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No. 20 December 1997



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## Has Anybody Out There Anything Good to Say about 1997?

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Well, I haven't. 1997 put the boot in, didn't it?

Here's my 1997: A loss of income security, and real reduction in income. The death of George Turner, and too many others. (I've just heard of the death of Margaret Aldiss, a great lady and fine hostess.) Major illnesses for Ian Gunn, Nick Stathopoulos and (I've just heard) Eric Lindsay. Our burglary, and the feeling it gives me that the world has become a crummy place. The sale of the tall buildings on each side of us; three months of noise while one of them is deguttled; the prospect of four new neighbours. The death of machines and systems: the sewerage pipe and washing machine at the beginning of the year; the computer crashing six times in the first six months of the year; the hot water system crashing at this end of the year. After doing lots of work towards the next *SF Commentary*, I now find I have no money to publish it. The list goes on.

Fill in your own 1997 list. I've just read four mailings of ANZAPA, and found that most of you had a worse year than Elaine and I did.

Fortunately, some of you had a good year. Even I must admit that 1997 had its occasional high spots.

My fiftieth birthday bash . . . thanks to everybody who turned up. Our friend Frances's fiftieth, at the same

restaurant. Lots of enjoyable fortieths, fiftieths and sixtieths. Basiccon . . . thanks, Ian and Karen (but no thanks to 1997 for playing such a cruel joke on you). That totally unexpected Ditmar award; thanks to those who voted. Good fellowship with good friends: thanks, Dick, Bill, Richard, Race and Iola, Frances and Robin, Jim, Andy, Geoff, Dora and many many others. Many hours of ingenious computer help from Dick and Richard. Lots of good books and films.

And, of course, the vast wave of best wishes and practical help from friends when they heard that I'd been made George Turner's literary executor.

The temptation is to say: bring on 1998. At the moment I can't see how it can be better than 1997. My income has become so uncertain that I don't know how to pay some current bills, let alone return to the real purpose of life: publishing fanzines. (Any suggestions welcome.) I hate grovelling to prospective clients, but find there's no other way to get work. We face the prospective of lots of new neighbours. And the carpet and roofing iron must be replaced sometime soon.

And that's just the 1998 disasters I can predict!

Now that I've cheered up everybody, on with the Mailing Comments . . .

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## The Great Indoors

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### MAILING No. 175, APRIL 1997

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#### Jeanne Mealy: LAND OF 10,000 LOONS

You and John seem to have too many health problems for your age. Monitoring your heart arrhythmia! Ouch.

I traded fanzines with Lynn Hickman during the early 1970s. I met him only once, when a few fans and I smooooothed with Bob Tucker in his room at Aussiecon I. I hear that Tucker has now been ordered off Beam's Choice.

Should I sue the horoscope writer for *The Sunday Age*? This time last year she predicted that Aquarians would have a *great* year during 1997.

On the few days I see the daily *Herald Sun*, its horoscope writer seems to be pretty accurate: during the last few months Aquarians have been told to hunker down,

grin and bear it, and hope things lighten up eventually.

I wish I could remember the author and title of the *F&SF* story from the 1960s which tells of the Great California Earthquake: the rest of America disappears into the Atlantic Ocean while California remains.

#### Phil Wlodarczyk: OFFICIAL BLOODY CONTRIBUTION

It's great to see you appearing in ANZAPA in your authorial glory, unfuzzied by the Singular Productions disguise screen.

Apologies for failing to make mailing comments on your cartoons in *Khalien* and elsewhere. Like many other non-graphics people, I know which cartoons I like but I can't comment on them in any way that makes

sense to a cartoonist. No wonder cartoonists are often the unappreciated orphans of fandom.

That fiftieth birthday at Mount Everest seems a long time ago. I was so busy trying to circulate, and not succeeding, that I drank very little that night. But I made sure I stayed close to the delicious food.

**Jean Weber: JEANZINE No. 113**

Thanks for telling us about the death of Eric's mother. I don't think I ever met her, even when I was staying at Eric's Springwood villa in 1975. I know how much she meant to Eric and you. Sounds as if she was quite a lady.

Our local estate agent said that our two blocks might now fetch a small fortune (by our standards), i.e. about the amount we'd need to buy anything else decent in the inner suburbs. Since we can't stand the thought of owning or running a car, we're still committed to inner-suburban living, so there's no point in selling.

If I read everything in each mailing as each mailing arrives, I would have been able to say to you at Basicon: 'Jean! You're not wearing glasses! How did the laser surgery go?' Since I hadn't, I didn't. You must have been wondering about the more-than-usual Gillespie insensitivity.

Interesting that you quote the price per eye for laser surgery. Newspaper pundits rarely mention prices for medical procedures for fear of reminding people that the cost of taking out medical insurance for two years would cover most major medical procedures if paid as an up-front fee. (But you need to have saved the money that you didn't spend on medical insurance.)

Thanks for your cat story (about Tinka's move to your place). While I was reading it, our extremely elderly cat, TC, had a spasm or fit of some kind. We thought he was about to become an ex-cat, but after lots of cuddling and patting he seemed to recover. This morning he tottered out to his food plate as usual, rejected canned meat and fish, and demanded fresh fish. TC might be an old wreck, but Indomitable Cat Will keeps him going.

I wish we could all get to each other's decade birthdays. In particular, I would have liked to have attended Eric's fiftieth.

Thanks for Joy Window's address. Needless to say, I still haven't written to her, but will — as soon as I write any other letters.

I find that I can no longer lug boxes around without suffering, no matter how carefully I follow the chiropractor's instructions on lifting. This is a problem because my work room is now filled with boxes of books, fanzines and other stuff. To find anything, I need to shift boxes. I'm waiting for somebody to invent anti-gravity bluetac.

**Marc Ortlieb: ENERGY No. 174**

Two years ago, you were going to review a Terry Dowling book for *SF Commentary* . . . but it would help if I could publish the fanzine in which the review is supposed to appear.

The main reason why I like to run my genzines through ANZAPA is to get mailing comments in lieu of letters of comment. As Alan Stewart would realise, it's very difficult to attract letters of comment from Austra-

lian fans.

My uneasy feeling (which is what I substitute for memory these days) is that Gary Mason began his newszine shortly before I joined fandom. But if my uneasy feeling is inaccurate, I should have a complete set of *The New Forerunner* buried somewhere in the house.

**Cath Ortlieb: YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED No. 50**

You'll have to excuse me for failing to make sympathetic sounds way back in April when you were suffering from pinched nerves, and much else besides, and Michael was having such a bad trot. It takes me six months to catch up with the real news.

My sister is a teacher as well. She's had lots of chiropractor-treatable problems that she hasn't had treated because she's a teacher, and doesn't have the spare time for such things. She has an intermittent limp, and even the medical masseur cannot see an easy way of treating her. So I hope you can find the time to get well. Otherwise, teaching will just make things worse.

**Gerald Smith (& Womble): RAMBLINGS No. 5**

I don't usually agree with you on economic matters, Gerald, but there's a first time for everything. I look back to 1971, when the unemployment rate almost fell off the bottom of the scale, and wonder what the rate might have been then if there had been the same female participation in the workforce as there is now. Perhaps the statisticians can guess at an answer to this one.

Tariffs protect entire economies, not 'bloated and inefficient industries', as the Japanese know full well. Every person who remains employed in one's own country benefits the fortunes of every other person in that country. A society is only as good as its poorest person, and the people who run our society (who are not citizens of Australia) aim to make as many of us as poor as possible.

Sorry if I don't take you entirely seriously, Gerald, but then, you probably don't take me seriously. And the people who have the power don't take any of us seriously. After all, I know exactly how to run the economy, and if I were allowed to do so, everybody would disagree with me.

But I do see red when anybody recommends a GST, especially as nobody recommends it if they have happen to live in a country that imposes it. An GST without exceptions for essentials is the most obvious weapon in the War Against the Poor, which is what the Federal and most State Governments are waging.

You explain 'tax bracket creep' (to Cheryl) a lot better than I can.

You were talking about elegant typewriter faces. Only recently have I been able to track down Prestige Elite for computer, which was the most attractive IBM/print-wheel typewriter face in the old days. Courier remains the basic typewriter face, but it's hardly the most attractive.

It's now become impossible in Australia to buy the paper, ink and stencils needed to use a duplicator, but Maureen Speller in Britain still runs a duplicator (and hence a duplicating service for innumerable British fans).

**Bill Wright: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP**

The graphics, as usual, are delicious, delightful, delirious — and only Elaine and I and you and Dick know how ghodawfully long they take to print on an inkjet printer.

You wouldn't want to be dependent on Radio Australia if you lived any point north of Indonesia. One minute it was there; next minute it wasn't. The snuffing out of Radio Australia seems to me the most typically mean action of the current Federal Government, and probably the action that will give the greatest long-term harm to what is laughingly called 'Australia's interests'.

Thanks to your friend Stephen for reminding us why we should never move beyond the range of the tram system. Not that that saves tram travellers from the perils of hot weather. Have you noticed that often in summer the 'air conditioning system' in trams blows gales of hot air? Maybe drivers have been told not to turn on the cooling system.

I hope you send the 'No Bank' ad to all the banks. The banks have made it clear what 'Competition Policy' means: 'Gang up on the defenceless little buggers and rob them blind.'

The speaker who entertained you for an hour about Schubert was almost certainly Michael Easton. He's been giving pre-concert talks for Melbourne Symphony and Musica Viva concerts for the last decade. When you've heard too many of his talks, you realise that he repeats his anecdotes. But if you hear his talks only every now and again you would find him very entertaining and informative.

I agree with Dick: I can't see any sign of 'true wisdom prevailing' today.

I'm not too *au fait* with Scrabble. If I did, I could appreciate the brilliance of Dick Jenssen's ultimate Scrabble board.

I loved your Diesel-Train-in-Tucson story. 'Everybody loves the sound of a train in the distance' (Paul Simon). I wish you would write the complete 'Bill Does America' saga.

I heard a pundit on ABC Radio National revealing that all forms of instant gambling (e.g. pokies) are taking over from all forms of long-term gambling (e.g. horse-racing).

Did you see that lovely documentary on TV about a year ago about the harness-racing family who travel all over the country, competing in race after race although their horse always comes last? I can't recall the name of the film at the moment, but maybe it will be repeated.

Apart from all that economic and labour theory, with which I agree — don't the economic irrationalists realise that people who are unemployed or have insecure jobs don't spend money? People on contracts can't take out mortgages, but various governments makes worried noises about low housing building rates.

I hadn't realised just how salubrious Geelong is until a group of us visited John and Sally, via the odd winery, last January. It has a refreshing feeling of treeness and laidbackness.

Part 2 of Dick's *The Planet of the Eggs* is wonderful, but I don't have enough knowledge to make any comments on it. I agree that eventually we will begin to see every natural object as an example of a Mandelbrot or other

fractal. The Koch curve 'tree' is particularly convincing.

**Weller: BURY MY SOUL AT EXIT 63**

Here you describe symptoms of ill health; then a few mailings later you're nearly dropped (after all these years) from the roster for inactivity. We are worried.

Your ordeal sounds like medical science gone mad. Surely in an Australian hospital the doctors would simply choose the cheapest of those tests, but not the whole batch. I take it that somebody expected you to pay for all the tests you describe!

**Sally Yeoland: LE CHAT PARTI No. 28**

It seems a bit strange in November to be reading nice things about my fiftieth birthday party in February. It's been a short but nasty year. I'm glad that everybody did get to meet everybody else; I get the impression that nobody was left at a loose end. Next event: Elaine's fiftieth? My sixtieth? TC's twentieth? Your fiftieth and John's sixtieth? If we can survive that long, we'll worry about the details later.

The worst of it is that Lee Harding is the best preserved of us all. Where did we all go wrong?

Julian's article: I like the way he failed to mention a galaxy of slightly famous guests: Brian McCurdy, my former boss at Macmillan; Alex Skovron, ace Australian poet; Eva Windisch, editor of *Tirra Lirra*; Gerald Murnane, ace Australian novelist, and Catherine Murnane; Judith Buckrich, ace George Turner biographer; and many more. That night was the last time I (and many others) saw George Turner, although I spoke to him on the phone once after that.

CORFLU IN AUSTRALIA! I'll drink to that! When?

**John Bangsund: PHILOSOPHICAL GAS No. 93**

I've owned about ten different versions of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 during the last thirty years, and some (such as the Janssons version) I've liked better, but the Bruno Walter/Columbia Symphony Orchestra version remains the best *recorded* version: it has the greatest amount of audible, interesting detail. So much for 'improvements' in recording technology since 1958.

I did hear Maureen Forrester sing in concert: at the Melbourne Town Hall, in *Song of the Earth*, in the early 1970s. It was her last tour of Australia. My favourite recorded version of *Song of the Earth* will always be the Bruno Walter/Kathleen Ferrier version of 1952. Nobody ever sang anything better on record than Ferrier on the last movement of this version.

**Terry Frost: MIMIZINE FLASHBACK No. 9**

Now I'll know what to answer when someone raves about those 'over-educated so-and-sos'.

I hate to disappoint your idealistic notions about education, but for me education was merely a meal ticket until I reached First Year at university. Gaining my Leaving (Year 11) and Matriculation (Year 12) Certificates was horrible hard work. My university course was just a bit easier, and somehow I managed to pass every subject. More importantly, the tutors of my favourite university courses taught me to write and think, which was a nice bonus to receiving a degree and Dip.Ed. But the Education Department had paid for the course, and

when I finished they wanted their service-for-payment. Hence my two years in hell, teaching.

I still haven't had a chance to see *La Jetée*. I read somewhere that a major London cinema was showing *La Jetée* and *Twelve Monkeys* on the same bill. I still haven't seen *Twelve Monkeys*, although I might have by the time I've finished writing this apazine [6 December: Now I have, but will save the review for a later fanzine.]

Robert Goulet? Okay, I share your liking for Frank Sinatra, but there are limits. Robert *Goolay* . . .

You can make coffee as strong as you like whenever I visit your place, if of course I'm ever invited to your place. I am a serious caffeine addict.

I like the way you keep doing things I would never do, such as going to the football or the Casino, and reporting them so that I need never visit them.

#### **David Grigg: MEGATHERIUMS FOR BREAKFAST No. 13**

Why *would* a middle-aged man of quiet habits do something as silly as teaching himself to juggle? I'm glad that you've succeeded, but I can't see myself ever doing anything like this. BRG's the name; terminal clumsiness's the game.

I wish I could interest you (or any other ANZAPAn) in a second apa, although I know you don't have time for ANZAPA. Acnestis, the British apa, is filled with people who are enthusiastic books and reading. You'd enjoy their company.

Amazon.com can send you broke, as at least one *\*brg\** reader has found to his cost. I'm glad I don't have access to it.

I like 'hard' science fiction when it's well written, which isn't often. You'll enjoy Stephen Baxter's *Titan*, David.

Don't tell me more about Music Boulevard, or I might be forced to get on the Internet at last.

#### **Jane Routley: A BLOT FROM THE BLUE**

Best quote of the four mailings: 'I am no longer think Le Guin is God, but I'm certain they are flatmates.'

I play in my head a constant music soundtrack to my life. Unfortunately its tunes never sound as good as the original versions, so I need to play my CDs from time to time.

#### **John Newman: COLLOQUY**

I agree with what I think you're saying. Two issues were mixed badly. The two results should have been (a) that the citizens of the Northern Territory retained the right to assisted suicide; and (b) the status of the Northern Territory should have been decided, preferably in the direction of giving it statehood. If Tasmania, why not

the Northern Territory?

The federal politicians twisted the situation not because of their own consciences but because of the backlash they expected from voters; but the polls seemed to show that the voters are way ahead of the pollies.

The eventual result might be that several other states gain voluntary self-termination before the NT does.

The main reason why I should be on the Internet is to download software upgrade patches for my favourite programs. But the mere existence of this service means that new versions of programs on CD-ROM are often very buggy, especially those produced by Corel. But Corel products are cheap. Quark XPress, which is expensive, is about to make its first major upgrade in seven years. I won't be able to afford XPress 4.0, but I suspect it is almost bug-free. Adobe products are a different problem. They are expensive, and work well in their Mac versions, but I have system problems in running their Windows versions. Unless some client asks me to use Pagemaker, I won't reinstall it.

WordPerfect 5.1 is the program I would most have liked to have had the time and energy needed to learn. WP5.1 is a vertical learning curve I refuse to ascend, especially now that I have WP7 on the system. It will save files back to WP5.1 if a client wants them that way.

#### **Michael O'Brien: MODULE No. 125**

I learned from a chance remark in a letter from Skel that the British Post Office still offers Saturday deliveries. So perhaps in 1961 it still offered the Railway Letter service.

I haven't seen *The Oldie* or the new *Punch*. It's many years since I've seen a copy of *Punch*.

Some of our friends sell things at Sunday markets. They reported that they did well during the late 1980s, could sell almost nothing during the recession of the early 1990s, but have found sales to be brisk during the last year or so.

Thanks for the information about Stan Drake. *The Age* did not even consider him worthy of an obituary.

The SBS TV program about Mandelbrot sets explained them with complete clarity; it must have been well-explained stuff for me to understand it. I particularly liked the way the program showed how fractals are the basic shape of nature, which is the drift of what Dick Jensen writes in the April issue of *IRS*.

Has there been any explanation for the virtual dropping of Rod Quinn's 'Trivia Challenge'? It seems much more interesting than the usual post-midnight 'The Challenge'. At least the people who phone into 'The Trivia Challenge' (including Michael from Hobart) know what they're talking about.

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## **MAILING No. 176, JUNE 1997**

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#### **Eric Lindsay: KINGDOM OF THE BLAND**

I thought 'road rage' had been promoted by TV programs and films aimed at men between eighteen and twenty-five, i.e. if anything or anyone gets in your way, smash 'em. It's all part of the dissolution of the idea of

civilisation, the corrosion that is at the centre of Jelfism/'economical rationalism'. How can any decent person survive driving these days?

I agree with everything you say about bicycle ways. I'd ride a bike if I thought I could remain safe from the

people who drive cars.

I'd try Claris Works for Windows if only the clients were interested in anything but Word. Somewhere there must be a better Windows-based word processor than Word or WordPerfect! (But what is 'PFE'? It sounds as if it's worth trying.)

Ditmar (Dick Jenssen) is willing to do covers for anyone, or better still, supply the software for doing your own. A recent *Interstellar Ramjet Scoop* gives full details.

#### **Roger Sims: SON OF BHEER IS BEST**

It's such a commonplace in SF circles that Hubbard admitted he would found a religion in order to make money that it must be difficult to track down the exact source of the story. The story is repeated in Russell Miller's *Bare-faced Messiah*, the Hubbard biography. I was hoping to find confirmation in either of Harry Warner's books, but can't.

Thanks for the Soupy Sales stories. The only time we heard of him in Australia was when he released several (dreadful) singles in the early 1960s.

Julie Andrews would have been better than Twiggy in the film of *The Boy Friend*, but by the early 1970s Ken Russell would not have been able to afford Julie Andrews. It's a great film, especially now that the original colour and the missing footage have been restored.

I hope somebody buys me a cup of coffee in '99 on the strength of being Fan Guest of Honour. Perhaps I shouldn't have accepted the position, since everything in my mundane existence has gone steadily downhill ever since. On the other hand, somewhere in the future I might remember being Fan GoH as the brightest spot of the years 1996-1999.

I just wish I could raise the money to produce some genzines to prove that I am still a fanzine fan.

I've seen a mailing of ALPS, and wish I had the time to participate. Lots of good stuff in there.

#### **Terry Morris: HOLD THAT TIGER!**

Thanks for the wonderful story about Raphi and the plum tree. You have the beginnings of a great short story in that paragraph.

You're the only person who's ever said that looking for a house is fun. House-searching drove Lucy and Julian mad, and Jo and Carey, and Fiona and Paul, and everybody else who's put themselves through this ordeal. Congratulations on finding a place that suits you. Will you welcome visitors when you move in? You must be quite close to Charlie and Nic Taylor, who are also now close to Huntingdale station.

If you're toddling around Oakleigh, take a look at 50 Houghton Road (south side of the line, on the corner of Bishop Street). I lived the first twelve years of my life there. The house seemed big when we were kids, but probably seems small now. The back yard seemed very large, with lots of lawn and garden and a patch of fruit trees right down the back.

I didn't think it was possible to confine cats to a back yard, no matter how large, but Elaine succeeded. Polly found a way of escaping a few months ago, but Elaine foiled her by wrapping extra plastic sheeting along the bottom of the wire mesh. Sometimes Polly stands under the wire-mesh-and-plastic fence, calculating distances

and trajectories with her one good eye. It's unsettling living with a cat with a brain as big as a planet.

TC would find a way of beating even a mechanical pill-dispenser.

Sorry if I implied that *Espedair Street* was part of a formal trilogy. It goes together very well with *The Crow Road*, but they don't share any characters. I'm not sure what the third part of such a trilogy might be. *Whit* is the Banks book nearest in tone to *Espedair Street* and *The Crow Road*.

Elaine often buys Tim Tams when faced with a particularly boring piece of maths editing. Something in Tim Tams disagrees with me, fortunately. I like Lindt chocolate, which is much more expensive than Tim Tams. Fortunately for my wallet, Lindt is hard to get from Jasper (our local coffee and chocolate retailer) at the moment. My waistline always demands expanding: I'll buy a Heaven ice cream at the local service station if there's nothing fattening in the house.

Thanks you very much for 'Some stuff I've read recently'. I've bought both the Ruth Park books you recommend, but haven't had time to read them yet. Ditto for *The Alienist*, which looks interesting.

#### **Bill Wright: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP**

To make sure that we are forced to visit the Grand Prix or Casino or whatever other idiotic bit of flummery that Kennett turns on, he closes the National Gallery and the Museum for three years.

Tell us more about Terry Norris. He was a founder member of the Emerald Hill Theatre, about which we were talking over dinner the other night. The core of the Emerald Hill team in the early 1960s were Wal Cherry (director), and actors Terry Norris, Gerda Nicholson, George Whalley, and Aarne Neeme. The second best night I ever spent in the theatre was the night Whalley starred as Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* (1964). In the same year Terry Norris was Creon in both the Anouilh and Sophocles versions of *Antigone*. Wal Cherry was nabbed by Flinders University to become Australia's first Professor of Drama, but died of a heart attack at the age of 40. The Emerald Hill Theatre, struggling to survive in the years before subsidisation, disappeared when he left. Gerda Nicholson died suddenly a few years ago. It's a long time since I heard any news of George Whalley.

Terry Norris's play sounds great. The reviews at the time made it impossible to tell what it was about, or how entertaining it might be.

You can only have another garden party in our garden if Elaine removes the garden. That yard was bare earth and bitumen when we held the Garden Party in 1992. We hired a marquee for the day. Elaine has turned the bare patch of dirt into cat paradise, without any help from me. Instead, I do the housework, very occasionally.

Haven't I given you your copy of the Garden Party Issue of *TMR* yet? Sorry.

Thanks to Dick for expounding further on 'non-linear dynamics'. I just wish my brain would do the mathematics involved, rather than merely appreciating the beauty of the result (paradoxical, in this case). 'A fully determined system which is totally unpredictable.' That sounds like life itself. This shows why Hari Seldon

could never have been correct, no matter how much information he assembled before making his predictions.

From the few parts of Gleick's *Genius* (the biography of Richard Feynman) I could understand, I did gain the impression that Feynman's search narrowed down to the physics of turbulence, i.e. why water spurts out of a tap in the way it does, rather than some other way. Which makes me wonder what Feynman might have made of Chaos theory, and whether it will answer many of the problems posed by sub-atomic theory.

The paragraphs about Feigenbaum and Lorenz equations are mind-blowing. I wish I had the intellectual capacity to understand all this completely, but what I do understand melts down the odd neuron or two.

I trust that you will submit the complete 'Planet of the Eggs', plus illustrations, to a major fanzine when you've finished it. A more appreciative market might be Moorcock *New Worlds*, which no longer exists.

#### **Marc Ortlieb: ENERGY No. 175**

Michael Bentine's most famous achievement was his play *You'll Come to Love Your Sperm Test* (actually performed in Melbourne in the early 1960s under that title), which was filmed by Richard Lester as *The Bed Sitting Room*.

I thought we needed a larger house until I saw your place, and Ian and Karen's. Your rooms make some of our rooms look almost empty.

No matter how many times I've appeared on panels or given speeches at conventions or Nova Mob meetings, I've never felt comfortable speaking in front of audiences. Fandom has never given me that self-confidence, no matter how hard it's tried, so I would never have been a successful teacher. By comparison, I took to fanzine publishing and writing with utter confidence as soon as I entered fandom, although the early results looked appalling.

I admit that I feel a strong and long-lasting sympathy with the main character of *The Accidental Tourist*. The main difference between us that I have never had two women battling for possession of me.

As I've said before to you, watching films does not make one a 'media fan'. Carried to extremes, it makes you into a 'film buff', an entirely different type of person. I thought I was a film buff until I met Race Mathews and became reacquainted with Dick Jenssen.

Even my favourite movies I don't watch more than once every five years or so.

Taxes on books and magazines are outlawed by international treaty, but I shouldn't think a mere international treaty would stop Costello GSTing everything in sight.

Perhaps we should aim for a Thirtieth Anniversary ANZAPA party, rather than an ANZAPAcON. The trouble is that there are very few fannish houses big enough to host such a party, and the usual suspects, such as Lucy and Julian, must get sick of being hinted at every time someone wants to hold a large party. Our place would be ideal if only Elaine hadn't covered the garden area with a garden.

#### **Michael O'Brien: MODULE No. 126**

My father had a copy of that threepenny Australian stamp showing the over-dressed Botticelli Venus stringing telephone cables between Victoria and Tasmania. But where is his stamp album? It was mine during the few years I was interested in stamp collecting, from the age of nine to about twelve. It remained with my parents, but my mother can't find it. I suspect my father sold the stamps in the album for a ludicrously low amount about twenty years ago but my mother cannot remember such an event. If she could find it, and sell the stamps through a dealer, I suspect she would solve all her current financial problems. (If she sells the house at Rosebud, she cannot hope to raise enough money to cover the cost of a really comfortable apartment in one of the local retirement villages. She might be able to afford a cramped one-bedroom apartment if she were lucky; and that's only if she can sell the house at all. Lots of older people live in Rosebud; there are always lots of houses on the market. And her son and daughters have no money to help out.)

I get the idea that Enid Blyton's work was so utterly British that she never succeeded in America.

We are very rude to all telephone salespersons — especially as such people always call when we are trying to put on dinner.

We have an entire wall of 'undecided' LPs. Many of them we are not willing to get rid of until we have heard them again. Many have never been reissued on CD. If we got rid of them all, it would probably not alter our listening habits one bit, but we would spend the rest of our lives regretting the disappearance of this or that old record. One we did play recently was Sargent's late-1950s version of Holst's *The Planets*. There has never been a better version, but it doesn't seem to have appeared on CD.

Fortunately we don't have to put up with John Laws in Melbourne, although there are always rumours that he might be piped here. Networked Sydney radio broadcasters have never had much luck in Melbourne, but we have to put with the Sydney dictatorship of Radio National.

#### **Phil Wlodarczyk: GHOULIE BEAR GOES GA-GA**

Like Terry Frost, you are able to sink a Grade A pipeline deep into the centre of your subconscious, then watch the gusher. I suspect my subconscious is as odd as yours, but mine doesn't go *ga-ga!* on cue.

#### **Leanne Frahm: THE TESTY TADPOLE**

It's pretty crook to find somebody having worse troubles than one's own. Go away, all troubles! Leave Leanne alone!

The insomnia must seem like the worst of your troubles. I find I can put up with a lot if only I can have a good night's sleep between bouts of worrying. To be deprived of *that* relief . . .

At least the medical tests showed better than you expected. I was beginning to think that I should have another bowel scan. I had one eight years ago. It showed nothing, and the condition that had worried me vanished when I stopped drinking milk. When I had the trots again recently, I could not think of a cause. Finally

I remembered that the local little shop had stopped stocking orange and pineapple fruit juice a few months ago, so I had switched to orange and mango. When orange and pineapple reappeared a few weeks ago, I changed back to that, and my digestive tract returned to normal. Maybe I'm allergic to mango as well as milk, or perhaps it's just the particular brand of orange and mango.

I've praised 'On the Turn' before, but I got twice as much out of it when I read it again in the *Borderline* collection.

Re your thoughts on the Budget: Barry Jones is the only Federal politician honest enough to say that the most unnerving thing about becoming an MP in Canberra is that one almost forgets how to organise daily chores, such as paying for milk at the supermarket. Somebody else always does these things for you. No wonder such creatures seem to live in an unreal world, and why Budget decisions seem unreal to everybody who lives outside Canberra.

**Jean Weber: JEANZINE No. 114**

I can almost see you doing cartwheels as you realised that the eye surgery had worked. But I knew this already, from talking to you at Basicon.

When I visited Toronto, it was very hot, although I realise that it is cold for most of the year. However, I did experience a week of nearly perfect weather there. When they were here for Basicon, Janice and Alan paid Melbourne a considerable compliment by saying it reminds them of Toronto. But they also looked at my photos of downtown Toronto in 1973, and noticed that most of those buildings had been replaced.

Don't tell me your airline delay stories: they just make me more determined than ever to avoid overseas travel for the rest of my life.

**Jeanne Mealy: LAND OF 10,000 LOONS**

This year (so far) I've been able to avoid colds by having at least one fresh lemon-juice drink per day. Squeeze the juice of one lemon into a cup, pile in as much sugar as you need to counteract the tartness of the lemon, and fill the cup with warm water. My ex-boss recommends adding brandy as well, but he can *afford* brandy.

My medical masseur (who's into health food) recommends throwing the whole lemon into a juicer. I tried the resulting drink three days running, but it burbled my tummy. For the same reason I don't drink vast amounts of medicinal Vitamin C, although many people say it's a miracle cure for everything.

3500 at a Minicon! Twice as many people as at Aussiecon II, and *that* convention ran everybody ragged. The view from the atrium at party time sounds wonderful; I've never experienced anything like it. Torcon II, in 1973, had 'only' 2500 attendees, but the concourse was so vast that everybody became exhausted getting from anywhere to anywhere. The venue dwarfed the convention. Strange to say, every time I went walking I bumped into Mike Glicksohn, Susan Wood or Jerry Kaufman, but Philip Jose Farmer and I were each at that convention for four days without finding each other. I finally got to speak to him when he phoned me from his home in Peoria while I was staying in St Louis.

Best line of this mailing: 'A lot of people are like cats: they keep doing foolish things because they're not *usually* caught.'

You've guessed correctly: if I can do something without worrying about the time, I usually enjoy it; if I have to reach for the watch to check the hours I'm spending on a job, it turns immediately into work, and therefore becomes boring.

**Terry Frost:  
HOW THE HELL CAN WE ENJOY NOSTALGIA WHEN  
THEY KEEP REVISING HISTORY ON US?**

One of these days you'll become an ex-bachelor and will have to throw out your copy of *Music for Bachelors*.

Sorry we didn't have too much to say to Sharon when we met at Basicon, but I suppose we didn't know enough about each to know what to say. Best wishes to both of you.

The Aboriginal Reconciliation Conference sounds great; perhaps that's why it didn't get much publicity.

Michael Jordan's game made me think 'ouch'. When I still thought that someday I might write fiction, I adopted a pseudonym based on my middle name and the name of the street I lived on when I was a child! Just shows that my ambitions are just soap opera pretensions.

David Russell raises present-giving to a surrealistic art. Sending me a pop-up *Enterprise* birthday card was taking things a bit too far! D.L.R. has a seriously twisted sense of humour.

**Cheryl Morgan: SCRATCHING POST No. 3**

Your response to my comments about my mother and women's magazines is so unexpected that I don't know how to reply. What I was really talking about was the enormous gap that remains between most people and their parents, no matter how old each gets; the fact that I could never ask my mother whether she is still reading women's magazines, and therefore has become amazingly liberated at the age of 79, or whether she has simply stopped reading women's magazines because they have little relationship to the women's magazines she (and I) read in the 1950s. Or, as I said, she has stopped buying women's magazines because she can no longer afford them, because her just-turned-fifty son is such an idiot with money that he can't afford to send her more than bits and pieces of stray cash so that she can afford the little extras she's stopped buying in recent years.

But I wouldn't want to spell it all out, would I?

Okay, allay my fears; describe exactly how VAT works in Britain, as no Australian newspaper has done so.

**Sally Yeoland: LE CHAT PARTI No. 29**

I met Ivy Bangsund only once, at the party to welcome you and John a month or two after you were married. My Auntie Linda and lots of other people in the Churches of Christ knew her, and I felt I knew her because you told us much about her, Sally. So it didn't seem strange to attend her funeral, especially as it was at the Northcote Church of Christ, which is only up the road a bit.

This fact did not escape the presiding minister, Mr



Bruce Alcorn, who remembered me (of course) from Sunshine Church of Christ in the mid-1960s. A Church of Christ minister never forgets anybody who has ever entered the portal of a C. of C., especially if his father was Frank Gillespie. It was a little awkward explaining that I simply do not go to church any more. It's always strange attending a Church of Christ funeral: here are all these people with whom I still feel a bond, but with whom I no longer share any religious beliefs. Still, I must retain some of the Church of Christ spirit, since I find myself sharing in the feeling that a C. of C. funeral is not a time of mourning but a celebration, a send-off.

The funeral gave me a chance to meet more Bangsunds than I ever thought I would see under one roof; and finally to meet Barry Kirsten, John's sister's husband, who seemed more ebullient and interesting than I've been led to believe.

You were robbed even before we were, and in much more upsetting circumstances. I met you on the bus just after your bag had been snatched. One night somebody made off with half the sewerage gang's timber, which was stored right outside our fence, and we didn't hear a thing! Anybody who isn't paranoid about theft these days is deaf, blind and dumb, or perhaps just dumb.

Amazing the length and passion of a conversation you can get simply by mentioning the latest nasty trick that Word 6 has played. The disastrous trick always happens while you're not looking, and usually proves

impossible to turn off (or only for one document).

#### **Cath Ortlieb: YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED No. 51**

You mention the struggle to get Jenny and Graeme's wedding. It was all my fault: at the last moment I had failed to take with us our handy little map of Woodend. With that, we could have walked from the station to Jenny and Graeme's in half the time. Instead, we were lugging plants and bags along one dusty road after another. The rest of the day was splendid, as was the day a month ago when we made the trip to Woodend for Graeme's funeral. After a truly memorable tribute service at the Woodend Anglican Church, we were driven to the house which we will now have to think of as Jenny's. Jenny said that she had already done all her grieving; for Graeme, death came as a relief from the last few months of frustration and pain. But he did regain his sight during his last week, and therefore could see his large garden, which he maintained as long as he could, in full spring flower.

All I remember of the original *Outer Limits* (very few episodes of which I saw, since we did not have television) is the brilliant black-and-white photography. Dim memory tells me that aesthetic standards of many TV shows were actually higher during the 1960s than they are now, simply because they were filmed in black and white.

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## **MAILING No. 177, AUGUST 1997**

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### **Lyn McConchie: FAN'ATIC No. 58**

Two new cats! Home is truly home again. Now you have to worry about what to do with them each time you go travelling.

'It's peanuts keeps the monkey fed.' Thanks for a useful slogan. The trouble is that feeding's all you can do on peanuts. I need that steak-and-veg income as well.

Publishers seem ignorant of anything but Mac programs. If they transfer a program to PC format, they have little idea of what they did and how. But if *Farming Daze* had been saved in Mac format, you wouldn't be able to access the disk. At the end of the disk saga, you don't tell us what the problem was and how it was solved.

It had never occurred to me that an American might not know what 'lounge suite' means. No wonder George Turner's American publisher had trouble with 'cooee'.

If you're running a farm, surely you're getting vastly more exercise than any of the rest of us?

That's the most unusual earthquake experience I've heard. We don't have quakes in Melbourne, only occasional tremors. When we had a tremor in 1977, I thought Apple Blossom had sneaked into the room and jumped onto the bed. The last tremor we had, a few years ago, I slept through.

### **Alan Stewart: YTTERBIUM No. 46**

Who can doubt the wisdom of astrology? My Australian zodiac mug for Aquarius reads: 'You are intelligent, loyal and trustworthy. So are cocker spaniels. Aquarius

people should never handle sharp instruments or power tools. Most Aquarians cannot tie their shoelaces together.'

I have no idea whether or not your Scrabble achievement is impressive, but congratulations anyway. D. Jansen, he who beats computer Scrabble programs, tells us your achievement *is* impressive.

When I was a kid I hated going on family expeditions in the car. I would always take a book with me, and try to read. Not until years later did I connect reading in the car with the fact that I always felt carsick during long trips. If I had looked at all that lovely passing scenery, I wouldn't have felt sick. Only twenty years later did I learn to enjoy scenery.

Could I borrow *The Eighth Stage of Fandom* sometime? I've never had a chance to read it.

I haven't read any of the books on your list, although I've bought a few of them.

I haven't seen any of the items on your TV and video list except *A Grand Day Out*. Elaine bought the three 'Wallace and Gromit' videos, then gave them to her young nephew at an afternoon family gathering. He had watched *The Wrong Trousers* five times before the end of the afternoon.

### **Marc Ortlieb: ENERGY No. 176**

If the world's economies go into steeper decline, we might be left with enough attendees at '99 to stage a good-sized Corflu. Which would suit me: sitting around

nattering to a few ancient trufans instead of having to face several thousand media fans who've never heard of the Guests of Honour.

**Jean Weber: WEBER WOMAN'S WRENGE No. 51**

Thanks for the your Cape York trip report, plus illustrations. As I've said before, I'm glad it was you taking that trip, not me, but I enjoyed catching up with things I hadn't heard about, such as the Tjapukai dance theatre; emuburgers; PVC didgeridoos; small, cute cane toads; Jowalbinna Homestead; and the Cairns Casino. 'The blackjack lessons that Linda Bushyager had given me?' This doesn't sound like the Linda Bushyager I met in 1973. How's she going these days? (Yes, I know you gave me her address a couple of years ago, but I've lost it.)

**Eric Lindsay: KINGDOM OF THE BLAND**

I agree that the introduction of the GST is very unlikely to lead to reduced income taxes. Our little household will end up paying about two or three times more tax than we do now. In Victoria, the only possible advantage that anyone might have gained from Kennett's 'reforms' is lower taxes. Instead, government and utility charges are vastly higher than they were five years ago.

Where's all this fabled Melbourne rain? We had almost none from September 1996 to September 1997, then one good deluge in early September, another in early November, and a couple of other squalls. This year we had a beautiful, sunny winter, during which Elaine had to keep watering the garden.

There is no fourth 'Wallace & Gromit' film, but there is a half-hour documentary about Nick Park and the making of one of the W&G films.

Not turn on the radio! How do you find out what's going on?

**Bill Wright: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP**

A particularly fine example of Ditmar graphics this time. A pity we can't persuade Dick to go into business as a graphic artist or Web designer. The proceeds would take care of any little problems he might have with his pension fund.

Mars whimsy delicious, Stephen and Bill.

Sometimes you approach absolute mysticism, Bill. 'Disney has a lot to answer for. Ask any Baptist.' Perhaps I'll decipher the meaning of that statement during my dying moments.

'Stefan the novice' is the best fannish article I've read for ages. Bill, can't you persuade your electronic friend to join fandom, or at least ANZAPA?

Thanks for the information about the early days of the 'microcomputer'. In 1984, when Macmillan installed its first editorial PC, the company did not buy the lowest-priced hard disk drive (2 megabytes) because it would have cost \$5000. To operate the computer that Macmillan did buy, I had to load DOS and WordStar from one five-and-a-half-inch disk drive, and write data to the other five-and-a-half-inch drive.

I agree with you about the disastrous state of nation now that the power of unions has been undermined, but I wish the unions had a put up a bit more of a fight when they were first threatened — by Hawke, of all people. There should have been a permanent state strike of all

unionists from the day the Kennett government was elected, and a total Australian strike from the day the Howard government was elected.

'I live one street away from a young lady who was executed by the Police for chopping a seat . . .' This makes no sense, Bill. Please tell us what you mean.

It sounds as if it's even more 'fun' living in St Kilda than in Collingwood.

Thanks to Dick for (sort of) answering my questions about Lyapounov images. What am I saying? I'm completely lost! I thought I understood the basics of Mandelbrots, Feigenbaums, etc., but I'm lost in Lyapounov-land. The trouble is that equations in themselves mean little to me, unless I can see the visual or graphic equivalent.

Dick hasn't touched on the connection between fractals and religion. The principal objection to the idea of a personal, interfering God is that if such a God created the universe, She or He or It must remain outside of that creation, and therefore can never have any further effect on it. Surely someone can formulate the Theory of the Iterative God, who begins the whole process yet can monitor it through continuous iterative feedback?

The above paragraph is my gift to all the theologically minded skiffy writers in ANZAPA.

**Cath Ortlieb: YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED No. 52**

If I happen to be around when you flatten Messrs Gude and Stockdale, I won't be witnessing against you. What amazes me is the constant evidence of these people's deep and active hatred for disabled people, at-risk kids, people with learning difficulties, or anybody else defenceless and without resources. But what else can you expect from people who start life as prefects at boys-only fascist schools?

I submitted myself to a colonoscopy (but without anaesthetic) about seven years ago, for a similar reason: that my colon was doing peculiar things, and my father had died of colon cancer. No pain, but it was a very weird experience. All the discomfort was afterward. Although I sat on the toilet for an hour afterward, not only did I need soft toilet tissue, but also vast quantities of it. And then I had to travel home by tram.

**John Newman: PING!**

I can't say I've ever shopped for a clock radio, but like you, I sometimes find that the quality of an entire product has declined. When shopping for a cassette player a few years ago, my sister found it almost impossible to find a model with many of the controls that had been standard a few years before. My own player was one of the last that had precise volume controls for input; now input is supposed to be controlled automatically, which means not very well.

Thanks for the reply about your own software. It doesn't sound like anything I will need to buy from you.

**Janice Murray: THE SEATTLEITE**

You and Alan have been to Australia, seen us, and conquered. Thanks for your company while you were in Melbourne. I trust the rest of the trip went well.

I correspond with some British fans who are collectors of Australian SF and fantasy, but I don't know of many Americans who are as keen as you are. It must be quite difficult to find our skiffy in bookstores. I trust you will reprint in ANZAPA anything you write about Australian SF.

On the other hand, I still haven't seen a copy of Waldrop's *Going Home Again*.

You're not forty-one! That's about as believable as Lucy Sussex celebrating her fortieth.

It seems a long time since people in our generation of Melbourne fandom were undergoing that exhausting business of 'getting together'. Now the main division is between long-established couples with children and those without.

'Volksmarching', as the name implies, started in Germany, but not recently. It goes back to an earlier era of hippiedom, i.e. the healthy-living movements of the 1920s in Europe, which were co-opted into the Nazi youth movement during the 1930s. (I know this only because it takes up a couple of paragraphs in a Phys. Ed. textbook I edited a few years ago.) I didn't know that Volksmarching had re-emerged as a 1990s healthy-living activity.

#### **John Bangsund: FLAGONDRY No. 94**

'It doesn't exist unless it's written down.' Yes, that's my attitude. Anything that's merely digitised bits in a computer system can disappear in the twinkling of an eye. Even if I had the ability to read Web documents, I would not consider that they were published until I had printed them. Because of the perilous state of my finances, the possibility of becoming electronically connected recedes into the far future. I'm not too worried; nobody's mentioned anything on the Net that seems unmissable.

Since the people in WordPlay are not fans and are not in this apa, it seems a bit odd that you would converse with them and not with us.

#### **Sally Yeoland: LE CHAT PARTI No. 30**

Thanks for the complete text of John's talk at George's funeral. The version that's currently widely circulated is that which Dave Langford cut slightly for *Ansible*. Thanks for your own memories of George. Could I include them in my own growing collection of material about George?

Thanks for your account of our Bad Day Out. We'd like to attend the national convention in Hobart next year, but that will be on Queen's Birthday Weekend, exactly a year after our burglary. You're right about not leaving hand bags lying around. In Collingwood, you don't leave anything around unless it's tied down. Things disappear even if they *are* tied down. A month or so ago, in the middle of the night someone stole a potplant-carrier from our front veranda although the object was tied up to the veranda post.

If you want to read an intense, perhaps too poetic account of the life of William Buckley, dip into Alan Garner's *Strandloper*, his latest novel. If I have time, I'll review it elsewhere in this issue.

#### **Michael O'Brien: READERS DIGEST CONDENSED BOOKS: AN AUSTRALIAN CHECKLIST: PART 1**

Where else but in fanzines would one find an article about *Readers Digest Condensed Books*? Good article, too. I wouldn't have thought of doing such a thing, because RDCB were such a part of my life while I was growing up (i.e. the 1950s) that they seemed the essence of suburban mundania. We were not subscribers, but my Auntie Linda and Uncle Fred were. We borrowed many volumes from them. That would be where I first read Kenneth Roberts' *Boon Island*. Michael, it's interesting that you say that it was heavily cut in the RDCB edition, since I remember enjoying it enormously for its combination of epic adventure and terse story-telling. I bought a copy of the complete version in hardback during the 1970s, but have never read it.

I suspect that the only time I've read Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* was in the RDCB edition.

RDCB's most adventurous choice was de Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, which was hardly cut at all. I didn't like the book then, and still have difficulties with it. It achieved its potential only when Visconti made it into a film.

Of the volumes you list, I cannot remember any before Volume 13, in which I read *Island in the Sun*. There's *Cry the Beloved Country* in Volume 14. In Volume 15 I read only *The Sleeping Partner*, possibly the dullest 'suspense' novel I ever read. In Volume 16 I read (as already mentioned) *Boon Island*, and also *The Scapegoat*. That seemed pretty dull when I was twelve years old, but I greatly enjoyed the movie, starring Alec Guinness, when I saw it about ten years ago. In Volume 17 I remember enjoying *The Philadelphian*, although I couldn't work out why. In Volume 18 *Beyond this Place* had exactly the rousing idealism that appealed to a teenager; I doubt if I could read Cronin now. *The Leopard* must have appeared in the early sixties.

Were you able to find out anything about individual editors or publishers of the series, Michael? Perhaps you're leaving such things to Part 2 of your article.

#### **Eric Lindsay: A DEATH IN THE FAMILY**

Because of the way in which you and Jean publish your material in ANZAPA, I've already read most of the details of your mother's death, but thanks for putting the whole story together in one place. A pity I didn't ever meet your mother; she was a person I felt I almost knew because she was a part of your fanzines for many years. (And, of course, she was your official address for most of your fannish career.) As someone else has said already: how easily she might have suffered the haemorrhage alone at home, instead of at the bus stop. Thanks for the funeral eulogy.

The most consistent thing many of us have noticed about our parents — that is, parents who grew up during the Depression — is their propensity for hoarding. Elaine and her sisters took six months to clear out their parents' house at Glenroy. Elaine's mother believed that anything should be hoarded 'in case it would be useful for something'. A sister of my aunt had packed an entire huge house in Oakleigh with unopened cellophane packets of clothes, towels, etc. collected over many years.

Since I'm a hoarder, I wish my mother would stop throwing out things. During several moves over the last twenty years, she and Dad, and she by herself have thrown out or sold all sorts of memorabilia from my childhood that I would pay a lot for if I could find them in secondhand shops. My mother's personal strength comes from her capacity for living in the present; in fact, she is so impatient about nostalgia that she kept many things only because she knows Robin, Jeanette and I might be interested in them. Fortunately, my mother has given me all my school memorabilia, i.e. all the things I actually wrote and did during childhood. But where's that big book about Australian trains that I doted on during childhood? No sign of it at all.

I hadn't realised the full extent of the damage to your house until I read this account. We hope our house will remain safe and sound because it is sheltered, but as you found out, a freak hail storm can do peculiar things to a roof.

It looks as if 1997 has become the year of crushing blows for everybody.

#### **Gerald Smith & Womble: RAMBLINGS No. 7**

I used to have some idea of fannish generations in Melbourne. There were quite a few people, mainly from the university clubs, who were (and are) exactly ten years younger than me. Hence the vast number of 50th birthdays and 40ths during the last year or so. Then there are the 'kids' from the Melbourne Science Fiction Club, who are often not much younger than the Boring Old Farts but see themselves as in opposition to older fans. Ian Gunn and Karen Pender-Gunn could easily have come into fandom as part of a 'older' group, but didn't. And then? The twenty-year-olds seem to be mainly media fans, and therefore I don't know much about them. Eventually a few who are real fans will emerge from the pack.

Thanks for the wedding report. I met Warren Nicholls only once, and I suspect I've never met Christine Smith. I met either Christine or Linda in Adelaide in 1980. Is there no fannish event unattended by Robin Johnson? Give my regards to Diane and John Fox.

That quote should be: 'How can you have a wedding attended by *Jack Herman* without a speech?'

If ever you get a phone call from Elaine and me, Gerald, it will be because Word 6 has done something sneaky, random and frustrating *yet again*, and we need urgent help. I avoid using Word 6 unless the client insists.

On your book list, I've read only *Axiomatic* and *Deadlock*. We agree on something: the high quality of the work of Greg Egan. I haven't seen any of the TV shows or films you mention.

#### **Leanne Frahm: FROG OF FROG HALL**

I feel guilty, Leanne, for failing to send on to you all the interesting material about George that has come to light since his death. But I was going to start a little George-fanzine that would include all the stuff I meant to send you, but I haven't had time. Did you, for instance, see the various obituaries for George? I think I still have photocopies of all of them.

I've heard no more news about Allan Bray. The current diagnosis for Gunny seems very hopeful.

I'm glad to hear that life is improving, ever so slightly. I'll be forever grateful to T. Frost Esq. for reprinting in his latest fanzine a quotation from Winston Churchill, of all people: 'When you're going through hell, *keep going*.' I can't offer any words more cheering than that.

Thanks for the story of Missie's injury, with all its paradoxes. It takes a real writer to understand all this and make it vivid in 1500 words.

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## **MAILING No. 178, OCTOBER 1997**

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#### **Lyn McConchie: FAN'ATIC No. 59**

Woken in the middle of the night with good news! Not bad. Any phone call after 9 p.m. is usually bad news. Sending a parcel at 3 a.m.? Surely that's enthusiasm beyond the capacity of the Post Office?

Thanks for the news of Linnette, since for obvious reasons she hasn't had time to write for ANZAPA. Encourage her to return soon.

You must be the only person I know who's having a WONDERFUL year. Roll with it. Enjoy every second.

#### **Alan Stewart: YTTERBIUM No. 47**

Congratulations on fixing that leaking tap, a task as beyond my capacities as playing Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto. At the slightest sign of a leaking tap around here, we call Ken Caffyn & Sons ('We plumb Carlton! We plumb anywhere!') and leave it to them.

Zemeckis directed *Contact*? I'll have to see it. I saw *Forrest Gump* last week, so I'm more impressed than ever by his work.

#### **Eric Lindsay: KINGDOM OF THE BLAND**

I never thought I would agree with you, Eric, on anything political or social, but I find myself agreeing with you on most things on your Page 1. Who's changed, you or I?

What are you going to do without your books? It's okay to sell the odd book or two if you know you will never read them, but selling 2500 . . . ! It's like hacking out half one's own brain.

#### **Leanne Frahm: FROG OF FROG HALL No. 2**

Your dogs are proving to be great ANZAPA entertainers. Surely they deserve a novel to themselves.

Read Stephen Baxter's *Titan*. It's the ultimate Watch Out For That Meteorite story.

The nearest I came to your narrow-escape experience happened in 1976. I was about to step from a tram in Nicholson Street when a car hurtled straight past. (It is illegal for a car to pass a stationary tram in Melbourne.) If I'd stepped out a second sooner, I'd have

been no more. Everybody, especially Elaine, would have been saved a lot of bother in their lives.

You echo what the police say to people who've been robbed: get a dog. There are six people (five cats and me) who would take a dim view of such a solution. Also, as Elaine says, we would not leave a dog home alone when going on holiday. Would cats do instead? If Polly can kill birds, surely we can train her to leap at the throats of burglars?

I can't help liking that notion of the consultant learning a program on your time when he was supposed to be teaching it. Sounds like the first year and a half I was using Ventura to produce books for Macmillan.

I would have thought watching the tele-evangelists in the wee hours would give you many notebooks of ideas for startling skiffy stories. Or perhaps for surrealist fantasy. Those evangelists could still enable *you* to rake in the lolly.

Many people would consider the inclusion of a Leanne Frahm story sufficient reason to buy an anthology. Tell *that* to Jack Dann.

I said hurrah! to myself when I read the last page of this issue — but I realise that 'arthritis of the cervical spine' could also produce uncomfortable effects during the next few decades. Find a good chiropractor; they're very good at relieving strange medical conditions.

#### **Michael O'Brien: MODULE No. 127**

I always thought the classic novels sold in book form only after they'd been hijacked by television. Seems I was wrong; or perhaps half right. Perhaps people see *Bleak House*, then read *Bleak House*, then decide this Dickens bloke can provide an entire summer holiday's reading with one book. Next summer they buy *David Copperfield*, the summer afterward, *Great Expectations*, and so on. They must leave the Jeffrey Archers to the winter months.

Perhaps I should rename all my fanzines *Rolland Comstock*. What an inspirational fellow. What an inspirational story. If I had any money, I'd follow his example.

I don't think I'd bother setting up a book stall if the receipts were as low as yours. Various friends of ours sell old stuff at some of the bigger Sunday markets around Melbourne, and do very well at it. The only pay-off for running a book stall, apart from getting rid of stray books, surely must be meeting the occasional interesting person or oddball.

#### **David Grigg: A DIARY OF DOINGS**

If I had any musical ability, I would like to be able to play piano versions of the great symphonies. Since I have no musical ability, I play the CD player. Meanwhile I can play music vicariously by romping along with your musical adventures, David. Very inspiring and enjoyable, especially your account of performing in Mozart's *Requiem*. I'm not surprised that your performance in the Concert Hall couldn't match that in St Paul's Cathedral. The acoustics in the Concert Hall kill most things stone dead, whereas the *Requiem* is written for spaces like St Paul's.

Last year I discovered a recorded version of Mozart's *Requiem* that is much better than any other I've heard: Ferenc Fricsay conducting the RIAS Symphony Orches-

tra of Berlin and the Choir of St Hedwig's Cathedral (Deutsches Grammophon 445-408-2). Please tell me when the CD of your performance is released.

I have at least one CD by Jacqueline Ogeil: *The Virtuoso Harpsichord* (Move MD-3167), which features pieces by Bach, Scarlatti, Handel, Rameau, and Hakim.

Life without Mahler, Bruckner or Shostakovich would be appalling. Stravinsky is one of my few can't-listen-tos. To Leigh Edmonds I would say (via you, since he doesn't seem to want to keep in contact): Never exclude; only include.

When we moved to here in 1978, half the total time of the move was taken in loading Elaine's piano at Johnston Street and unloading here at Keele Street.

You define perfectly the difficulty of learning to play the piano: 'your two hands have to learn to do quite different things at the same time'. My brain simply does not operate at that level. In fact, it's a bloody useless brain for doing most things I want to do. I wish I could trade it in on a new one.

Congratulations for keeping the piano all these years; Elaine sold hers more than ten years ago.

#### **Terry Frost: DIPPING INTO THE LICKERISH SHOWBAG**

It's not only Generation Y who can't hold their booze. I said the same thing in 1975 when the two youngest attendees at the first Writers Workshop got stuck into the beer on the first night. *Horreur!* I'd bought the beer as a 'civilised' accompaniment to all the other supplies we took to Booth Lodge. Ursula Le Guin and I quietly agreed to pack the remaining beer in the back of the fridge. Nobody noticed it had been taken off the menu, since for the rest of the week everybody worked eighteen-hour days.

If anybody would pay me for reviewing films, I'd review films. But (sigh!) they don't, so I can never find time for watching films in cinemas, let alone reviewing them.

#### **Cheryl Morgan: SCRATCHING POST No. 5**

Thanks for the miniature snapshot of California. American films don't often give one much idea of California as a place (offhand, I can think of only four films that do this). I've always wondered why American fans were so gravitationally challenged compared to Australian or British fans. I assumed it was because they drank lots of 'real' Coke instead of Diet Coke.

The one World Series baseball game I ever watched on television was one of my life's most boring experiences. By comparison, a cricket game is sizzling.

#### **Sally Yeoland: LE CHAT PARTI No. 31**

That was a nightmare job, all right. I get a headache from thinking about the headaches I would get from trying to do it — let alone putting up with those sarcastic memos. I'm glad your story has a happy ending.

I've also had the feeling throughout 1997 that 'no one will want me', but the resentment comes from the feeling that 'I don't want to have to care whether they want me or not; I just want to disappear from the editing scene and publish fanzines.' This solution doesn't pay the bills. Meanwhile, I worry all the time about running out of work and/or running out of money.

I bet that cat's friends say: 'Izzy an Oci, Lizzie?'

**Richard Hryckiewicz: ANYTHING BUT AVERAGE No. 18**

Your account of my computer's brain transplant can only be described as discreet and cheerful, considering all the technical hassles and the time you spent on the job. Thanks again for your patience and hard work. My conclusion from this epic is: *Never upgrade. Buy a new computer.* Which is exactly what the computer industry wants us to do.

The oddest part of the upgrade escapade was carrying the computer itself, in its tower case, up Keele Street and along a part of Smith Street, in the middle of peak hour. I always swore that if I saw somebody doing that, I would call the police. Luckily nobody did so.

**Bill Wright: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP**

A particularly good colour cover this time. Compliments to the chef.

I wish I knew what your October Reflection is all about, Bill, but it is very diverting. The amazing thing is that the city department stores do *not* go away. If they do, the city centres will become empty of customers, as has already happened in many American city centres.

Stephen Donaghy is in good form this issue. He has developed the exact fannish style without (I assume) having read any of the classic fanzines. The piece on Rail Rage was particularly good. Persuade him to join ANZAPA. My only worry is that I can't write anywhere near as well as he does.

Scrabble players deserve everything they get, especially apoplexy. I have never understood why anyone undergoes this form of voluntary torture.

Does Dick Jenssen claim 'cheoplexologist' as his occupation on his census form?

You have had a busy life, haven't you, Bill? It's a pity you never tell us about it, except in occasional comments. When will we see the first part of your autobiography in *IRS*?

I don't understand what you mean when you talk about detonating 'a series of social time bombs at indeterminable future times' but it sounds like the basis of a great unwritten skiffy novel.

Whenever thinking about most of Australia's current governments, axe murder *always* comes to mind.

Like you, I'm not quite sure maturity is, since I've never achieved it. I'm not sure I want to. In the early 1970s Elizabeth Darling (Foyster, as she was then) used to say of fans, 'Why don't you all grow up!' in such a way that you knew that 'growing up' meant becoming very boring and unfannish.

Phar Lap as our prime minister? Certainly he isn't Lightning Fast.

The sesquipedalianisms give great pleasure. Where does DJ get them from? 'Glin' is my favourite word in this list, but it is not in the *OED*.

'Planet of the Eggs (Part 5)' is as splendid as ever. I always knew Henry Kuttner was great art, but not as great as 'henrykuttner'.

'Fully determined, and totally unpredictable.' Apply that to human behaviour and you get rid of the nature/nurture dichotomy at one hit. The most useful application of chaos theory might yet be in psychology.

**Jane Routley: A BLOT FROM THE BLUE**

Those catastrophes, plus moving back to Denmark, must make life just a bit tedious. If only the efficient (your words) Terry could get an equivalent job in beautiful downtown Brunswick.

My sister found Danes and Swedes a bit hard to take. She certainly thought the beedoodiful Swedes were a bit stand-offish: imagine having to put up with scruffy Australians. It sounds as if Danes are friendlier (more tolerant) than Swedes.

Glad to hear that the writing career continues. I suppose it gives you something to do during the Danish winter.

Thanks for the booktalk, although I've read only one of the books you mention. 'The New Atlantis' is one of my favourite Le Guin stories, but it's a very long time since I read it.

The article you reprint (which I presume is by Spider Robinson) has been echoed by lots of authors recently, especially Norman Spinrad. The industrialisation of literature goes ever onward, with even highly successful 'mid-list' writers being scrubbed from publishers' lists. Not much hope, therefore, of reselling George Turner's SF books, especially as they have just been deleted by Avon. The odd thing is that a lot of interesting SF and fantasy books are still published but, as the writer points out, you have to grab your copies fast.

**Marc Ortlieb: ENERGY No. 177**

The only thing I regret about the death of Princess Di is that news of the event obliterated the news of the death, on the same weekend, of Sir Georg Solti, the last of the Great Conductors. Fortunately, ABC TV and ABC-FM made up for the initial blip with a two-hour tribute on TV and some enjoyable tributes of Solti performances on radio.

I agree that *Sirius* is by far the best of Stapledon's novels. But some of the Big Ideas in *Last and First Men* and *Star Maker* stay in the mind long after you've forgotten how boring is much of his prose. The Big Ideas certainly stick in Stephen Baxter's mind, since he seems set to become the Stapledon of the 1990s.

'Am I here all alone?/Everybody must get stoned!' ('Rainy Day Women Nos. 12 and 35', a hit in 1966).

Justin Ackroyd must be the only bookseller who can spend as much effort preventing you from buying a book as he does in selling you one.

Congratulations on the 3LO anti-football limerick. I wasn't awake at 6.15 a.m. to hear it.

**John Newman: PING!**

Sympathy to your parents. The situation you describe could have easily happened to my parents, but colon cancer finished off my father before worsening short-term memory loss made it difficult for him to live in the family home. Now, nearly ten years later, my mother does not know what to do about the house. If only I had the money to set her up somewhere! But if I had that sort of money, I could retire and stop beating my head against multiple brick walls.

Thanks for the meditation on suburban change. For me, it's hard to recognise anything in Oakleigh north of the railway line. I read in *The Age* a week ago that the

housing market in Oakleigh is booming! If that's so, a lot of those old, decrepit houses must have been renovated recently. Oakleigh High School was closed down even before the Kennett Government started lopping schools, so I wouldn't recognise that North Oakleigh/North Clayton area.

Christmas Street, Fairfield? Justin and Jenny Ackroyd live at one end of the street, and two other friends of ours at the other end. My sister lives only a few blocks away from Christmas Street. Fairfield might well have become the fannish centre of the universe, if only house prices hadn't risen first.

**Cath Ortlieb: YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED No. 53**

We see Lee and Irene a few times a year. It seems as if Lee has always been writing, off and on, during all these years. One novel was rejected; *Heatsease* is the novel after that. It's not SF or fantasy, so I suppose it won't be much noticed by local fans. Unfortunately, it was also not noticed by the judges of the Australian Children's Book Award, in which where Lee had so much success in the early 1980s. Perhaps the judges won't take notice until he produces another Young Adults SF novel.

**Michael Green: REALITY MODULE**

Thanks very much for the self-introduction. I can't remember meeting you, but you were at ARCon, so perhaps we have met. Now all we need is another ANZAPACon . . .

You and Bill Wright can natter about Roger Zelazny while the rest of us look on bemused.

Interesting to read of how you discovered children's and young adults' fiction when you were an adult. A similar thing happened to many of the Melbourne fans during the early to mid 1970s. Anne Sydenham, who worked at Space Age Books during those years, would proclaim in her most schoolma'amish voice that *she*

didn't read boring old science fiction; she read *good* fiction, such as *children's books*. And so she did, often ignoring Space Age customers who were trying in vain to handing her money. Since Anne was attractive and imperious, she persuaded lots of us to try Alan Garner, Russell Hoban, Leon Garfield, William Mayne, Susan Cooper, and many other children's and young adults' authors who were popular then. I still think Alan Garner, William Mayne and Russell Hoban are the three best writers of English prose, but nobody pays much attention to them now.

I know how good Diana Wynne Jones is, and have collected about thirty of her novels, but I find to my shame that I've still read only one of them. Elaine read one of her very early books and enjoyed it a lot.

Of the musicians you mention, I like The Church (in small amounts), Marianne Faithfull, Steeleye Span and Joy Division, but not New Order.

You would hardly be the only fan in Australia to like filk music. I've heard Marc Ortlieb sing filk songs, and he's written some of them. He's published filk-song collections. Filk-singing used to be an important part of the late-night activity at Australian conventions; I don't know whether or not that's still the case.

**ANZAPOOLL 1997**

Congratulations, Leanne! It was a bad year for you in other ways, but bad times seem to bring out the best in a good writer.

I feel ashamed at not voting, but when the time came I just didn't have the time or energy. The results would have been just the same if I had voted, except that I would have received the 10-point bonus, and perhaps beaten Sally and John (but perhaps not, since I certainly would've given them some points). Great to see Bill Wright back there at No. 2, especially after being away for many years.

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In Acnestis, my other apa, Steve Jeffery asked whether I could reprint George Turner's first article for *Australian Science Fiction Review*. Since I can now give myself permission to do this, here it is:

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## The double standard:

The short look, and the long hard look

by George Turner

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*Editor's Introduction:*

In June 1967, when this article appeared, *Australian Science Fiction Review*, edited by John Bangsund in association with John Foyster and Lee Harding, had already

put Australia on the world SF map for the first time in a decade. The publication of George Turner's first article, 'The Double Standard', helped to give Australian fandom a literary reputation that lasted into the

mid-1970s. It's not clear whether or not George had read James Blish's *The Issue at Hand* before writing this article, but comparisons between Blish and Turner were made from then on.

In hindsight, I can see that in much of his later criticism George Turner backed away from some of the assertions in this article. After he published his own first SF novel, he became a lot more forgiving of other authors' failings. However, he never abandoned his love of excellence and his contempt for science fiction's sacred cows (ideas, not people). Perhaps telepathy, and hence *The Demolished Man*, was merely unlucky to be the first of George's kickable cows. [BRG, 5 December 1997]

In the course of private exchanges John Bangsund and I have touched on the vexed question of the difference between reviewing and criticism. With his concurrence, I quote John:

'When you mention the "separate and distinct functions of reviewing and criticism" I wonder if you mean what I call the double standard? There are books and there is literature . . . one must often find books which are vastly entertaining but which fall short of being literature. . . . The double standard comes in when one says, This is great sf — but let's not delude ourselves that it's literature.'

Whether or not he really holds this view (he may merely have thrown it out as a hook to force me to a definitive statement) I as a professional writer cannot subscribe to it. Bluntly, *all* books are literature — good literature or bad literature. The only standard by which a book can be measured in a qualitative fashion is to set it alongside the best we know and apply certain tests. The nature of these tests can be discussed later.

There is no double standard, but there are differing functions among the assessors of books, the two best known of the assessors being the reviewers and the critics. Broadly, the reviewer does little more than give the reader of his periodical a guide to what is on the market. He reads a great number of books, reads them in a hurry because he has a deadline to meet, and attempts little more than a superficial relation of the work's most obvious qualities: his own immediate reaction is for or against, and this colours his assessment. He has neither the time nor the distance in perspective to do more; he may condemn the worthwhile because its less evident qualities elude his swift reading, which is bound to fasten on surfaces rather than on total content, and he may praise the worthless because his immediate pleasure causes him to make undue allowance for the weaknesses which he perceives hurriedly but cannot stop to analyse. In the long run he says little more than that he liked the book or he didn't like it. If your taste happens to march with his, then he is a good reviewer for you.

But he is of no use at all to the writer or to the serious reader who considers literature a major amenity of civilization, one which must be treated with exactness and great care.

The job of the critic is much more taxing. He must be able to see the book in perspective — in relation to the writer's other work, in relation to its particular

genre, in relation to literature as a whole, and in relation to the civilization of which it is a part. He must assess it not only as a good or a bad book, but as a useful or a useless book, one which adds to or detracts from the author's total stature and as one which will or will not have some effect on the culture whose existence made it possible. Other matters also, but mainly those.

Writers read with care, note his remarks and his references, assess his conclusions and give much consideration to his summation of their weaknesses. They don't allow critics to dictate to them — far from it — but they do appreciate the thinking of minds which have paid them the compliment of considering them worthy of the immense labour which goes into good criticism. I have on two occasions written letters of thanks to critics who pointed out faults which were hidden from me and the discussion of which has made a difference to my writing and my approach to literary problems of style, construction and presentation.

To the student and serious reader the critic can be an opener of doors, a pointer out of missed values, a guide to pleasures and excitements denied to the reader whose goal is entertainment only. Emotional pleasure is not enough; it is transient and soon exhausted. A good book must give emotional pleasure or it is not a good book, but the final criterion is intellectual pleasure, which makes a book not a thing of the moment but a part of one's experience of life, as easy to browse over and reread as it is to listen to a favourite song repeated or to turn again and again to a fine painting.

To sum up, the reviewer is concerned with the impression of the moment for the reader of the moment; the critic is concerned with causes, effects and ultimate values.

As a demonstration of the great gulf in these functions I propose to take a popular and much lauded sf novel and treat it on several levels of criticism. *The Demolished Man*, Hugo winner, good seller and earner of rave reviews, will do nicely, particularly as it has lately been republished by Penguin, and first appeared sufficiently long ago to allow its position in the body of sf to be fairly assessed.

But first my qualifications for discussing sf at all:

Sf reader — 39 years.

Student of literature — 30 years.

Novelist (with a reasonable local standing) — 10 years.

Practising critic — since I commenced this article 30 minutes ago.

And so to business.

First, the magazine editor who receives the ms of *The Demolished Man*: He demands a moderate literary standard, but is more interested in other qualities. His impression runs somewhat thus:

. . . hard, incisive style, very compulsive . . . plenty of action . . . 80,000 words, three-or four-parter, will divide well into either . . . telepathy a staling subject, but the writing will carry it . . . violent without being unnecessarily sadistic, will go down well . . . scientific basis pretty doubtful, but most of the weak points fairly well covered . . . terrific tension and speed,



should be a winner.

Then the reader, jolted out of his pants and writing feverishly to his favourite magazine:

Dear Ed,

Demolished Man is a winner. But a WINNER!!! Boy, am I caught up in this one. It's absolutely real, but REAL. And can that Bester write! Get more like this, one every month, and I'm hooked for life. After this no one can doubt that telepathy is something real, and the scoffers can go (unmentionable and impossible) themselves. Never before have I had such a kick out of . . .

And so on until he runs out of nonsense and relaxes gasping to wait pop-eyed and panting for the next issue. This kind of appreciation hasn't even the justification of the editor's hardboiled but practical summation, but appears so brutally often as to give one severe doubts about the mental level of the average sf reader.

The book is submitted for hardcover publication and a publisher's reader submits his report:

. . . the background is such that it has to be labelled science fiction, but in fact the scientific content is negligible, and the story is really a hardboiled, fast-moving thriller. On this level it is entertaining stuff and should go down well with the science fiction public. Others may find it a bit too far out for easy digestion. Characterization is almost entirely absent, the persons being cardboard types set up in a few words and developing not at all; since the persons of the story are extreme types, this is probably as well, for they wouldn't stand much psychological penetration. The great strength of the book is the compulsively readable style. We should publish this on the sf list . . .

Sam Moskowitz gets at it for one of his fabulous parodies of appreciation:

This magnificent novel sets a new literary standard in sf. Bester fulfils the promise shown in his trail-blazing short stories and crowns his career with a coruscating cascade of sheer genius. This novel marks a new development in sf . . .

I don't know whether ineffable Sam ever did a review of *The Demolished Man*, but perhaps my version wouldn't be far wrong.

A daily newspaper takes a cautious fling:

A solid, craftsmanlike work, full of action and ingenuity. The author is a very talented man with a flair for making the noisy nonsense of science fiction seem most real. The brutal, pared-down style is admirably suited to the brutal, pared-down story, but is relieved by flashes of compassionate understanding . . .

Robert Gerrand notices it for *ASFR*: (I quote the most relevant portions of his review.)

One of the strong points . . . is the author's ability to write so convincingly about psi powers. He not only makes you believe they exist — he makes you believe they *should* exist. And this he does by the brilliant way he sketches in his societies . . . These societies are not mere backdrops . . . but vivid, necessary parts of the story . . . [they] give meaning to the characters' actions: we see how the environment influences the whole.

With all good will I contend that Mr Gerrand has created virtues that are simply not present and missed those that are. Let's see what the critic does to it after a long, hard look.

The critic has done his homework. He read the book when it first appeared and found it a most entertaining tale, hard to put down; but he was troubled by sub-conscious awareness that all was not as well as appeared on the surface. So, after a reasonable lapse of time he read it again, and then knew definitely that the author had subjected him to a brilliantly loaded snow job. Ten years later he read it again, in order to write this article, and found it hard going — the tricks and glosses and deliberate misrepresentations stood out like blackbirds on the snow.

Now, *The Demolished Man*, Hugo and all, occupies a high place in the sf canon. Question: Does it deserve this high place? It purports to be a sf thriller. Questions: Is it good sf and is it a good thriller? Reviewers and editors have made much of the lifelike delineation of existence in a telepathic society. Question: What in fact does Bester tell us about such an existence?

Over-riding question: Does this book in fact represent a high point in the development of sf, or is it a high grade example of how to do it and not get caught?

Having asking himself these questions and a dozen others, the critic set himself to the typewriter, and this is what he wrote:

*The Demolished Man* is an ingenious thriller constructed and plotted by an ingenious man. It is, perhaps, altogether too ingenious for its own good as a novel, for the reader is hurled from event to event and idea to idea without pause for breath or thought, much less pause to consider an idea and evaluate its validity.

Any work of fiction must be consistent within the bounds of its own convention; a work of sf must be consistent within the bounds of the speculative ideas embodied in it, and those speculative ideas must hold up under scrutiny. If they do not, the work is no longer sf but fantasy or daydream, and loses validity accordingly. Since *The Demolished Man* rests on the conception of telepathy, the whole book stands or falls by the handling of that subject.

Bester provides spectacular passages showing telepathy in action, but is never foolish enough to suggest how telepathic powers are brought into existence or to discuss the techniques of using and directing these powers. He makes statements, but never suggests a *raison d'être*. He hits the reader over the head, says 'this is how it is and don't ask silly questions', and so leaves himself a bare field in which he can do as he pleases because questioning what he does is tacitly barred.

But even with this limitless arena in which to play he trips over his own ankles more than once. For instance, there is a short scene in which the detective is pleased to discover the protective thickness of his hotel-room walls, because it will shut out the incessant telepathic gabble of the world's thinking. (So Bester's telepathic function is susceptible to the usual laws governing the behaviour of radiation, is it? The non-telepathic majority would very quickly adopt effective baffles to prevent 'peeping'.)

It appears, then, that the telepaths must exist in a world of appalling, never-ceasing noise, comparable to the position of yourself or myself doomed to spend his life in a never-silent crowd, working desperately hard to separate one intelligible message from the uproar.

This short scene makes it apparent that Bester was well aware of this difficulty, and removed it by simply ignoring it. And this piece of cheating encourages us to look for more of the same. Such snow-blinding would be unforgivable in a mainstream thriller, and must be considered equally unforgivable in sf. A writer may and must break a lot of rules, but he cannot throw them overboard and pretend they never existed or don't apply to him.

Then there is the telepathic game of building sentence figures. This commits Bester to the admission that his telepaths think in words, not in total impressions. Therefore this game can be played vocally also. I suggest you get a few friends and try it some time; you will soon discover the simple reasons why it can't be done on the complex scale presented in the party scene. The intention of the scene, apart from its role in the plot, seems to have been to impress the reader with the realistic possibility of telepathy. In fact Bester simply presents another fait accompli which tells nothing except that the author says 'you gotta believe me, see!' The poor reader has been hit over the head again, and the action moves on while he is still groggy. Never give the poor so-and-so time to think, or all is lost!

Swiftly we come to the matter of the 'tension, apprehension' rhyme. A neat trick, but still a trick. Ben Reich is presented as filling his thinking with this thing whenever telepaths are present who may peep him. Either the telepaths are pretty weak or Reich is concentrating in a fashion which would effectively prevent him carrying on a conversation (which he does) or even of sparing enough attention to hear a sentence spoken to him. The slightest distraction entering his mind would break the interference rhyme and he would be wide open. In any case, the human ability to concentrate without interruption is measurable in seconds, so Bester has played another trick with his snowballs. This time he has falsified the known capacities of humanity. He was aware of this, too. If you read the relevant passages you will discover some careful wordplay designed to divert your notice from the technical difficulty of bringing off the interference feat.

I have now accused the writer of wilful dishonesty with his theme. These are not slips in Bester's thinking; he was aware of the problems, as the text shows, but ignored them because to admit their existence would have made his premise impossible and his plot unworkable.

(Short digression on telepathy in sf. If you are going to introduce telepathy as an operating proposition in a story, you must first have some basic idea of what telepathy is, and how it works. You are free to invent, because the properties and laws are unknown, but if you are to do anything more than wish-fantasy you must devise some framework wherein the talent operates. You should set up some rules, *and abide by them*. If you want to speak of projecting a thought, you must first give some thought to the possibility of a mental mechanism whereby such projection might be accomplished and *controlled* by the projecting person. One reads airy mention of mind blocks, controlled invasion of resisting minds, telepathic shouts and other acrobatic mental performances. It's about time someone gave thought to the question of how such things could be accomplished. I take leave to doubt that the first full scale telepath will simply do these things without understanding how he does them, and is more likely to be forced into some lengthy psycho-anatomical investigation before he can begin to do anything at all. Even baby seals have to be *taught* to swim. There's a good story waiting to be written about the purely mechanical problems of the first telepath. No copyright — the idea is free to anyone who cares to use it. All present uses of telepathy in sf are pure fantasy. Science is dependent on rules, and even sf must obey a few if it is to have validity or even intelligibility.)

*The Demolished Man* has been praised for its strong characterization. There is little hint of characterization anywhere in the book. There is a forceful presentation of each *type* as he or she appears, but nothing more. The characters never develop beyond our first meeting with them and are as predictable as the sunrise. They are very striking characters, admirably suited to the uses to which Bester puts them, but no more than that. Brilliant puppets, but puppets. One wonders occasionally how an ass like Ben Reich managed to hold his financial empire together; he is shown as too narrow, emotional and unstable to manage anything much more complicated than a newsstall. He wouldn't have needed driving to destruction; he would have fallen to it.

Finally, we must consider the hou-ha about vivid presentation of the society in which the tale takes place.

What society? Aside from Ben Reich and the telepaths we are presented with a brothel which is only a gimmicked-up version of a classy whorehouse anywhere at any time and a peculiarly stupid party wherein the hostess is caricatured to represent the social/wealthy/silly set. It is the same caricature to be met with in any satirical novel set in this day and age. Oh, sure, we have space ships and telepaths and a playboy satellite, but if these things have had any deep effect on social attitudes and behaviour we are not told of it. The society of his novel is indeed a backdrop, and a mighty sketchy one at that. The society of *The Demolished Man* is the familiar twentieth century milieu with some technological trimmings and some telepaths whose existence is suspect because of the anomalies in the writer's account of their talent.

Be it noted also that when it came to the demolition of Reich's mind, Bester was wonderfully vague about that, too. Just what *did* they do to him? The obvious treatment would be to remove his memories (and hence

the formative influences of his environment) and start him afresh with a push in the right direction. But just what are these monsters demolishing? In a haze of words we never find out. But it makes a nicely sadistic close to the action and gives the detective an opportunity to think up some completely pointless blather about the future of re-educated humanity.

One can only conclude, then, that *The Demolished Man*, when all its virtues of style and speed and ingenuity are admitted, is a faked-up job, and therefore a bad book. That doesn't make it bad entertainment — so long as the reader realizes it is just that and no more. The snow job, and hence the dishonesty, arises from the attempt to cover the whole shenanigans with a gloss of deep importance. Plenty of readers and reviewers were fooled, which makes it a successful exercise, but the same could be said of making money with the thimble and pea trick.

What irritates more than anything is the fact that Bester can write thoughtful and serious sf. His short stories are among the best the genre has produced. But in the novel form his weaknesses stand pitilessly revealed, and this is especially noticeable in his non-sf crime novel (can't remember the title) where all the sf trappings are absent and the poor characters stand revealed in all their uninteresting sameness. Even the outre touch of murder motivated by homosexual jealousy cannot enliven it, nor the careful psychological exploration of character put breath into the cast. As for *The Stars My Destination*, my remarks on *The Demolished Man* apply almost in toto. In that book Bester makes the mistake of providing too much information about teleportation without plugging the holes in the techniques involved, and goes through the same routine of drowning the critical faculty in louder and faster avalanches of action.

It remains only to consider the position of *The Demolished Man* in the sf canon, and the conclusions are not sweet.

The book won a Hugo. One can only surmise that either the year was a poor one for novels, or that the judges were hypnotised by the snowstorm of style and movement. The book is a triumph of style over content and inconsistency. It was, unfortunately, the kind of book which encourages serious critics to regard sf as irresponsible and unimportant, and its readers as sadly lacking in discernment.

More deadly is the thought that readers liked it so well, and that editors exist to give the readers what they demand. If this is a sample of what they demand, then sf will be, for the majority, never more than a titillation of the emotions. While readers demand, writers must supply, all but the few who say 'to hell with the readers' and strike out in the direction of quality at all costs.

With those few lies the future of sf. On present signs it does not lie with the readers. They applaud the

occasional literate venture (*A Canticle for Leibowitz*, *A Case of Conscience*) but give scant attention to works which pose problems of approach and understanding, though it is these that show the way. *Odd John* remains the most perceptive of all superman novels and Budrys's *Rogue Moon* the most impressive attempt to grapple with the allying of sf with human problems; but what chance has such work in a magazine-ridden genre where Retief and his idiocies gain the plaudits of the crowd, monstrosities like *Skylark Duquesne* can appear in a magazine which has just won a Hugo as the best of the year, and a piece of painfully second hand Talbot Mundy called *Dune* can lay reviewers and readers in fits of adulation?

Under these conditions sf does not need more recognition from the 'establishment' but less. It should get what it deserves — more and harder kicks in the pants — until it throws up an intelligent and literate body of work which does not fall apart at the touch of the critical probe.

Budrys and Blish and Aldiss have it in them to gain worthwhile recognition, but too much other promise has caved in to the demands of the magazine trade. Heinlein has become a mumbling rebel with nothing much to rebel against and an armoury of outworn philosophy and jingoism as his weapons; Anderson has given up the struggle to be a writer and is satisfied to turn out saleable yarns wherein good ideas are wasted on *Boy's Own Paper* stories; Judith Merrill is writing high flown unintelligibilities in the attempt to prove that what she selects as readable is art, whereas she would prove a great deal more by writing another *Project Nursemaid*; Pohl's highly individual method has degenerated into a tiresome habit.

And the reviewers, God bless 'em, are taking Ballard terribly seriously. So is Ballard. It's about time that gent ceased giving displays of style and started in to write some stories, as distinct from word pictures with doubtful application to anything except the inside of his own mind. 'The Sound Sweep' showed that he can do it, so why the devil doesn't he? Probably because the readers are content to be bemused by him as he is.

Better sf will be written when the readers demand it, but the readers won't demand it while they are contented with a purely emotional evaluation of their reading material. The majority have yet to learn that the real pleasure of literature begins on the day you stop using it as a drug.

I have nothing against escapism — it is a necessary activity — but the manner of the escape is important. If the magazines are to be taken as the measure of the average sf reader's escape, then the flight is only into daydream and fantasy. He has not discovered that the thinking reader escapes into wider realms than science fiction ever dreamed of.

— George Turner, June 1967

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# BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

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These are books read since the end of July 1997.

**KEEPERS OF THE FLAME:  
LITERARY ESTATES AND THE RISE OF BIOGRAPHY  
by Ian Hamilton  
(Pimlico 0-7126-5970-6; 1992; 344 pp.)**

Britain's Maureen Speller, who put me onto *Keepers of the Flame* by discussing it about a year ago in *Acnestis*, will realise the irony of my reading it just a week after I discovered I've been made George Turner's literary executor. Executors are the baddies of the literary world. They burn old diaries, destroy caches of letters or hide them in attics, and never, never let a truthful word be said about their 'charge'. Hamilton goes on the trail of horrors and perfidies perpetrated by executors, and has delicious fun with what he finds. Boswell's diaries lie deep within the bowels of a country house for nearly two hundred years; as much truth about Hardy as possible is obliterated by his widow. The war between executors and biographers is fought down the centuries. Hamilton traces brilliantly the connection between executorship, biography and hagiography. How does all this affect me? Already I find that Judy Buckrich, George Turner's biographer, has said some things about George that would have annoyed the hell out of him, but I'm not going to object too much, since Judy has done a fine job. George destroyed his own letters and cut his own ties before he died. Secrets, secrets.

**FAR FUTURE CALLING:  
UNCOLLECTED SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASIES  
by Olaf Stapledon, ed. Sam Moskowitz  
(Oswald Train; 1979; 275 pp.)**

An odd book, which Dick Jenssen lent to me. The 'uncollected stories' aren't up to much, but the essay 'Interplanetary Man' casts some light on the thinking behind *Last and First Men*. The book was worth reading for Sam Moskowitz's two essays, 'Olaf Stapledon: The Man Behind the Works' (his second attempt at a short biography of OS), and 'Peace and Olaf Stapledon', a powerful article, originally published in a 1950s fanzine, about Stapledon's visit to the New York Peace Conference a year before he died.

**FERMAT'S LAST THEOREM  
by Simon Singh**

**(4th Estate 1-85702-521-0; 1997; 362 pp.)**

I know this is Mathematics for the Millions — mathematical dummies like me — but Singh explains many things clearly that are incomprehensible in the maths textbooks I 'edit' for a living. Singh has a great feeling for the numinous quality of mathematics; if only I could follow his arguments all the way. He is able to show what Andrew Wiles achieved without feeling the need to

transcribe his 100-page proof.

**NARROW HOUSES, VOL. I  
edited by Peter Crowther  
(Little Brown 0-316-90395-7; 1992; 460 pp.)**

So I'm only a few years behind in reading Crowther's anthologies. I'll catch up soon. Here are lots of very conventional horror stories, with a leavening of fine pieces. Two great, very strange stories are Nicholas Royle's 'Glory' and Pat Cadigan's 'Naming Names', but I also enjoyed 'The Tale of Peg and the Brain' (Ian Watson), 'Bleeding Dry' (Stephen Laws), 'From a Narrow House' (William F. Nolan) and 'The Landlady's Dog' (James Lovegrove). Jonathan Carroll's 'Learning to Leave' has appeared as part of one of his novels.

**THE MAGICIAN OUT OF MANCHURIA  
by Charles G. Finney  
(Donald Grant 0-937986-92-5; 1989 (1968); 127 pp.)**

A strange, Vancean comedy-fantasy that at first seems to have nothing to do with a real China or real people. Yet its characters are powerful and its style vigorous, and the story proves to be set in a refracted version of modern China. Finney is arch, funny and nicely off balance. His other work is not easy to find, but I must track it down.

**BARE-FACED MESSIAH:  
THE TRUE STORY OF L. RON HUBBARD  
by Russell Miller**

**(Michael Joseph 0-7181-2764-1; 1987; 390 pp.)**

I have a vision of massed Scientologists combing the bookshops of the world, snatching copies of *Bare-faced Messiah* from the shelves and ripping them apart on the spot. Perhaps that's exactly what they did. Fortunately I found *Bare-faced Messiah* on a remainder table not long after it was published. It would be the funniest book of the year if it were not so sad. Why do people want to be disciples? Especially of somebody as worthless as Hubbard? I can understand Hubbard: he got away with murder because people asked him to pull the trigger. But who invents the gun, the shyster or the shystered? Incomprehensible puzzles, to which not even Miller can offer answers. His writing is crisp, his research exhaustive; I'm glad I found the book before all the copies disappeared.

**THE SECRET OF THIS BOOK: 20-ODD STORIES  
by Brian W. Aldiss  
(HarperCollins 0-00-225364-X; 1995; 334 pp.)**

I've put off reading this latest Aldiss collection for far too long. Reading it immediately made me read his two previous collections (see below). Aldiss the writer gets younger all the time. At the age of seventy he gives the

impression of discovering the sheer joy of writing for the first time. A Dionysian gusher of ideas and visions boils up from the pages: from 'A Dream of Antigone' and 'The God Who Slept With Women', new glittering fables based on ancient fables, to 'The Mistakes, Miseries and Misfortunes of Mankind' and 'Horse Meat', dark meditations on the bleeding sores at the heart of European culture. Aldiss has not quite abandoned an earlier, less glittering style, but he takes such pleasure in his new-found sense of fantasy that I can overlook the few uninteresting stories in this collection.

### **A TUPOLEV TOO FAR**

**by Brian Aldiss**

**(HarperCollins 0-00-224033-5; 1993; 200 pp.)**

Here's Aldiss sloughing off an older style of story-telling and discovering the approach that would emerge at its dazzling best in *The Secret of this Book*. The 'new' Aldiss can be seen best in 'Ratbird', full of wild disconnections and tropical revelations. A previous, more obviously science-fictional Aldiss can be found in 'A Day in the Life of a Galactic Empire'.

### **SEASONS IN FLIGHT**

**by Brian Aldiss**

**(Jonathan Cape 0-224-02271-7; 1984; 157 pp.)**

This is Aldiss's most coherent theme anthology of short stories. When it appeared, *Seasons in Flight* must have seemed a bit of an oddity: dark fables set in 'primitive' settings or informed by ancient legends. (To complement the newer stories, Aldiss revives his sublime 'The Oh in Jose', first published in 1966.) Most of the stories feature granular, stripped-down language and unforgiving plots. They are memorable but dour. Reading *Seasons in Flight* more than a decade after its publication, it feels like a curtain-raiser for *The Secret of this Book*.

### **DECEPTION ON HIS MIND**

**by Elizabeth George**

**(Hodder & Stoughton 0-340-68930-7; 1997; 568 pp.)**

In her recent mystery novels, Elizabeth George has been one of the most inventive writers in the field. Not in *Deception on His Mind*. This is strictly join-the-dots fiction, lumbering its way through 300 pages too many.

### **WALKING THE LABYRINTH**

**by Lisa Goldstein**

**(Tor 0-312-86175-3; 1996; 254 pp.)**

I still don't know what to make of *Walking the Labyrinth*, the second Goldstein novel I've read. For much of its length it seems as mysterious as *Tourists*. The main character is forced to explore her past when a private detective comes calling, basing his quest on a single newspaper cutting. Later it appears that the main character has been set up to 'discover' family secrets that are only too well known to many members of the family. And then . . . ? Does Goldstein really provide answers at the end of the book? I thought so for awhile, and was disappointed. Later I realised that the point of the quest was never to discover the ending, and all the 'solutions'

are just red herrings. Too many tricks to be fully persuasive? Perhaps. Perhaps not.

### **TITAN**

**by Stephen Baxter**

**(HarperCollins Voyager 0-00-225424-7; 1997; 581 pp.)**

The Novel of the Year, of course. But I wouldn't have read it unless it had arrived as a review copy. All those acronyms and gung-ho space skiffy in the first 100 pages! If I hadn't enjoyed *The Time Ships* I wouldn't have persevered. If I hadn't reached page 200, then page 300, then found myself on the journey of a lifetime, I would have been a poorer person. Pro-space-race propaganda dissolves into exquisite ironies as Baxter reveals how NASA has been mothballed progressively since 1972. Humanity can reach the rest of the solar system, if not the stars, but has chosen not to. A people who can still plan, build and crew a one-way trip to Titan can also destroy everything. Baxter rarely uses generalisations. Instead, as in *The Time Ships*, he uses visualisations: one dazzling set piece after another. As for the ending: some will hate it, and others, like me, will see it as inescapable outcome of Baxter's Stapledonian view of life. I've grown rather fond of Stapledon over the last year or so, and I'll certainly catch up on some of Baxter's earlier books.

### **UNDER THE CAT'S EYE**

**by Gillian Rubinstein**

**(Hodder Children's Books 0-7336-0554-0; 1997; 202 pp.)**

While science fiction struggles to achieve any respectability in regular Australian fiction publishing, the Australian children's and young adults' market has given its top prizes to SF and fantasy authors for the last twenty years. Australia's top two writers for young adults are Gillian Rubinstein and John Marsden, both of whom have written almost nothing but SF for the last ten years. In *Under the Cat's Eye* Rubinstein enters into the field of uneasy fantasy — not quite horror, but bordering on it. The result, we find at the end of the book, is science fiction. The trappings — a creepy isolated boarding school and very creepy members of staff — give a nice push to proceedings until halfway through. The science fiction bits at the end are perhaps less persuasive. Rubinstein has a vigorous style that I enjoy a lot, but the story seems a bit rushed. If Rubinstein's books are released in Britain, look out for them.

### **THE MERMAIDS SINGING**

**by Val McDermid**

**(HarperCollins 0-00-649358-0; 1995; 387 pp.)**

This is the beginning of a new series of mystery novels by Val McDermid, about whom I had never heard until HarperCollins sent me this review copy. Detective Inspector Carol Jordan is paired with Tony Hill, a psychologist brought in to catch a serial murder using the 'clinical profile' method. This sounds like mumbo-jumbo to the Bradfield police, so they aren't much help. Acknowledging the influence of Iain Banks's *Complicity*, McDermid also shows us the murders from the view-

point of the murderer. Why is it so difficult for Hill and his team to track him down? This is an inventive plot, although it includes what is now a cliché of the genre: the detective set up to become the last victim. Nevertheless the book's cliffhanger ending has real punch.

### **REFLECTIONS IN A JAUNDICED EYE**

by Florence King

(Black Swan 0-522-99376-X; 1989; 198 pp.)

This is not as entertaining as *Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady* (reviewed last time) because it is not autobiographical narrative. The various characters from King's autobiography are mentioned from time to time, but *Reflections* is not a narrative. It is a series of articles written for various major American magazines. Only King would write an article about why such magazines keep scrubbing her from their contributors' lists. The book includes a merciless parody of the work of John Updike and various funny diatribes against the decline of the American language. Thanks to Yvonne Rousseau for finding this book for me.

### **MINNERS MAROONED AND PLANET OF THE MARSUPIALS: THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS OF CHERRY WILDER**

by Yvonne Rousseau

(Nimrod 1326-561-X; 1997; 26 pp.)

You might have read a shorter version of this essay in *Foundation* in 1992. It is Yvonne Rousseau's brilliant analysis of the underlying structures behind Cherry Wilder's science fiction, illuminated by an intimate knowledge of the texts. Rousseau points to major differences between Wilder's New Zealand/Australian view of fantasy (the 'lost child in the bush' story) and American fantasy structures. *Minners Marooned* appears in Norman Talbot's 'Babel Handbooks' series of monographs from Nimrod Publications, PO Box 170, New Lambton NSW 2305; \$10 per volume.

### **ROAD RAGE**

by Ruth Rendell

(Hutchinson 0-09-180204-0; 1997; 328 pp.)

There's not much point in discussing *Road Rage*, the latest Inspector Wexford novel, since the *Age* reviewer gave away most of the plot a few weeks ago. Yet it's hard not to discuss this fairly substantial novel without revealing what it is all about. Dora Wexford takes a taxi to the local railway station, only to be kidnapped by a group who claim to be eco-terrorists. Several other people are kidnapped in the same way during the same week. The message is received: stop the superhighway going past Kingsmartin or one hostage after another will be killed! This is an odd book, since the reader's sympathy for the criminals, whoever they might be, is enlisted from the beginning, and the ending only heightens this effect. Yet we feel completely Wexford's horror at finding that his wife is one of the kidnap victims. Rendell has obviously been bored with Wexford for some time, and has decided to use his investigations to highlight some major problems in English society. *Simisola*, the previous Wexford novel, was a bore, but *Road Rage* is an offbeat classic of the mystery genre.

### **THE VOICE THAT THUNDERS: ESSAYS AND LECTURES**

by Alan Garner

(Harvill 1-86046-332-0; 1997; 244 pp.)

A lecture by Alan Garner must be an arresting, even frightening event. Here is a Biblical prophet without a Bible, a writer who treats the past as alive as the present, a declaimer who upbraids the whole of modern English literature for its failures without lapsing into generalities. He makes extravagant claims for his novels, delivering expositions that are sometimes more interesting than the novels they talk about. These lectures and essays, written over twenty years, cover an extraordinary range of material. He shows that a ballad from his local area can be derived not from the sixteenth century but from the Bronze Age. Similarly, he shows that an implement found in the area was made of metal mined in the area more than 4000 years ago. He reads selections from his fan mail, and in so doing gives us great insights into why he writes his novels. He provides the background for *Strandloper* and many of his other famous books. He shows us just what it is like to go mad suddenly. He challenges listeners and readers to explore their own past. This is a memorable book; I wish it didn't make me feel so inadequate.

### **STRANDLOPER**

by Alan Garner

(Harvill 1-86146-160-3; 1996; 200 pp.)

This novel is so challenging that I suspect I could not have read it without first reading Garner's essay about it in *The Voice That Thunders*. It is more poetry than prose; highly concentrated, offering few concessions to the conventions of narrative. William Buckley, a transported convict, escaped from the first expedition to Corio Bay. The settlement failed, and Buckley was left for dead. He was adopted by the local Aboriginal tribe, who believed him to be the ghost of a dead shaman. Buckley lived with the tribe for 32 years. After he was 'rescued' by white settlers, he returned to England. Even if you know this before you begin reading the novel, much else is difficult, demanding close scrutiny: the pagan village rituals during which Buckley and his future wife choose each other; the equally strange pre-Christian church service during which Buckley is arrested for crimes he cannot comprehend; the terrifying sea voyage to New Holland; the escape; and the mystical process during which Buckley learns the insights given only to a shaman. Garner does his best to stretch his perceptions back into eighteenth-century Chester, then into pre-white settlement Australia. Garner links the symbols on an early Christian church window with the symbols found on Aboriginal weapons; pagan rituals in Chester with the initiation rites that Buckley undergoes in Australia. Mysticism is never far away, but what remains true is the intense earthiness and sensuality of the writing. For the first time I understood much that was unclear about the reality-world of the people who lived here for 40,000 years. If *Strandloper* were easier to read, I would say that every white Australian should read it. But it's valuable only because it's difficult to read! It's a Garner book: it should not be read, but reread.

**TOM FOBBLE'S DAY****by Alan Garner****(Collins 0-00-184832-1; 1977; 72 pp.)****GRANNY REARDUN****by Alan Garner****(Fontana Lions 0-00-671602-4; 1977; 58 pp.)****THE AIMER GATE****by Alan Garner****(Fontana Lions 0-00-671603-2; 1978; 79 pp.)**

These three stories, plus *The Stone Book*, were published in America as *The Stone Book Quartet*. Nearly twenty years separates them from the publication of *Strandloper*. Garner works slowly, for reasons made clear in *The Voice That Thunders*. In that volume Garner claims that the 'Stone Book' series have been his best-received work. Each book is scarcely more than a short story, yet each packs in more experience than a good novel. In *The Stone Book* we climb to the top of a newly built spire and descend to the depths of an almost inaccessible cave. In *Tom Fobble's Day* we feel travel very fast over snow on a perfectly made sled. In *Granny Reardun* we find out just what it was like to harvest a field up until the early years of this century. Yet these particular experiences are just part of a complex response to old England itself. Garner talks much in *The Voice That Thunders* about the need to know one's *place*: a peculiarly English concept to an Australian. Yet this concise family saga, various generations indicated from volume to volume by mere hints, connects people and place in a way that proves Garner's contentions. Marketed as children's fiction, these books are not stories I could have read when I was a child; instead, they have a depth rarely achieved by Booker Prize winners.

**THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE ARGONAUTS****by Rob Johnson****(Hodder & Stoughton 0-7336-0528-1; 1997; 270 pp.)**

A few years ago I wrote an article about my memories of 'the Argonauts', the radio club that was the central part of the *ABC Children's Session* from the early 1940s to the late 1960s. At that stage the only independent source of information was Ida Elizabeth Osborne's *Good Rowing!*, which concentrated on her own years as head of the Argonauts. Ungenerously, she dismissed post-1950 incarnations of the Club, and left out much that I wanted to know. Anything about the Argonauts that was unclear until now has been clarified by Rob Johnson. Not only

does he confirm my memory that 'Chris' was acted by Leonard Teale, long before he became famous as a TV actor, but he gives valuable information about G. K. Saunders, the writer who introduced me to science fiction in 1953 and who wrote the most vivid serials broadcast by the *Children's Session*. Johnson is particularly skilful at conveying the central elements of the Argonauts Club: the emphasis on high achievement in prose, poetry, art, music and science, competition against oneself rather than against others (because each Argonaut was known only by a 'ship name' based on Greek mythology and a number), and the fostering of Australian talent. Barry Humphries, who writes the introduction, was an Argonaut, and so were a large number of other famous Australians who are now over 45. Their stories are here, as well as the stories of each of the 'team members'. Atholl Fleming, who was 'Mac' and 'Jason', survived the death of the Argonauts Club by one month; John Ewart ('Jimmy') died recently, never having fulfilled much of his early promise. The Club did not commit suicide, but was murdered by ABC executives, when a survey in 1970 found that many of its listeners were over forty. Nothing has replaced it, yet young people still discover poetry, prose, art, music and science for themselves. We'll never know whether it could have metamorphosed into something interesting to children of the 1990s; all I know that its high ideals were the brightest light of my 1950s childhood. *The Golden Age of the Argonauts* is a fine tribute.

**THE WIRE IN THE BLOOD****by Val McDermid****(HarperCollins 0-00-225704-1; 1997; 373 pp.)**

Val McDermid 'borrows' so unashamedly from other mystery and thriller writers that she must know that we know, and she dares us not to find it all fun. In *The Wire in the Blood*, we know from the beginning the identity of the serial killer. Jason and Hill, ordered off the case and suspected of murder, know who he is. How will they nab him? All this resembles some of the latest, weakest Patricia Cornwell novels, even to the ending that isn't an ending. Now we have mystery stories that demand sequels! I forgive McDermid because she is readable and inventive. This is a Guilty Pleasure, not a Fine Novel, but some Guilty Pleasures are much more fun than others.

— Bruce Gillespie, 7 December 1997