Level 2 materials and lesson materials as developed - \$50 balance or more

Contents of This Issue

This issue contains a complete news section. As noted below, those of you receiving Ju'i Lobypli will no longer be receiving le lojbo karni, since the contents will be redundant. Also below is a series of articles relating in some way to the value of Lojban. Athelstan and Bob compare Lojban and Esperanto. Robert Gorsch reports on his Semiotics course at St. Mary's College in California, the first academic course significantly incorporating Lojban into its curriculum. His bibliography, and Ralph Dmain's annotated bibliography on language and thought, are included. There is also an article by David Morrow on using Lojban in writing fiction, Lojban text is by Michael Helsen, including the first samples of original Lojban poetry, and a variety of letters and responses. ko xangu lifri.

Lojban and Stream of Consciousness Writing
by David C. Morrow

Stream of consciousness, or subjective writing, was developed by Joyce, Proust, Woolf, Faulkner, and others to convey a character's immediate awareness and mental activities (an "interior monolog"). Leon Edel, who terms works using it "Modern Psychological Novels," lists four salient elements.

Each work or section of a work takes the consistent viewpoint of a single character. The reader must puzzle out what is happening from the character's interior monolog. Time moves according to the associations of the character's thoughts and memories rather than a simple linear flow. Finally, although authors using this mode are realists, these very devices force them to be symbolists in order to create the impression of being alive.

It is the second and fourth elements that present problems for author and reader. Part of the difficulty is that persons whose background enables them to enjoy piecing together the subtle but objective clues of mystery novels may not be so adept at empathizing with other's feelings or seeing the clues that reveal them. About that the writer can do little but keep following (or decide not to follow) his or her artistic bent.

But these complex puzzles hold difficulties even for persons who enjoy them that their creators may not have foreseen. It is hard enough to show the thoughts of individuals contemporary to a reader; when a novel has become noncontemporary, like those of the writers mentioned above, or is about an earlier time (consider McKinlay Kantor's *Andersonville*, written in the 1950's and intended to represent the consciousness of participants in the War Between the States) the difficulty is increased.

This is because, for example, few modern persons depend on horses for transportation and so most lack the associations with them or the knowledge of their behavior that must have been common to people at and before the turn of the Twentieth Century. The same might apply to candles or to certain foods. Again, the little sidelines of style and fashion, the political and social quirks and nuances of a time, like geographical localisms, would figure large in the mind of a participant yet disappear even from historical footnotes.

Even if a storyteller can discover and work there into a character's mind, they may require as much explanation as unfamiliar elements in an old text. During the 1982 and 1986 episodes of murder by poisoned Tylenol capsules, offering someone — stranger, boss,

spouse — that medicine carried a host of special if temporary meanings. To one not alive then, the unexplained appearance of such an incident in a story set in those years would be puzzling.

The same thing must apply even to ordinary narrative writing about members of another culture; the readers may not be as familiar with that life-way as the author. This often forces the artist to employ what are supposed to be common human traits, such as romantic love, that may not be common at all; Classical cultures regarded romantic love as a form of lunacy.

Historical writers, who are nearly always depicting foreign cultures even when their setting is the recognizable antecedent of the readers' own, generally commit such anachronisms. Often they make their story accessible by depicting "progressive" characters in rebellion against their culture. That device is an anachronism in most cases, since tolerance even of one's own nonconformity is largely a Modern Western value.

Subjective writing might serve better in depicting social changes. One might wish to show why history took this turn once and another when a like situation again arose, or to examine through the eyes of characters, who likely did not intend their actions' present results, the origin of some philosophical or religious idea. An example of this last might be someone who realized that human sacrifice does not necessarily make the crops grow or that paternity is part of reproduction.

Such persons' concepts and motives would differ so vastly from ours that even were an author to reconstruct their consciousness with a degree of accuracy, the story value would be lost because it would be difficult for readers to untangle them without corresponding scholarship. Unless, that is, there were also some such way of clarifying them as anchoring description in physical reality as we know it.

When a character in a subjective narrative lacks knowledge or understanding the author may juxtapose some other person's viewpoint or even an omniscient one. Faulkner used both to clarify his retarded character Benjy's innocent and atemporal impressions, and Durrell provided an entire volume of his *Quartet* with the omniscient viewpoint on one character.

This would not be enough in many cases. If the characters have very primitive ideas, believing, say, that the sun is a beetle or that there is no natural death but that everyone always dies of injury or sorcery, then much of their thinking — the internal monolog comprising the story narrative — would seem ridiculous or psychotic if not incomprehensi-

die. In this case it would not help to play one character's consciousness off against another's, since they would all share the same assumptions even if their intellects differed. The use of a deliberate anachronism would only work for current readers, even when dealing with contemporary characters, since nobody can know with what values or types future readers will identify. Only objective narrative of some type will enable one to make such a tale both universal and particular.

This is where Lojban can be useful. A writer could use a natural language to construct a symbolic flow of consciousness belonging to the characters, filled with verifiable and if necessary imagined elements, impressions, feelings, and motives. Linguistic devices can be used, and purely idiosyncratic character traits developed within a strange conceptual frame.

To clarify what is objectively happening or convey meanings of invented symbols and transitory elements without interrupting the story's dramatic movement, and do so in a way that will (we hope) remain accessible to future readers, the writer can use lojban to describe the physical setting, the movements, the actions, even in some cases the dialog of the characters whose interior monolog is in some artificially specialized form of English — or French, or Spanish, or whatever. Lojban descriptions may either be given in separate chapters or sections, or interspersed with the streams of characters' awareness.

Not only would this provide the readers an anchor in relating the characters' minds to theirs, but also in the case of completely abnormal persons in alien cultures allow insight into their minds. Finally, the story could retain its unity as an artistic whole without anachronisms or intrusions from outside.