

27
SEP 13 1984

"Doctor, the Tardis has stopped."

"That's right, were in 1984."

"What for? We're not going out there, are we?"

"I'm afraid so. I would rather like to get a copy of

RATAPLAN TWENTY - SEVEN

February 1984

Registered by Australia Post, Publication No. NBH5483

A fanzine with a past from Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 433, Civic Square, ACT 2608, AUSTRALIA. Time travellers get a lifetime subscription in exchange for next week's TattsLotto numbers but the rest of you can get copies in exchange for a letter of comment, published contribution (or words or art), having such virtues that it would be impossible for me to drop you off my mailing list, or a subscription at the standard rate of \$2 for three issues or the delux rate of \$49.99 for three issues. This fanzine is about science fiction and science fiction fans and their various interests. A U-Boat Publication. MM.599

* * *

Opening Shots

A personal explanation

I was talking to Shayne McCormack the other day (... You know Shayne, she's the one who said that she'd write me an article about Medtrek... No, it hasn't arrived yet...) and she said that she would love to know what fans who read Rataplan but haven't met me think that I'm like. If it is possible to look puzzled over the telephone I must have managed it because she went on to explain that everybody who knows me personally would agree that I am a marvellous, warm, witty, caring, lighthearted, generous person who is fun to have around. Those might not have been her exact words, but that's how I remember them. In contrast, so Shayne says, there is the image which I present in this fanzine.

To go by what you read here, I must be an intense young fellow, intent on setting the fannish world to rights by word and deed. From a quick perusal of the fanzine reviews and the comments splashed around in the letter column it seems that I have at least time-sharing access to a fine intellect and a bulging vocabulary. "What does 'dialectic' mean anyhow?" Shayne might ask, "Even Jack Herman doesn't use words like that." (I bet Jack doesn't use words like 'hegemony' either in his fanzine; look for it in the letter column of this issue - misused as it may be).

Perhaps overseas readers have now formed an impression of me as a basically serious minded person, given to thinking about matters of some depth and possible importance, armed with an enquiring mind and a desire to seek and reveal the truth of the matter, to examine and explain, etc., etc. On the other hand perhaps they've just got the idea that I'm a bit of a pseudo-intellectual, given to the delights of reading my own writing.

Now, if I was really lucky (blessed might be a better term), you would have formed the impression that I'm really a combination of those supposed "in-person" attributes and impressive "on-paper" capabilities. It is even true that in my happier moments I can believe that this is so. But no, I'm just not that lucky.

The truth of the matter is that I am best described as "vacant". One of my less flattering observers described me as "wandering around in a daze".

Let me explain it to you this way. If you happen to be up in the bar at the Victoria Hotel in a few days and see me in the company of a number of well known and respected fans, and if you happen to observe me gazing into the depths of my glass of bourbon (if it's almost empty don't hesitate to buy me another - double, straight - thanks), don't be mistaken and think I'm just pausing for a moment before making a witty rejoinder which would upstage even John Bangsund or, on the other hand, constructing a detailed analysis of the woes of Australian fanzines and western society. No, it is most likely that I'm only doing exactly what you see, gazing into the depths of my glass. Will I be thinking at all? Who knows, but don't ask me because I only live here.

Now you know my secret. But there's no need to let it go outside the pages of this fanzine. Not for nothing have I long practised the art of looking as though I've just been disturbed in the middle of deep thought or that I'd contribute something stunningly entertaining to the conversation, if other's standards were high enough for me. Conditioned reflex, that's all it is! (If I had any really good friends, they'd assure me that all thought is nothing but elaborate conditioned reflex anyhow...)

It's probably my good Puritan (Methodist anyhow) upbringing which is seeking an expression in the pages of this fanzine. Just as Dick Geis used to have an alter-ego which was impish, irrelevant and entertaining in a brutish fashion, I'm cursed by an unfortunate alternative personality which is serious, indulges in meaningful dialogues on important issues, uses long and potentially intelligent words, etc., etc. I can tell you that it's not much fun. Every time I put my fingers to a keyboard or take a pen in my hand the doors to my repressed subconscious urges burst open and this raging, insatiably serious person emerges.

I'm really sorry about it and I wish that I could do something to make it easier on you people who read this thing. But you see, when I stop writing my mind just seems to become vacant. That's why I try to drag these things out as long as possible... otherwise it's a sort of living death to those serious urges.

Still, nothing lasts forever.

* * *

Hello again. Here's the

Bloody Book Review

I don't know why I do these things to myself. We went around to visit Jean Weber and Eric Lindsay (to look at computers but we don't mention that sort of thing here) and as soon as I was in the door I asked Jean if she was a sci-fi fan. She looked at me rather dubiously and admitted that it was a possibility. "Well then," I said, "You'd probably have a copy of Ringworld Engineers that you could lend me." Jean looked relieved and said that she probably did. And that is how I came to inflict the unfortunate book upon myself.

Ringworld Engineers is a book which has been out and about, stalking the hapless book buying public for more than a couple of years. I suppose that the reason I haven't bought a copy is because I really didn't enjoy Ringworld that much and nobody seemed to have anything decent to say about the sequel. So why waste good money on something you know you're not going to enjoy.

All the same, it was a wet weekend and I had piles of history books that had to be studied in minute detail, just the set of circumstances that call for a good bit of escapist reading.

The real trouble with this book was that it just wasn't escapist enough. Books of that kind should suck you in after about half a page and then keep dragging you on through the story, always teasing you with what will be in the next paragraph, the next page, or the next chapter. They should have larger than life characters doing things which attract and encourage the imagination. But that is something that Niven just didn't do.

It seems to be a well known fact that Larry Niven doesn't write with any great style but that he does have some fairly interesting ideas. That is exactly how things seem in this story. On some other occasions he has managed to work up a little excitement and suspense in his writing, and combine it with some of his novel ideas too; such a novel is World of Ptavvs which manages to combine the two elements. But that doesn't happen in Ringworld Engineers because the problem to be solved is not so personally involving to the participants and partly because there doesn't seem to be any urgency in what happens.

Perhaps the best way I could describe this book is to call it self-indulgent. Although the ringworld which was invented for the first book was novel enough, Niven did nothing much with it them. The basic value of the thing, literary value at any rate, is that it is just so huge that almost anything is possible on it - but this is something that Niven didn't make us feel. He described it and told us how many times larger than the earth it was, but that description did not bring it to life - the difference between reading about chocolate-chip ice cream and eating a bowl of the lovely stuff. In the writing of this sequel we still have the description without the sensation.

Characters such as Louis Wu and Chmoce have all the potential to be larger than life, to be full of the kind of dynamic potential which could lead them (and take us, their admirers) through many totally absorbing adventures. However this doesn't happen, and it seems that instead of being people with imaginations they are simply competent, and fairly dull with it. Similarly, the ringworld isn't written about as though it were a place of almost infinite potential where almost anything could happen, it is an artifact which needs to be examined and repaired.

This is a matter of worldview. The author and his readers are perhaps content with a reality in which the known parameters of natural science are used to construct new and interesting sorts of artifacts. But the excitement is in the technology and not in the uses to which people put those things that are made. This view is scientific and detached, a matter of seeing problems and solutions and dealing with them in an impersonal manner. Perhaps I am wrong, perhaps that is just what Niven has been aiming to do, in which case he deserves some congratulation for making science dull and uninteresting.

The impersonal view is sterile and simply lacking in excitement and the sorts of personal involvement which I was hoping for when I wanted a piece of escapist literature. It is not enough to say that a place is so far away that it takes me five days to get there at three times the speed of sound, what literature needs is to make me feel as though I've had to cool my impatience for five days of boredom (playing chess with the computer and gazing out at the landscape just rolling by too fast to see in detail but too slow to get a larger idea which would include the variety of a place like the ringworld). No wonder people are going off and polluting their minds with fantasy if this is the best that traditional science fiction can do.

All the same, at the end of this book we know that the ringworld is more or less stable, we know who built it and a little of the history of the place. Even more interesting, Louis and Chmeze are stranded on it and about to set out to see what there is to be seen of the world. If somebody (not necessarily Niven) were to write another sequel in which these people just did a bit of exploring, just to see what's to be seen, I'd probably borrow a copy of that from Jean too.

* * *

A dip into the editor's private lives

Life at university is hard, so it's just as well for me that I don't spend much time there. Full time students get to indulge in such exciting things as the ANU Drama Society, the History Collective, the Sports Union and the like. There isn't, so far as I know, a science fiction club - probably for the simple reason that it would end up being called something like the ANU SF Society, leading to a rather unhappy acronym.

Much of the fun, of course, is the business of student politics. Last time I had anything to do with this rather desperate business was back at the end of the sixties, not directly but when people like John Foyster and Gary Woodman used to tell us all about the earth shattering events out at Monash University. I seem to recall that Gary became a member of the Democratic Labor Party at about the time it started its nose dive decline. We didn't think that he was stupid, just warped in some way. If he'd joined a couple of years later we would have realised that he was a person with a fine sense of humor.

Student politics have moved on a little since those heady days of protests, sit-ins and strikes. It seems that these days the clients of universities generally spend their time in much more serious activities such as looking at the job market and aiming for the sorts of marks and degrees which are going to get them into it. But I suppose that student politics has some value because there are those who are looking to a political career. If this is the case then real world politics is going to have to change a fair bit to match the aspirations of the latest batch of ANU campus politicians.

I have here a pamphlet with the official policy statements of candidates for the election of delegates to the Australian Union of Students' NSW Regional Conference 1984. There are, as you would expect, deadly serious candidates of the right and the left. Karen James informs us that she is a "member of Left Alliance and a feminist. My major policy concerns are women's issues, international affairs and nuclear disarmament and more basic issues such as TEAS, curriculum problems and childcare." On the other side Geoffrey McDougall of the Liberal Students tells us that "AUS is supposed to represent student views nationally or at least some student views on some campuses. AUS is dominated by various factions of the Left so now's your chance to, if only at the regional level to have a wider view." So much for the once great rhetoric (and grammar) of the Liberal Party.

Meanwhile, from the centre Christopher Stamford writes that he was "elected to the position of AUS delegate in 1983 on the policy that 'there is nothing wrong with AUS that cannot be fixed by breaking a few heads' ... during his campaign for AUS President he was within four votes of winning before the ranks of the Liberal-Marxists closed against his Controversial Sox Policy. Current AUS policy on sox is fine for any black migrant working class pregnant unmarried lesbian members, but not really applicable to normal members."

Sally Dugdale, another representative of the new centre in ANU politics writes, "A survey of the unsavory collection of hacks from the ANU Liberal Society and the ANU Left Group which opposes the Deadly Serious Party shows that

they are short on ideas, short on policies and short on sense. I am merely short. When elected to AUS Regional Council I will participate in the small caucuses and press for the adoption of a policy against heightism." (A policy which Jack Herman would no doubt applaud.)

The Deadly Serious Party is no doubt where it's at in student politics at the ANU at the moment. Apart from a Controversial Sex Policy and anti-heightism, their policies also include; bans on nuclear testing in public libraries, non-sexist sperm donor programs, supporting missionary work in inner-Sydney ALP Branches and an effective policy on unsatisfactory academics. "Arm fifty activists with a dossier on a selected academic and a small firearm. This will be the most effective early retirement scheme in the history of Australian tertiary education."

No doubt a sociologist would have a great time and gain many academic brownie-points in examining and writing up the current fad of student politicians who refuse (or seem to be unable) to take the business seriously. And who could blame them.

However there seems to have been a break in the ranks of the unserious and so Nichole Gerrand writes, "Once upon a time in the fantasy land of the ANU campus, there was a group called the AGL. Basically they were sick of student politics and bored, so they produced me. I'm female, a second year arts student and spend most of my time wandering between the Psychology building and that den of iniquity the Physics building. The AGL figured that on these qualifications I may possible get elected."

Apart from totally sensible policies like alternative assessment procedures and concern for minorities on Australian campuses, the AGL also want to make universities Gravity Free Zones - not being called the Anti-Gravity League for nothing.

Nowhere on this pamphlet does it tell me how many delegates are actually going to go to the Regional Conference of the AUS. Anyhow, there are twelve nominations and six are members of the Deadly Serious Party. So you can guess which party is most popular at the moment and which party is likely to send the most delegates. One of those I'm going to vote for is Heather Brimson, who has no sympathy at all for her political rivals. "Were I not a Deadly Serious Party candidate trained to keep a straight face I would have to laugh at my opposition, consisting as it does of several small lunatics from the ANU Left Group and a Liberal who appears to have fallen off the back of a truck." With a turn of phrase like that she is destined for high office in Parliament House I feel sure.

If you think that this kind of politics shouldn't be wasted on mere students you can come and live in Canberra where the DSP ran candidates in the most recent Commonwealth elections. They got my vote because they were the only people to run an intelligent campaign. One of my colleagues at work who normally votes for the Country Party agreed with me and also voted for them. It seems that they've succeeded in doing what even Bob Hawke has failed to do, by bringing people of drastically differing political persuasions together.

Oh. Didn't I say, a few issues ago, that I wasn't going to write about politics here. Sorry.

Still, I reckon that it might be better than me bending your ears about the course that I'm studying at university this year. The English Civil War was, after all, just so long ago.

* * *

Culture Corner - Munich: the Antikensammlung and the Glyptothek

Paul Stokes

While in Munich, on one none to cold day (-12), I decided to journey out of the city centre and take in some of the culture. In fact I had some familiarity with the collections of Ludwig I of Bavaria, and was very interested in making as close a personal inspection as the security guards would allow.

The Antikensammlung was commenced in 1838 and completed in 1848. With broad steps and Greek temple porch of Corinthian columns, the museum building is a good example of the 'classic' style in which Ludwig I created much of modern Munich. Originally it was dedicated as an exhibition hall for the promotion of arts and industries in Bavaria, though it was used as a museum to house the Royal Antiquarium (1868-72), by the artists of the 'Sezession' (1896 - 1916) and from 1919 until the last war as the new state gallery of paintings. The building was almost totally destroyed during the war, and after standing in ruins for a quarter of a century, the building's interior was rebuilt in a very modern fashion and the outside restored. It was reopened on 21 April 1967 - once more as a museum, this time for the exhibition of the State Collection of Antiquities (Staatliche Antikensammlung). It is the permanent home of the collection of Greek Pottery, ancient gold-work, clay and bronze figurines, and other works of Greek and Roman art.

In 1804 - 5 Ludwig, then Crown Prince, made his first trip to Italy, starting his collection, and expressed the wish to found a museum of ancient sculpture. The Glyptothek, in contrast to its companion, makes use of the Ionic column. In fact this part of Ludwig's 'forum' took some time to complete. The original plans were drawn up in 1813, but it was not completed until 1830. Further extensions and additions continued until 1894. Like the Antikensammlung, it suffered greatly during the war; some forty per cent of the building was destroyed, and ninety per cent of the sumptuous and colourful decoration (marble floors, stuccoed walls, painted stucco decoration in domes, and frescoes). Rebuilding has taken place, despite much disagreement as to the form it should take. The walls, whether preserved intact or rebuilt as they were originally, were given an unobtrusive plaster coating and the floors throughout the building were paved with shell-limestone slabs. It was reopened on 28 April 1972.

The nucleus of the collection in the Antikensammlung consists of the "Vases Collection" of King Ludwig I and the "Royal Antiquarium". The foundations of King Ludwig's vase collection were laid out in 1824. In less than two decades he made it one of the world's foremost, and this, like the Glyptothek, was entirely his personal achievement. His first extensive acquisition was the "Panitteri Collection" from Sicily where masterpieces of Attic pottery had been recovered from Greek tombs near Agrigentum. In 1831, the greatest addition: through his agent J Martin Wagner, Ludwig acquired hundreds of Attic and many Etruscan vases which the Candelori brothers had had dug from Etruscan cemeteries near Vulci. A further fifty-one vases, including many distinguished Attic works, were brought in the King's name at the auction of the effects of Lucien Bonaparte. From the collection of Caroline Murat, Ludwig purchase mainly Southern Italian Greek vases, among which the magnificent specimens from Canosa in Apulia stand out.

The rest of Ludwig's rich collection consists of jewellery, bronzes, terracottas and glass. The prize pieces are the Etruscan gold jewellery which Ludwig had

acquired in 1841 from Lucien Bonapart's estate. There is an absolutely magnificent "great funeral wreath" from Armento. Superlatives fail me in trying to describe this piece. It stands out as probably the finest single piece of jewellery I saw in a dozen of the greatest museums in Europe. There are bronze ornaments from Perugia and numerous Greek terracottas from South Italy. An exceedingly rare late Roman glass-cage or network cup - is one of the very few in existence, and an excellent specimen. In recent years a very important event took place. Crown Prince Rupprecht, in 1923, made over the entire contents of Ludwig I's private art collection to the Wittelsbach Compensation Fund, so that they might remain in this form the permanent property of Bavaria and an indispensable element within the Munich Antikensammlung, continuing to play the part intended for his public collections by their great founder and patron.

From the nineteenth century to the present day the collections have been built up, and gaps filled, by regular purchases out of the Bavarian State funds. In 1908 the extensive "Paul Arndt Collection" brought the museum its greatest enrichment in bronzes, terracottas, glass and Greek vases since Ludwig I. For pottery, bronzes, terracottas and above all priceless and beautiful gold jewellery the museum owes much to the "James Loeb Collection". The museum's latest great benefaction is the "Collection of Hans von Schoem". The collection he built up with such devotion in Athens includes, among other choice pieces, a series of early Greek pottery from proclassical periods, which rounds out the museum's pottery collection most excellently; and an exceedingly valuable set of burial gifts from an Attic girl's grave.

Perhaps a few remarks about Greek pottery and vases would be in order. In classical and preclassical Greece, simple clay utensils were part of everyday life. When an ancient Greek dedicated an offering, what more obvious, intimate and useful gift could be chosen than a fine painted pot, a special "Sunday" version of a vessel in household use?

By far the greatest part of our antiquities were found in ancient graves, where burial in the earth preserved them. It is of course to our great loss that conditions for preservation were not equally favourable in temples and sanctuaries, for we should then have still richer and more comprehensive finds. Offerings to the gods might have been more costly and on a larger scale than burial gifts to the dead, but they were made by the same artists and portrayed the same subjects - scenes of gods and heroes, reflecting the nature and the fate of man as they are reflected in the ancient, venerated myths and legends. Objects and artistic representations devoted expressly to the grave-cult are the exception. Most vases, jewellery and figurines are of exactly the same sort as were dedicated to the gods. Whatever their nature, nearly all ancient works of art, great masterpieces and more modest productions alike, were made for a more or less religious purpose, though few can be called "sacred art" in the narrower sense in which we today normally understand it.

Generally speaking, the finest Greek vases were not made for everyday use. While the shapes are the same, they belong to a different class from ordinary domestic ware, although the dividing line cannot always be drawn hard and fast: a plain household pot might have been offered at a poor man's grave or as a humble gift to a god, while fine pottery was used in wealthier houses. It is not usually hard to identify vases for purely votive use. Miniature pots, for example, obviously come into this category, as do the very common giant ones - the monumental amphoras and colossal cups and jugs which would scarcely be possible to carry when full, still less to pour or drink from. Costly hydrias, or water jugs, would be too breakable to take on the daily trudge to the spring or well and to leave standing about in the house all day to be used every time water was needed. Wine-cups, which were used day and night like our tea or coffee cups, would not long have survived the chemical action of wine on their

delicate paintings. Amphoras, jugs and oil-flasks had no protective coating on their inside surfaces; wine and oil would have penetrated the clay until the painting on the outside was discoloured and the artistic effect ruined. This we know well from the case of oil-amphoras. Those which were sold empty, and placed empty in graves by the buyers, have survived with their paintings in perfect condition. But the so-called "panathenaic" amphoras, which were presented, filled with olive oil, to the winners of the Panathenaic Games at Athens have often been noticeably damaged by their contents.

Other vases could not be filled because they were cracked. Both South Italian Greeks and the Etruscans of central Italy imported a great deal of fine ware from Attic. If one of the imported luxury vases was cracked or broken, it would be carefully repaired, but the strongest of ancient lead clamps could not mend it watertight again.

The function and value of a fine vase and its inner meaning, so to speak, to an ancient Greek, lay not in its material or its artistic worth, but the fact that it served as a sort of embodiment, to earthly eyes, of the higher reality.

* * *

Letters of Comment

David Grigg
1556 Main Road, Research, Victoria 3095.

For a lecturer of English Literature as well as an sf writer, David Lake seems to have a very odd idea of what literature and writing are about. Literature is "anything a mature person can bear to read three times"? This seems a very strange criterion. I could bear to read lots of books three times - most of which I would consider very light reading and not literature. I have read Protector three times, and although still enjoying it, know that by normal literary standards it is just sf junk. But on the other hand, I don't know that I could bear to read Little Dorrit or War and Peace more than once, despite my high regard for those books as literature. I suppose David's answer to this is that I am clearly not a "mature person".

It seems to me that both David Lake and Bruce Gillespie have missed the point about science fiction and fantasy. Surely what makes a work achieve the status of literature is that it is seriously concerned with some important idea. Good literature is about something. It must have a point to it. And I would have thought that good science fiction writers merely use the sf form to investigate an important idea - not ideas about how to build bigger spaceships, but an important idea about us, about the human condition, about how we face existence and the inevitability of death. Surely that is what made The Time Machine a great book, as it made other classics of literature great books. And the reason that sf as a genre seems to be on the decline is that concern with the trappings, the machinery of the time machine, has come to dominate the concern with the human, the time traveller who has no choice about his steady journey forward towards death.

I should have thought that all of the above was obvious. Surely it is not hard to look around at what we consider the classics of science fiction and see that they are all about important ideas. The great idea that surges through Orwell's 1984 is not some half baked prophecy about what society might be like this year, but the great idea that "the purpose of power is power". What makes Clarke's Childhood's End an sf classic is just what its title investigates: the idea that our present phase of human existence might only be like the stage of

childhood and that something greater lies beyond our individual deaths. It is, as others have pointed out, a deeply religious book. Ursula Le Guin's Left Hand of Darkness remains for me one of the greatest sf novels written because it is filled with a vital concern about what it is to have gender, what it is to be human, what it is to face death bravely. And of course, it has a real, living character springing out of the pages - Estraven.

The whole point of David Lake's comment "I really think sf was a doomed genre from the start" is pathetic. Of course science fiction is not prophesy - it never has been. Surely the only excuse for writing science fiction is that only in that way does the writer have the freedom to explore particular concerns about the human condition which would be difficult or impossible to explore in another way. Similarly that remains the only valid excuse for writing fantasy. Or historical fiction. Or any damn book. Naturally, only a very few writers have this serious intent. The rest are parasites and write junk. How many best-sellers today could be classified as literature? Damn few.

None of this is to say that I don't agree that sf has been devalued by the parasites, just as fantasy has been devalued. Fresh new writers with a serious concern must now break new ground for themselves - and what they write almost certainly won't be called science fiction.

As for the rest of Lake's gloomy pessimism about the future of mankind... I can only agree that a nuclear holocaust is all too probable. But our individual deaths are absolutely certain, sooner or later, and most of us manage to live happy, useful lives despite that knowledge. And, you know, one answer to David Lake's morbid gloom was made many years ago by Albert Camus, both in prose ("The Myth of Sisyphus") and in fiction ("The Plague"). Surely, if David Lake was serious, he should be using his fiction, as did Camus, to explore these deep and important concerns about death, not merely fiddling while Rome burns. But what do we get instead? The Right Hand of Dextra and so on.

It's also very saddening to see that David's opinions about mankind and about the boredom of space exploration don't seem to have changed in the last five or six years, since he first expressed them at Q-Con. I find this amazing. Has he really been around, alive, these last few years? "The planets are not worth going to?" Maybe not in person, but how can any "mature adult" not be astounded and intrigued by the discoveries made by the Viking and Voyager space probes? The discovery of a world with continuously erupting sulphur volcanoes, a world with a crater a quarter of its diameter, a world with liquid methane oceans, a world with a thousand intricate, amazing and lovely rings? Has the man no sense of wonder, no sense of beauty?

And the business about why we've never heard from any other intelligent species in the galaxy is nonsense. There are plenty of good reasons for understanding why it's unlikely we would have picked up alien transmissions so far - there's an excellent book by Sagan et. al. that I've just re-read called Communication with Extraterrestrial Intelligence, which makes it clear we will have to search long and hard before it's likely we'll make contact.

And then David wraps it up by saying that he would find attending the World SF Convention in Melbourne in 1985 "too macabre"! Well, I'd like to assure him that he is certainly very welcome to come, but that in his present mood he would be really rather like Banquo's ghost at the feast.

Jeff James
PO Box 30, Scullin, ACT 2614.

I enjoyed reading David Lake's stimulating little piece so much, I felt I would be doing it an injustice if I didn't reply. There are just too many meaty bits,

not to take a bite.

David writes "the best things in sf have always been literary fantasies, thinly disguised with a veneer of science". Now what a one-eyed view is that? I haven't read any novel that wasn't literary fantasy to some degree. You need some real world facts to relate to, gives your imagination a launching pad. If an author wants to veneer his literature with science; good on him. It shows he thinks he knows what he's talking about. And if he doesn't you can have a good laugh at it.

The type of stuff written by Hal Clement, for example, was literature for those who liked it. David's definition of literature should read: anything he thinks he can bear to read three times. A mature person would realise that his opinions are his alone. It's dangerous to generalise, you know. (I'm pleased that David can't read Hal Clement more than once, having to would obviously distress him.)

Who wants to argue about whether hard or soft sf is better. Some people like it hard and others like it soft - end of conversation. Why hard sf haters want to argue with soft sf haters is beyond me - you can't argue with personal opinion.

David is right, Wells didn't call his stuff "science fiction". That's a more recent term. Naturally he insisted his stories were fantasies. Space travel was only an idea, not a reality as it was when Hal Clement wrote his classics.

And as if all that weren't cynical enough, David goes on; "Good sf never really was scientific." Insert one large raspberry. What a monocular view of sf, no perspective at all. Good sf is whatever "you" as a person enjoy. That's the name of the game. Sf will exist as long as people wish to enjoy it, which should outlast this generation by at least a few millenium. And those who don't enjoy themselves might as well become a bunch of manic depressives and whinge about how bad everything is.

However, since most of us aren't, I doubt the world will end. There is a future because we want it (I'm an idealist at heart). Who cares whether we zoom about in rocket ships or astrally project ourselves through the cosmos. It's good fun reading what fertile minds can create.

Anyway, now that you've made up your minds about good sf, what about truthful sf. David Lake writes "what truthful sf says is that the human race is doomed: whether in the next five years or next fifty billion." Well that's rather obvious, isn't it. There is no birth without death. The point is how you spend the time inbetween. What I think truthful sf says is: okay, we're going to become extinct, but so what. Aren't we going to have a great time getting there? It'll be a long time to the death of the last star. "Cold death", rubbish. If we do manage to be hanging about near the last star's death, let's hope it's big enough to go as a supernova. A nice fireworks display to signal the end and some new beginning.

David misses the point, it will all eventually end so, why be miserable about it. Truthful sf is a place for optimists. I'm optimistic, I think there are billions of worlds in the cosmos supporting life. (Here's my bit of scientific evidence.) The present evidence I have seen suggests, granting that human levels of intelligence are rare (all other life is probably much smarter), you can't assume that other civilisations will develop atomic power and snuff themselves out. What a load of rubbish. Consider uranium; though there's plenty of it here it's a rare element at the cosmic level. It's only made in a supernova. Our solar system just happened to be in the right spot at the right time to collect it. Other systems with civilisations will wind up with

next to no uranium, or other radioactive stuff. They won't have an atomic age, will they now? Perhaps a solar age?

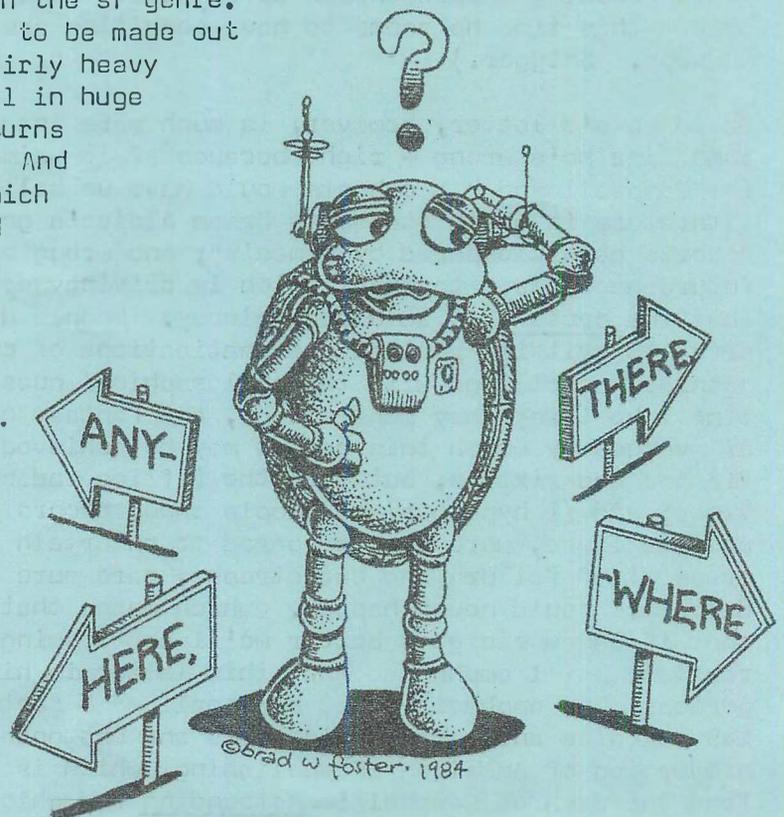
David's whole letter (see his third last paragraph) seems like a big dig in the ribs, "thinly disguised with a veneer" of cynicism. Or could it be a free ad for his next book... to get our attention you understand. It'll probably be ready before AussieCon II. Mo? Maybe he's just trying to tell us he's a one-eyed league supporter, without seeming to be obvious about it.

((Another optimist! Two in two issues is probably pushing things too far. At one time I would have thought that sf was an optimistic genre but it seems that this is only the case with people who haven't been reading the stuff for so long that they've seen it all and want to know why it isn't getting better to match their rising expectations. Easy solution is not to have any expectations, but that would make life a lot less exciting.))

Joan Dick,
88/27 King Street, Prahan, Victoria 3181.

The discussion in "Letters of Comment" on the pros and cons of sf and fantasy was most interesting. When I read such discussions I feel very strongly that there is a lot of life in the sf body yet. It is far from dead. However I do agree with people who say that the new brand of sf is missing something. I feel that authors are writing for the market and not because they have something to say. There is a publisher in England called Mills and Boon. They churn out an endless supply of light romances. The various authors write to a formula, with variations on the theme. This formula writing is beginning to appear in sf. There is a sameness and staleness appearing in most of the new releases. Perhaps this explains why there are so many re-releases of older books. Or do they just have good agents?

((It probably is the nature of the market which is creating such a changed nature in the sf genre. There seems to be a lot of money to be made out of sf, but only in return for fairly heavy investments. Books have to sell in huge numbers to make the sorts of returns that investors are looking for. And so the same sort of mentality which goes into making tv programs and selling newspapers is taken up by the managers of the big book publishing companies. The end result is the kind of book which is published to the parameters which those investing the money think will reap the most reward. As we have often seen in the past, this is linked to the idea of the lowest common denominator. The most recent crop of sf films have demonstrated once more the good old tried and true "pulp" values which worked so well for so many years... and so that is what we are just going to have to put up



with. But the arguments in a place like this don't really seem to be about the value or otherwise of the new stuff, but about something a little more difficult to define; the "sense of wonder" which most of us used to get out of sf but now seem to be unable to find. Perhaps this is just because we've been reading it too long.))

I see Joseph Nicholas has reared his head again. He does like telling people how to run their fanzines. Perhaps he had better go back to publishing for himself again.

((So far as I know, he does. He publishes Paperback Inferno for the BSFA and Ground Zero News for the Pimlico CND. Both fairly serious little publications with serious intent, I would imagine. But being neither a member of the BSFA or the CND...))

Joseph Nicholas
22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER, UK.

I was not (as Ted White asserts) "pontificating about American culture", but was confining myself expressly to sf and pulp magazine art, and in formulating a theory of it specifically acknowledging my debt to Brian Aldiss - whose knowledge of (as White puts it) "the context of US publishing from the dime novel through to pulp magazines" is a hell of a lot wider than White claims. (And one could point out in passing that White's claim that I don't know what I'm talking about can easily be turned against him - having lived all but five years of his life in the same house, what can he know about anywhere else at all?) Secondly, his claim that the art of sf magazines is "illustration: the visualisation of scenes from stories" (emphasis his) is nothing more nor less than a restatement of what I originally pointed out, and this point in itself formed the cornerstone of my theory as to why sf art had never managed to achieve an independent life of its own. So what on Earth does he think he's disagreeing with? (He's often accusing his opponents of suffering from what he calls "reading comprehension difficulties" and failing to understand what he's said - this time he seems to have committed pretty much the same sort of blunder. Snigger.)

David Lake's letter, however, is much more interesting. He's right; but at the same time he's wrong - right because sf is primarily a pessimistic rather than (as Campbell and his cohorts would have us believe) an optimistic literature, a literature in which (to quote Brian Aldiss's great thumbnail definition) "hubris gets clobbered by nemesis"; and wrong because it's not so much that the future has ceased to exist which is driving people to fantasy rather than sf, as that the present is so bloody gloomy. People don't want literature that presents grittily realistic dramatisations of current social concerns or agonised wrestlings with the philosophical questions of human existence at a time like this; they want escape, and fantasy novels are merely one of a number of avenues by which this escape may be achieved. It was different in the fifties and sixties, but then the fifties and sixties were much more optimistic times; and (I hypothesize) people then, secure and happy in their public and private lives, were more prepared to entertain in their leisure hours the prospect of failure and catastrophe, more sure than we are now that such disasters could never happen. Which means that this may come in cycles, and that if the world gets better we'll see a swing away from escapism back towards realism; but I emphasise that this latter is highly speculative. And I should perhaps also emphasise that by "realism" I certainly don't mean the drivel about L-5 colonies and terraforming Mars and whatnot that animates a sizeable proportion of American SF publishing, which is quite clearly a tired holdover from the days of Campbell's Astounding and which is so naive and simplistic in its view of human affairs and historical process as to be utter laughable. As those who may remember what I once said (in Napalm in the Morning 3!) may know,

I think Western civilisation has just about run its course, and whatever replaces it will more than likely sneer contemptuously at the NASA dreams of today, turn its back on "the conquest of space", and get on with something much more interesting.

((I've two comments to make so far. The first is that you seem to be using a definition of sf which appears to be a bit arbitrary. If I take your meaning right, there is the stuff such as Earth Abides which deals with real issues and people dealing with situations, and that is science fiction. And on the other hand there is that pulp stuff that was and still is being churned out to meet the needs of a mass market, and that isn't sf. Or perhaps I oversimplify your argument. Anyhow, I'd have said that it was all sf, and that the argument, if there is one, is about how to go about the business of improving the level of the junk so some of it is worth reading. If we're doing no more than pointing out what the good works are, then all we need is a hard working soul who publishes a list of what is worth reading and what isn't. But then we come to the business of setting criteria for personal taste so that everybody knows what a person means when they say something is good or bad. Fortunately for me, I'm a historian and not a literary critic.

((Which brings me to your supposition that "Western civilisation has just about run its course". If there is one thing to be said for western civilisation, it is that it deals fairly harshly with those who oppose it. Places like the USA, UK, USSR and other leaders of Western society have it within their power to wipe out the inhabitants of the world if they want to. One of the reasons that this hasn't happened so far is because, despite their differences, all the nations in the upper levels have similar attitudes and beliefs about the way in which the world operates. If they were to cease to see themselves as having something in common and fell into the hostility which is usual of relationships between people or groups which have nothing in common, then there might be something to really worry about.

((But if Western civilisation felt itself really threatened (rather than just having a bit of an internal conflict) it is quite able to make sure that nothing else wins. However it seems much more likely to me that instead of "the conquest of space" being ignored, it will prove to be the avenue by which the rather aggressive members of the present civilisation find an outlet. Those of us who are left behind might well have the sense to try something more exciting, but there will probably be the continuation of Western civilisation talking about the "traditional virtues" which they have carried on for the past thousand years or so whilst in orbit around some of the outer planets. Which will be a pity, but the restraints of such values might be one of the motors which has always driven this civilisation and might continue to generate the dynamics which keep it going.))

Robert Coulson seems to be attacking something of a straw man; certainly, what he thinks I said bears little resemblance to what I actually did say. "What Nicholas seems to want is for fans to think carefully about what they write in order to project a specific personality as strongly as possible." Really? I thought I wanted people to think carefully about what they write in order to project their thoughts and feelings as clearly and as unambiguously as possible; to communicate to their readers something of the underlying reasons why they think and feel as they do, and thus to communicate something of their personalities as well, no matter what those personalities may be like. Coulson may be right in claiming that careless writing is evidence of a careless personality; but the reason why such writing will always seem impersonal is that it communicates little if anything of the personality that produced it: such thoughts and feelings that are expressed are expressed so badly as to provide few if any clues about anything.

James Styles's letter is a case in point - I had to read it twice before I could be sure that I'd penetrated his fog of incomprehensibility and grasped what he was trying to say. (A good example of the muddled state of his thinking is his questioning "Who wants to be reminded of dismal British society and history in a film that is forward looking and investigates various moral ambiguities?", where he's clearly confused "Dickian" with "Dickensian". Or perhaps it's a product of his ignorance.) So he thinks Deckard in Bladerunner is the "missing" replicant? (Well, it would explain the woodenness of Ford's acting...) Perhaps, then, he'd care to tell us precisely where he spotted the arithmetical error outlined in my letter and tried to shoehorn Deckard into the yawning hole that thus opened up; and at the same time state precisely what evidence exists within the film to suggest that this assertion of his is even remotely correct.

Marc Ortlieb makes a common mistake with respect to the term "standards", seeming to think that it applies not to the worth of what is written but to the writing's actual content. "Fanwriting's strength comes from its diversity," he says, and continues: "forcing everyone to write according to a particular set of standards is silly". But the standards in question (pay attention here, Ortlieb - there will be a written test afterwards) are concerned with the quality of the writing, with how good it is as a piece of prose, how well the author expresses himself and in consequence how memorable, how alive, it is, not with what is actually said, with the range of subjects covered. The "standards" in question are standards of excellence, nothing else. (Okay, Ortlieb, now write out one hundred times...)

Julie Vaux could do worse than re-read (one hundred times, even) what I actually said about "sf art". "I believe that Joseph thinks nothing has changed in the course of forty years. Of course things have changed. That should be obvious to anyone who compares the style used in pulp illustrations to (sic) modern illustrators (sic). If nothing else, there is a far greater diversity of expression and technique being used in modern illustrations." But style and technique and expression did not figure for one moment in what I was discussing, since I was concerned with sf art's failure to develop as an artform due to its remaining tied to the unimaginative business of illustrating other people's words. The pictures could be composed of mint-striped toothpaste smeared across unvarnished chipboard, but if all they'll show me is another liquid-eyed furry alien or a weird species of tree then I will remain completely uninterested.

((But it will at least smell different to most sf art.))

Craig Hilton
4 Hawkins Street, Mount Pleasant, WA 6153.

A review of The Dreaming Dragons by Damien Broderick

Namatjira, PhD,
and House, autistic LSD,
are spirited to secret base
where dragons, fighting men in space,
have hid themselves in egg which lies
beneath Uluru. Kremlin tries
with Pentagon to make it yield
its subatomic missile shield,
despite a psychic testament
from murdered Russian dissident.
TM freak and astronaut
attempt the quest with peril fraught,
reveal their roots through dragon's eye
and float around and laugh and die.

Christine Ashby
PO Box 175, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205.

Who is this Don Ashby character anyway? (Actually he's Derrick's long-lost brother, who used to be active in fandom in the mid-seventies, but these days he's more of a fringe-fan, even though he does share a house at present with Carey Handfield.) I think that Donald's views tell you more about Donald than about how to run conventions, but I really can't let them go unremarked upon.

I suppose that now we know why Donald kept barging around AussieCon bellowing "Out of my way!" He needed psychiatric attention. We also know why his one attempt at convention organising went broke; I really truly don't understand his theory that the ideal relaxacon would cost ten thousand dollars a head to mount. Relaxacons are dirt cheap to run, and it is not true that the smaller the con the higher the cost per member. That equation is very like the one which goes: if a convention of X size makes Y profit then a convention of 5X size will make 5Y profit. I have seen convention organisers taken in by that reasoning.

As you know, AussieCon II is the sixth convention of which I have been treasurer. I have to say that none of them has exacted a toll, to my knowledge, of personal relationships, jobs or well being. I have never known committees to use the convention as an excuse to get drunk, either free or at their own expense, and I rather resent Donald's implication that such behaviour is usual. As for the role of small bistros in science fiction, these days most of the talking takes place in the hucksters room. There is something rather tempting about the idea of whisking Jan Howard Finder et al away from the convention, but since most of Melbourne fandom is going to be quite busy running AussieCon, I don't suppose it is likely to happen. (I might add that the very best bistros are located in South Melbourne.)

((You'll have to give the details of their locations to people such as I, who will have plenty of time during the convention, not being in the unfortunate state of living in Melbourne.))

The kindest word for Donald's views on censorship is "muddled". I really liked his definition of pornography as "products advertised as such." What a magnificent cop-out! My experience of pornography is pretty limited, but the last example which I read (somebody donated it to the library where Derrick works and he brought it home before throwing it out) had a long and pretentious preface in which it claimed to be a serious study of human relationships. Even something like Sodomy in Live (which I saw at the newsagents) hasn't actually got the word "Pornography" plastered across the front cover. I haven't got a handy definition of pornography, but it usually strikes me as boring - I mean, there are only so many things you can do. I suspect that for people like Donald stuff like Sodomy in Live is pornography because it is cheap and nasty, but "The Music Lovers" isn't because it cost a lot of money to produce. I am inclined to dismiss Donald's views about exploitation etc. as cultural fantasy to bolster up his sense of security. As for his view that "The Magnificent Seven" is not to be preferred to any and every version of Macbeth, that is pure pseudointellectual snobbishness. Macbeth is a play, for goodness sake! (Cancel the foregoing if in fact I am ignorant of the existence of a cinematic masterpiece entitled Macbeth).

((Well, there are certainly some films bearing that name, and using a lot of the words which appear in the play, but as to whether some or all of them are better than "The Magnificent Seven", I'm not brave enough to comment. I don't think that I've ever had the "pleasure" of seeing that particular film, though I've seen a lot of similar westerns which are supposed to be in a similar vein. Some of them were actually better than a version of Macbeth that I saw on the tv many years ago when Great Birnam wood turned out to be a bit of the Pentland

Hills between Melbourne and Ballarat at about the Pike's reservoir. soldiers darted in and out among the pine trees like badly trained rabbits. Perhaps Sodomy in Live would have been better than that. So there you are, it's all relative -- if you'll forgive my putting it that way.))

Joseph Hanna-Rivero

NO 1 Tech App Course, RAAF School of Radio, RAAF Base Laverton, Vict. 3027.

I think Sally Beasley misunderstood what I said about the liberation of pornographic literature as opposed to film. She says that reading about child pornography is not so bad since it does not actually involve a child, where a film does. Under literature I include magazines which often contain scenes just as explicit as film scenes. Someone had to pose for those magazines.

Don Ashby is being a bit unfair with his statement that "every person who pays money to watch pornography of any sort must be directly guilty for every rape and child molestation that happens in this society". For one thing, it has not been proved that pornography in a country causes or adds to the number of rapes and sexual assaults in that country.

He then goes on to say that pornographic films undermine the rights of women and children to be as equally human as men. What about the men who are taking part in these films? Aren't they being exploited and degraded just as much as women? Besides, any person who is exploited by a pornographic film has only themselves to blame. It would seem to me that these people are more interested in money in their pockets than their basic human dignity.

((I don't know about that, it is fairly easy to push people into doing things which they really don't want to do, perhaps by threat of violence or by various sorts of inducements, such as money. Feeling forced to do something by these sorts of pressures is also a form of exploitation.))

A few things have happened, since my article, in the censorship world. You may not be aware of them. For instance, as of 1 February this year the X rating has been added to the classification of home video movies and this now means that hardcore porn films and almost any other type of video film will be allowed for viewing at home. This is at least one step closer to a free country.

In the UK the exact opposite is happening. All types of sexually violent and violent films are being confiscated by the police and banned. Over there it seems that people are allowed to view these films at the cinemas, but not at home.

Leanne Frahm

272 Slade Point Road, Slade Point, Queensland 4741.

As a mother of one adolescent going through the high-school system at present and another child hovering on the brink of both, I've shared Rob Gerrand's concern about schooling for a long time. The spelling cards tacked on a Grade IV wall saying "Spagetti" and "Parylised"; the Business Principles teacher who gaily confesses to her class that she can't read the stock market page in the newspaper; a teacher's paragraph on Grade I lunches that includes the sentence "A bowlful of eggs are brought to the table"...

These aren't isolated specimens. Every week another bizarre example or two comes home from school -- not the children, dummy! I find it frightening. Not only is it quite simply bad to have children exposed to this poor quality education, the child also loses respect for the educators when a parent is constantly remedying faults and correcting errors.

I'm convinced that the root of the problem lies in the fact that today's younger teachers are the products of the revised curricula and examination procedures of the Seventies. They can't help being inadequate teachers because they themselves were inadequately taught and tested. It's a problem that's going to get worse as their students will leave school even less well equipped and so on. (And printing this should guarantee a seven page letter of refutation from Jack Herman.)

((I don't know about that, most teachers I know do fairly well at ignoring comments from the mere consumers of education. I'm reminded of the time when the Minister for Aviation met a deputation from some rate-payers group near Sydney Airport. They were complaining about the way that the planning had been carried out and asked the Minister why he'd let people who knew nothing about the local area mess around with their community. In reply he asked them if they knew enough about anatomy to conduct surgery on themselves. And I'm sure that most of us want the right to have a say about how our kids (or yours since I don't want any) are being brought up. But surely the whole business about "professionalism" is that it involves a lot of knowledge which the simple user doesn't think about or even know exists.

((Anyhow, you can't blame the teachers for everything. The other night I helped Valma read through some work that the office had typed up for her. And you thought that the spelling and grammar here was bad... it was amazing. And the first time Valma had assumed that the office at school could spell and had got the sheet printed up straight away. I hate to think what any parents who read it might have thought.))

((And, saving the best until almost last.))

Ted White

1014 N Tuckahoe Street, Falls Church, VA 22046, USA.

The trouble with "most social and marxist theoreticians" is that their theories deal solely with generalities and ignore the specifics and individuals. Where the history of American mass-market fiction is concerned, only the ignorant could prattle about "ruling class ideals". To begin with, just which ruling class are we speaking of here? The "dime novel" (which really cost a nickel) rose out of the late nineteenth century, along with cheaply-published books. Who was the "ruling class" in the US then? The "old money" was slipping away. The "Robber Barons" were in the ascendancy, but due to go into eclipse within twenty years. It was a time in which the social order was in flux and the average individual couldn't have cared less. It was a time of fresh opportunities and massive immigration. Marxist theory was born in and a product of Feudal and post-Feudal Europe; the US (like Australia?) sat outside that model and attracted those who were dissatisfied with it. Depending on your criteria, we had either several distinct but somewhat overlapping "ruling classes" or none at all.

Now consider who was writing and publishing mass fiction here - first as "dime novels" and subsequently as pulp fiction. Street and Smith were the major publisher of both forms in their formative years. But with the end of Prohibition a great deal of gangster money went into publishing, causing dozens of new pulp-publishing companies to spring up in the midst of the worst part of the Depression (1933-36). Prohibition money launched the publishers of everything from THRILLING WONDER STORIES to SUPERMAN comics. Tell me these mobsters represented the ideals and goals of "the ruling class." No they had money and wanted to make more money - and did.

And who was writing the stories they published? I've read a lot of autobiographies (Frank Gruber) and reminiscences of pulp writers (the subject

has fascinated me for many years), and most of them were iconoclastic types, some of them very left-leaning in their politics (like Hammett), and some of them equally right-leaning (Prather). Writers in general tend to stand somewhere outside the mainstream of their culture by virtue of their occupation - and I would guess that most of them would bridle at the notion that they parroted or gave currency to "the dominant ideology" of "the ruling class." Most of them, I think, were far more sympathetic to society's underdogs, and this is a major sub-theme of much of their fiction. The rich were often made sport of, the butts of jokes. Horatio Alger was an ideal: with hard work anyone can Make Something of Him/Herself. Is that the creed of the Ruling Class? Funny, I always thought the Ruling Class always sought the status quo and wished everyone to accept their born positions in life...

American mass fiction reflected American preoccupations and ideals. The principal ideal was Individualism, Making It On Your Own; and a major sub-theme to this was vigilantism, the Lone Avenger (the "Lone Ranger", in fact) who Battles Crime and Injustice On His Own - the hero of most western pulp fiction, most detective-mystery fiction, most science fiction (the backyard inventor), and all heroic-character fiction (Doc Savage, The Shadow, The Phantom Detective, The Whisperer, etc., etc., etc.).

All of this - the actual publishers, the actual writers, the actual fiction - gives the lie to your glib assessment that "popular taste is a reflection of the ideals of the ruling class and they are passed to the subordinate classes..." in mass fiction. I find your expressed view not only naive, but a substitution of dogma for fact.

But you've carried Joseph's argument into a new area by converting it into "social analysis" when what he was talking about was something else entirely: he was criticising "art" which is designed to serve a specific commercial function as if it were designed solely to serve "pure" artistic functions. Thus my comparison of a commercial jingle with a symphony.

Your analogy with automobile manufacturing holds no water. Cars and books do not serve analogous functions, either artistically or socially, and although both may have considerable unplanned impact on society, the nature of that impact is very different depending on whether one is considering transportation or fiction, although in each case it is, or can be, profound.

Sometimes, as Freud observed, a cigar is just a cigar. And most things are what they appear to be. Why muddy the waters by pretending otherwise and looking for Hidden Conspiracies by which to prove that, say, this typewriter is a Tool Of The Ruling Class In Its Subjection Of The Masses? Maybe it's just a "tool" in itself.

Death to Dogma! Down with Slogans! AussieCon II in '85!

((Right on!

((The first time I read through your letter I thought that you were simply wrong, but having read it through again, and considering particularly your paragraph about conspiracies, I see that we are simply suffering from a misunderstanding which it may be possible to resolve.

((While a cigar may indeed be a cigar (or even a good smoke) it is also something which people make, pay money for, store in boxes, attach ritual meanings to, and a whole host of things. Psychology isn't sociology. The difference between those who see, or attempt to see, theories driving or describing the evolution of human societies, and those who don't, is the difference between those who think that there are reasons for things happening

as those other people who are quite happy enough to note that things have changed. Marxists (and no I'm not one, but that theory is a bit like democracy, a pretty terrible system but the best there is at the moment) like the particular theory that Marx put up, and which others have developed, because it does seem to explain why society works the way that it does. Durkheim and Weber also put forward their ideas on this subject in theories which are in some ways very different from Marx, but I've yet to hear of a Weberian People's Revolution - probably because Marx's ideas boil down the easiest into something like dogma.

((The importance of theories is that they make a kind of overview understanding possible, if we want it. When I write about a "ruling class" I am using a theory which describes layers in society and when you, in your letter, write that "Writers in general tend to stand somewhere outside the mainstream of their culture by virtue of their occupation..." you are putting forward another theory, though perhaps a smaller scale one, to explain the social positions of writers. It might be quite possible to find examples counter to your "theory" but it isn't worth the effort simply because both you and I find it a useful description. Anyhow, a theory isn't the reality of how something works, it is a description of how things work which is used so long as it adequately fits the descriptions of reality which we have at our disposal. Such a thing may be boiled down to dogma, but of course theories are supposed to be flexible or replacable. Here we have a problem because in the social sciences we are likely to have more than one theory to describe a given set of evidence whereas in the natural sciences there is generally likely to be only one. I suppose that the reason for the difference is that it is difficult or almost impossible to conduct reproducible experiments in the social sciences.

((Now to the specifics of your argument. I have infact no argument at all with the facts that you put up about who were the rich and powerful in US society, who got into publishing pulps and why and who the writers were. I assume that this is all fairly well documented stuff. The difference is that you seem quite willing just to say that these bits of information don't add up to anything or fit into a pattern which might help to describe the ways in which society runs. Fair enough, there's nothing forcing you to do so. But it's a problem that I find fascinating.

((The idea of a "ruling class" which you have seems to be one of an oligarchy which is all known, one member to another. From the research that I've seen this is simply not the case (in Australia at least), but there is a group of several hundred people forming a network of friends and acquaintances, who are sufficiently powerful individually and together to get what they want out of society. This doesn't mean that there is a conspiracy of any sort (and I don't think that I suggested there was one), but it does mean that in the course of talking to each other they come to share certain views and opinions which can, in turn, be picked up by those others with whom they associate. Through a process of gradual transferrance these views can pass down through levels of society. For example, owners of publishing empires can give their editors the general idea of what they think are good moral values and those can be passed on to writers - not so directly as orders of course but through association of a powerful person with a person who is trying to please them.

((I think that it is unlikely that a modern day ruling class would want people to accept their born positions in life. In a previous age when much wealth was inherited, birth was a very important way of being rich or poor, but that is no longer always the case. Since money is power in a capitalist society it makes sense to get people to work hard, not only does it give some the potential to join an elite, it generates more money in itself and makes everybody a little richer, and those who control the flow of money a lot more richer. I don't suppose that capitalists would get very far at all if they

didn't encourage people to be out spending money on things, to strive to better themselves in their activities, and to do good in the community.

((There probably isn't much point in going through every point in your letter and trying to show how it could be fitted into a theory. That is the kind of exercise that would simply fail to interest you. Of course I'm quite willing to argue about the validity of this or that explanation ("theory") but not about whether such things exist or not. That is something which I will be dogmatic about.)) ((Wasn't I supposed to say something about hegemony too?))

Nae Strelkov

Estafeta Postal, 4501 Palmasola, Jujuy, ARGENTINA.

This is the second letter I'm writing you after years of semi-silence when I seemed to have nothing to say. Vadim brought your fanzine from Jesus Maria down south on his most recent trip, and I find myself enjoying all you write. It rings a bell.

Conventions? At this distance in time and space from Washington where I met you, back in 1974, I can confess that I was lost throughout the days spent wandering (all lonely and confused) through the vast halls of the old Sheraton. Just as you describe it: "the people going in all directions but never seeming to get anywhere... the chaos ...etc." Like walking through one of those fantastic shopping malls of the USA, with the added onus that you have to be seen with a wide smile hurting your facial muscles and a bright look, all the time. Yes, after nine years, back again in those wilds of Argentina, the truth comes out at last from me. Since that visit I did get to another convention - in Atlanta in 1978, when visiting my cousins there. Ned Brooks invited and took me, and the same sense of being on an alien planet overtook me once again. When Ned got called away (it was only for one brief morning that I was there), I "entertained" myself in the Huckster Room by studying the merchandise on all the stalls. Star-trok material; comics. "This is science fiction?" thought I. There was an emotional, for me, moment when introduced to some brilliant young girl interested in my topics-of-interest, (symbols and old languages). I recall telling her (I was still so young and eager and silly), that I felt I'd found the key to all our languages, the old "alphabet of symbols" on which all speech is based. She cried, "If that's so, it's the most important discovery yet made by humanity." My eyes filled with tears; I almost wept for a moment, so precious was this topic to me; so precious too what I had found.

So what happened? Ned lent her the notes I'd made (printing them up on a hand-operated postcard mimeo for hundreds of pages) and she later told Ned she couldn't make head or tail of it. (Nobody can, apparently. Yet here at home where the symbols got studied gradually, Sylvia and Tony - our youngest two - perfectly "read" them and understand their multiple dimensions, too, by now.) But I can't give them away freely, because nobody wants this gift, anywhere. So I stopped trying, but it did disappoint me that all those brilliant minds to be found at sf conventions, only want to forget their brilliance and get soused "for fun".

Not only conventions, but fanzines also slip into the slough of Banality, I fear. We're all trying to remain modeled after the founding fans in 1935 and the early 1940s. How dull it is in retrospect. As for Booze; how dull it is to be with boozers when you yourself can't booze easily. (It goes to my head instantly and I want to fall asleep, that's all.) Boozers talk so fatuously, repeating themselves like a bunch of pontificating popes.

Sue Tagkalidis wrote a beautiful letter of comment. "Writing is a magical ritual," she says. "A telling to the world at large, a gesture of open

sharing of something of value. That gesture is hollow when the gift that is offered is so ordinary and commonplace that its value has been debased." Splendid. Writing is "symbolic and ceremonial", Leigh! For me, to sit down to put into words the glorious realities of daily experience requires a giving-over of one's self to the joy of symbol and ceremony, like a Japanese tea ceremony, or an old-style Chinese visit-of-state. Bowing mentally to you and your loccers, thinking of you all with an actual thrill of joy that you exist and are what you are, and that all join together to produce a fanzine like yours right now. Symbols are my meat and drink, my daily fare; they happen constantly to us here because we "read" them. How nice if fandom got into that adventure finally.

((It seems unlikely to me that it will, mostly because fandom seems to serve a much more practical purpose. It is just the business in which people make the kinds of noises to each other which signify that we all exist, that we have differing opinions, and that some of us think that our opinions are better or more important than others. Perhaps there's something symbolic there, but I have to admit to not having looked. I suppose this is because we look for that sort of symbolism in other places - my attitude to writing is that it is a way of expressing ideas and concepts of a "real world" nature, those other things which Sue described as "magical" seem to me to be better conveyed through music. I often think of the sorts of things which might be used in prose to express an emotional content in musical terms. I once wrote a piece for one person which had a central part in the form of a minuet with a repeat, but they went and edited it out. Perhaps they have an even more practical use for words than I do. Or perhaps if I'm going to think about using music forms I'd best stick to trying to write music.

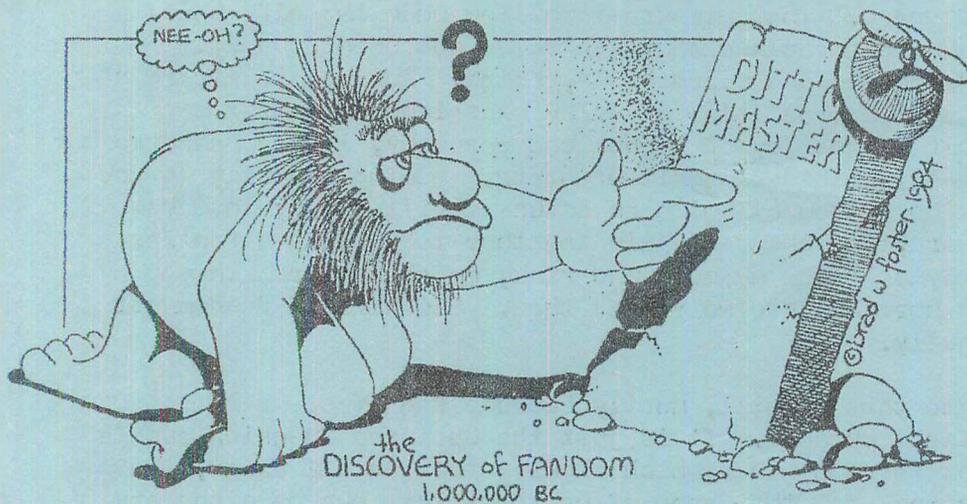
((Your comments on conventions make me wonder if people who are about to go to their first convention should not go to a sort of training course. After all, when they get you into the armed forces they don't expect you to go into a battle untrained in even the rudiments of survival. And just as you can probably tell the seasoned veterans in armies you can tell the seasoned veteran convention attendees - they know all the tricks of survival. I suppose that there are also fanzine veterans too, though I don't know if they would agree with you that we're still trying to hang around in the 1970s. If we seem to be that way it is because the mode of production we use is still the same sort as they used then. But I'd have to leave it up to somebody who has been around since then to say whether what is written and published in modern fanzines is still back in those days. But perhaps if it is that only reflects the fact that human values and concerns haven't changed that much in forty years.))

Other people who wrote were - Damien Broderick, Ken Ford, J Gregor, Van Ikin, Stewart Jackson, Eric Lindsay, Marc Ortlieb, Marilyn Pride, G Rawlings, Gregory See-kec, James Stylos (who now lives at 145 Faraday Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053), Joan Weber and Jack Wodhams.

* * *

Fanzines from the West

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of this decade there seemed to be a ceaseless stream of paper sweeping over the Nullarbor from a newly emerged fandom in Western Australia. Some of the fanzines produced in that period were fairly good but the majority started to fall into a kind of common style which made them less and less approachable by those of us living on this side of the continent. I suppose that this was understandable enough since a bunch of fans will find a common language and entertain themselves with it, and what



with egoboo being the motive force, fanzine editors will tend to publish the sorts of things that people tell them they like and praise as being good.

but in the end it all seemed to fade away, and these days getting a fanzine from Western Australia is a rare thing indeed.

Fortunately there still seem to be

three fans over there who are still publishing fanzines and sending them out for the rest of us to see and enjoy. Gary Barber publishes The Hard Ones, Stewart Jackson publishes Living in the Limelight, and Kevin McCaw publishes what is left of The Wasffan. There are some differences between these three fanzines, but it does seem to me that it is their similarities which are just as striking.

Living in the Limelight is a fairly intense little fanzine, the editor does a lot of the writing, and that can range from a direct and biting presence in an editorial which complains about how people have reacted to the first two issues, and to positive discrimination, to an article about computers which is fairly serious and straightforward in its intent. There is a film review, record reviews and some comments in the letter column. Since most Australian fanzines are fairly laid back affairs it is really enjoyable to read the writings of a person who seems willing to take an aggressive and almost violent approach to what he writes. There is a sense of enthusiasm and involvement in the writing which just doesn't seem to be available anywhere else - if it were linked with a greater sense of direction and control it would certainly be among the best in Australia. I'm not sure what the driving force in this kind of writing is, I suspect that it might be that Stewart is only new to this sort of thing and simply wants to put down the words and feelings that come to him, and he is not yet in full control of how they come out. If this is so it would be a pity to restrain the flow. I assume that much of the thought in this fanzine is given a kind of shape by the music that Stewart likes. He thinks that "Motorhead" are pretty good (which is not a bad assessment) and, like them, doesn't seem to believe in only going at half pace, and even his review of a punk film has the sort of aggressiveness which is associated with that mode of life.

The only contributor to this issue is Ian Perry, with a piece of fiction which is, well... a lot better than most of this sort of thing, but still not well enough developed to be a good piece of fiction. (There is the idea stated fairly baldly, and it needs fleshing out to really come to life.) In appearance Living in the Limelight is really nothing above functional. Since Rataplan is also just about nothing but text too, I suppose that I am not in a position to be critical - but there is something to be said for leaving enough room around the margins to make the words seem more readable, and to give a sense of having been planned a little. Still, I suppose that it's just a matter of taste.

The Hard Ones has reached its ninth issue and really does seem to be improving in all directions. The format and layout are good and could easily move into a very high class indeed - the only change I'd like to see would be a typeface

which seems to fit better than the heavy black one which makes the reduced pages look heavy and untidy. I am very attracted by most of the artwork, especially that of Des Waterman who is now turning out material in an "underground" style which is at least equal to anything that I've recently seen in fanzines; and I wish I knew his address so that I could ask him for some art too.

I don't think that the written content of this fanzine is as brash as Stewart's, and for that reason I find it less interesting. Perhaps I find brashness something novel and therefore overlook its faults whereas when I come across the usual style of fanzine writing which is not well done, it tends to drag and so become noticeable. The other reason that I am probably not as impressed is that while some writing on comics is interesting, an issue of a fanzine full of the subject has a sameness that doesn't appeal to me - or is it simply that I'm not overawed by that topic. For example, Julie Vaux's article is fine if you like mini-reviews of the various comics she has found which contain female lead characters, but it isn't written too well, isn't edited well either, and so just gets boring.

The Wasffan doesn't seem to have appeared in its larger form since December last year. It was (and still may be) the fanzine of WASFA and Kevin McCaw seems to keep publishing it in an attempt to keep the Association going. I don't know whether he is going to have any success, but since I've been of the opinion that organising sf clubs is sheer masochism, and would like to see more fanzines from Kevin, I kind of hope that he drops this fanzine and goes on with one of his own. (Perhaps he needs the feeling of "obligation to the club to keep him at it.")

Being a club fanzine, The Wasffan contains many of the things that are not common in personally produced fanzines. There are lists of conventions which are on the way, names and addresses, film news and reviews. All standard fare and nothing above the average. More interesting is the extensive letter column which shows that Kevin has at least been receiving some response for his efforts. But whether or not these letters are the kind of thing that you'd want to receive if you were to keep going... perhaps not. At any rate it seems that the letters haven't been edited very much or assembled in any particular order, so reading them is a bit like leaping into a bowl of porridge and trying to find the solid bits by just working your way through the lot. But leaving that aside I did like the editorial presence in the column, Kevin has some point to make from most of the letters and, as with Stewart Jackson, there is no messing around, just saying what he has to say in the plainest and most direct language. Some might think that it is just crude writing... perhaps so but it does make a point and it also makes a change from all the terribly reasonable people like me who will go to almost any lengths to be nice.

Unfortunately this particular issue of The Wasffan is a disaster. Many of the pages have great streaks of invisible writing on them and some of the artwork has been pasted in so that the edges mark a startling boundary between the text and the picture. There is also a general air of untidiness and being cluttered.

But although all three of these fanzines have their faults, and I've mentioned them mainly because it seems to be much easier to say negative things than positive ones (and because I wouldn't want anybody to get the idea that I see no fault in these fanzines), I really enjoy getting them and reading them. One of the major things that the three together seem to have is a sense of identity and purpose. And although they do not actually talk about each other I get the impression that there is the sort of personal contact between the editors which means that they have some idea of their aims and how to go about getting to them. Perhaps it is just a result of the isolation of living in Western Australia.

I hope that these three fanzine editors can find the enthusiasm to keep going, and I hope that they receive the kind of encouragement that will help them. Their addresses are:

Gary Barber, 409 Wanneroo Road, Balcatta, WA 6021
Stewart M Jackson, PO Box 257, Kalamunda, WA 6067
Kevin McCaw, 20 Dodd Street, Hamilton Hill, WA 6163

* * *

Arcane Female Rituals Exposed!

Christine Ashby

Women have a secret life. Men suspect as much I am sure - no doubt many of you have encountered a cosy female discussion of child-bearing, child-rearing, practical gynaecology or even husband-management, and no doubt you didn't hang about too long. These are the universal concerns of women, and as a woman passes life's milestones she is initiated into the appropriate mysteries, if that is not too fanciful a description of the breaking down of reserve that she encounters with other, usually older, women, who on occasion may be complete strangers. Engagement brings on a sort of sisterly welcome to the new lamb lining up for the slaughter - the implication is that you don't really know what you're letting yourself in for - and pregnancy, if I can believe my sister-in-law, marks your arrival as a grown woman and opens out all manner of confidences (which may have nothing to do with babies or where they come from).

This secret life is not confined to mere verbalising. It manifests itself in rituals and customs, which are not hidden from male view, but which men are not invited to participate in. Many of these rituals are connected with weddings, which as we all know are traditionally run by the couple's female relatives largely for the amusement of the aforesaid female relatives.

Surely the most arcane of these rituals, and one which need not necessarily be connected with a wedding, is the Tupperware Party. I use the term generically; all sorts of goods are in fact sold by this method, but Tupperware got in first in this country. I have been to parties for make-up, wigs, and household cleaning gear as well as plastic storage boxes. They all follow the same carefully planned format, one mandatory aspect of which is the banishment of all males over the age of five.

You are invited by a "friend", or sometimes a neighbour. Sometimes you may even be invited by your mother, who has been cornered into going along by one of her "friends" and wants moral support. The affair is presented as a jolly way to get together for a few hours innocent amusement in the company of friends and neighbours, perhaps even with a view to raising money for the charity which is running the do - spending money is never explicitly mentioned, though it is made clear that the products to be demonstrated are just what you've always wanted. Numbers may be anything from eight to twenty, depending on the size of the hostess's livingroom and the availability of friends and neighbours.

Participants sit in a semi-circle, facing a table on which the goods have been tastefully set out by the demonstrator. Those ladies are always free to improve upon the basic layout, and go to some trouble to produce just the right piece of purple velvet on which to display their wares to best advantage. Demonstrators, I should point out, are like nothing so much as members of the school A-Grade hockey team - terribly keen, competitive in the sense of trying to do just that little bit better than the other girls, but above all devoted to the team and

ultimately to the game. This analogy is not in the least far-fetched. One long vacation in my student days Tupperware took over the Monash University campus for their national convention. We were amazed to find that the demonstrators were all organised into teams, each with a distinctive uniform of their own design and festooned like Girl Guides with badges for merit and long-service and whatnot. And they sang team songs! And they were all having such fun! It's a sort of fandom I suppose, the FIAWOL variety at that.

Anyhow, here we all are sitting in our semi-circle. Proceedings commence with everybody introducing themselves. You may even be asked to preface your name with an adjective beginning with the same letter - anything to get the giggling started. Pencils, paper and glossy catalogues are distributed. To begin the pencils are used to play some particularly asinine children's game, with a prize for the winner of course, and a consolation prize for everyone else. The last time I won something it was a widget you attach to the stool wool so as not to damage your fingernails when scrubbing pots.

Now that the ice is broken and we are all girls together, the real fun begins. The demonstrator starts to demonstrate. A carefully prepared patter, spiced with illustrations from real life, introduce each object on the table. They are not usually handed around - too distracting - but you can comment if you like, or ask for a closer look. The desirability of the products, and their superiority over anything similar on the market, is never in question; it is in fact frequently connected with the amazing success of the company founder, whose aura infuses in some mystical way everything that bears his label. If the product is makeup some victim may find herself plastered with cucumber-mint face cream or cocoa-butter mascara ("It's so natural you could eat it - not like other brands, they're really only boot polish. Do you realise you've been putting boot polish on your faces?"). If the product is brushes to scrub the bath or the ceiling the demonstrator will go into an elaborate pantomime; at this point the as-yet unmarried may begin to have doubts about dooming themselves to a lifetime of worrying about whether the bath is clean enough, but the old hands all fall about appreciatively.

Throughout the demonstration subtle hints are dropped about buying things, though money is never mentioned. You are reminded that your hostess, or her club, will be getting a present the magnificence of which depends on the volume of sales (clubs sometimes get a cut of the proceeds). Sample presents (which are not company products but the sort of things you win on spinning wheels like electrical goods and suitcases) are produced. If you hold a party, you could get one too, providing your friends buy enough. Of course you'd love to hold one - aren't you having a great time today? Who knows, you might even consider becoming a demonstrator; one day you too (if your hubby is willing to take out a second-mortgage) could be an area supervisor with your garage stuffed with Tupperware!

This is where you take off your engagement ring, if you have one. Of course it may be too late - your hostess may already have asked, at the top of her voice, after your fiancee. The traditional shower tea or kitchen tea is not such a bad thing. I didn't have one, and found myself for weeks after the honeymoon nipping round to the hardware store to buy baking tins and wooden spoons and all the trivial little things that you take for granted in your mother's house and suddenly find you must have. Unfortunately the shower tea is ripe for transformation into a Tupperware Shower Tea. The display table is decorated with a mock wedding cake made of graduated tiers of pastel-coloured bowls, and of course the guests all give the bride gift vouchers. I'm sure the cold sweat was visible on my brow as I protested that I wasn't going to have any sort of shower tea. Possibly this intransigence stood me in good stead when I later resisted buying anything other than a pastry sheet and a spill-proof jug (which I had intended to buy all along).

It's not easy to avoid buying. After the demonstration is over, while the kettle boils, you are invited to go through your glossy catalogue and mark off on your order sheet the items which you require. Feel free to go up to the table and handle the goods as much as you like - if it's jewellery try it on. In the meantime the demonstrator does the rounds - it will avail you nothing to hang back in the hope that you will be overlooked. It's no good leaving your money at home either; goods are to be picked up a week later from the hostess, and paid for then. Saying no to a lusty suitor is as nothing compared to saying no to a party-plan demonstrator. I have had some little success at jewellery parties by wearing my very best Emily Hope silver and opal things, even at the risk of looking overdressed, and protesting that there really isn't anything in that style in the catalogue (and no, I don't know of any little girls who would love an imitation pearl bracelet for Christmas). It's worth turning up to a makeup party with a shiny well-scrubbed face (well, you only came along to enjoy yourself after all) if you can cope with the observation that even people who don't use makeup may be facing the threat of Enlarged Pores. On the whole though, there is no escape, and you find yourself wondering what the cheapest thing on the list is - and nothing is really cheap - and what your less-favoured relatives ought to get for a Christmas present.

The really galling thing about the whole performance is that in the final analysis it has been most carefully structured by a man or men (probably with a PhD in psychology), and it is all designed to benefit a man or men (namely the Glorious Founder and the fellows at the top of the pyramid). I have a fair idea of what the training manuals must look like. I once had a file which contained a large number of supposedly confidential documents the property of Drake Personnel (International) (this claim was in fact in dispute) and I rejoiced over the advice, which naturally had to be adapted for local conditions, on how to conduct yourself at a job interview; when asked if you have any further questions you reply "When do I start?" and when told that there are others to be interviewed you point out that there is no need since you are obviously the best person for the job. This indomitably positive thinking is exactly the sort of thing that has enabled a number of men (and maybe women) to make a lot of money out of a very large number of women. If only something could provide women with a dose of the same spirit to enable them to turn up, have fun, and not buy anything!

* * *

Parting Shots

Talking about indomitable thinking...

There we are in the professor's room and we have just attempted to read one of the documents in a book entitled The Stuart Constitution. I won't bother you with the editor and publisher, I doubt that you will want to buy a copy. The text that we had read is as follows:

"If any man shall affirm that men at the first, without all good education and civility, ran up and down in woods and fields, as wild creatures, resting themselves in caves and dens, and acknowledging no superiority one over another, until they were taught by experience the necessity of government; and that thereupon they chose some among themselves to order and rule the rest, giving them power and authority so to do; and that consequently all civil power, jurisdiction and authority was first derived from the people, and disordered multitude; or either is originally still in them, or else is deduced by their consents naturally from them, and is not God's ordinance originally

descending from him and depending upon him; doth greatly err."

And after our brains have stopped boiling-over and have straightened themselves out (as much as is possible after such an experience) the Prof asks, "Does anybody have any comments?"

Just as well for me somebody speaks up straight away, I am on the verge of saying; "That must have been written by somebody called Nicholas!"

* * *

Late comments

In a recently arrived letter Gerald Smith takes me to task for not noticing that he had moved to Sydney and was still sending my stuff to his old address. For some reason he seemed quite cut-up about it and I would be tempted to reply that I don't make it my business to keep track of other people's romantic activities... but of course I simply abase myself and mutter something about doing better next time...

But that wasn't what I wanted to mention here, or what I wanted to quote Gerald as saying either. More to the point we have:

"Finally, I will say that I mostly agreed with your comments on this year's Australian SF Achievement Awards, including your closing remarks. It would seem to me that the EurekaCon committee has defined the category of "Best International SF or Fantasy" very loosely indeed. Without wanting to be too cynical is it possible that this is because they wish to subject the category to ridicule because of a basic dislike of the category and/or the awards themselves? I would like to think that the Committee was not itself that cynical in its task. Especially as this is a rehearsal for the worldcon."

What a fine and possibly perceptive person Gerald Smith is. I just wonder if there is anybody else out there who is thinking the same sorts of things about that particular category and the awards themselves. Of course it could well be that a lot of Dr Who fans voted for the Ditmars this year, but if that were the case I would have expected some of their fanzines and fan writers to turn up in those particular categories too.

Gerald concludes his letter, "In closing I will point out that the ballot actually names Ornithopter/Rataplan in the "Best Fanzine" category - as being alternate titles for the one fanzine. You're not getting out of it that easily."

Indeed. And I can tell you that, as a person threatened with having to get one of those Ditmar things at EurekaCon, the prospect of having to be all gracious after "Doctor Who" or Thor's Hammer has won the "Best International" award, and while people are still falling out of their chairs thinking about it, does not thrill me all that much. And we all have Marc Ortlieb to thank for the prospect.

There is at least one thing. You can't blame me for the results because I won't have voted. Thankfully the organisers have forgotten to send me a ballot form... that's my excuse anyhow and I'm going to stick to it.

Oh, and if you want Gerald's new address, he tells me that it's printed just about everywhere. You can't miss it.

* * *

And finally

Did you see our noble leader, The Hon R J L Hawke, AC MP, giving the Gold Logie to Bert Newton the other night on the tv. It seems that the USA has an actor who became the head of government and here in Australia we have a head of government who is working at becoming an actor. As Bert Newton put it, Australia's top-rating talk-back personality. (Actually, and seriously for a moment - I'm not convinced that Hawke having such a high popularity is a good thing for the Party which he represents. Afterall, in 1916 Billy Hughes arrived back in this country to a hero's welcome and within a year he had "blown the brains" out of the ALP. And Joe Lyons wasn't unpopular when he split the Party in the thirties and then Doctor Evatt was popular (as popular as he was over like likely to be) when he lead to the split of the Party in the fifties.) One of phrases which Bob Hawke used and which had become almost as popular as the almost inevitable "My husband and I...", was the dreaded "In respect of..." But he seems to have deleted it from his vocabulary. Which ruins the political irony of the beginning of the next paragraph.

In respect of this issue you will have noticed, if you glanced through it, that there are a couple of pictures. This marks a radical departure in my publishing policy and I hope that in the future I will be able to publish more of this sort of thing. However I should warn artists that I'm a hard person to please and while it is possible to edit writing to suit what I think is seemly, it is not so easy to edit pictures. So if I don't feel that I can or should publish something I'll send it right back again. This isn't likely to win me any friends, but what is the point of attempting to do something to encourage local fan writers if I'm not going to do the same for local fan artists. So, the invitation is open.

* * *

Index

Opening Shots	1
I chatter on about books, university life and make a personal explanation	
Culture Corner - Munich: the Antikensammlung and the Glyptothek	6
Paul Stokes returns to the treasures in European galleries	
Letters of Comment	8
Fanzines From the West	21
Mention of what seems to be the last three WA fanzines	
Arcane Female Rituals Exposed!	24
Christine Ashby risks all to reveal all	
Parting Shots	26
I have the last odd thoughts to round off the issue	
Art from the gracious pen of Brad Foster, pages 11 and 22 actually.	

* * *

And finally the Big Red ***. If you find that you have one in the space here it means that I haven't heard from you in a while and unless you respond (in the manner set out on page one) you won't hear from me again either.