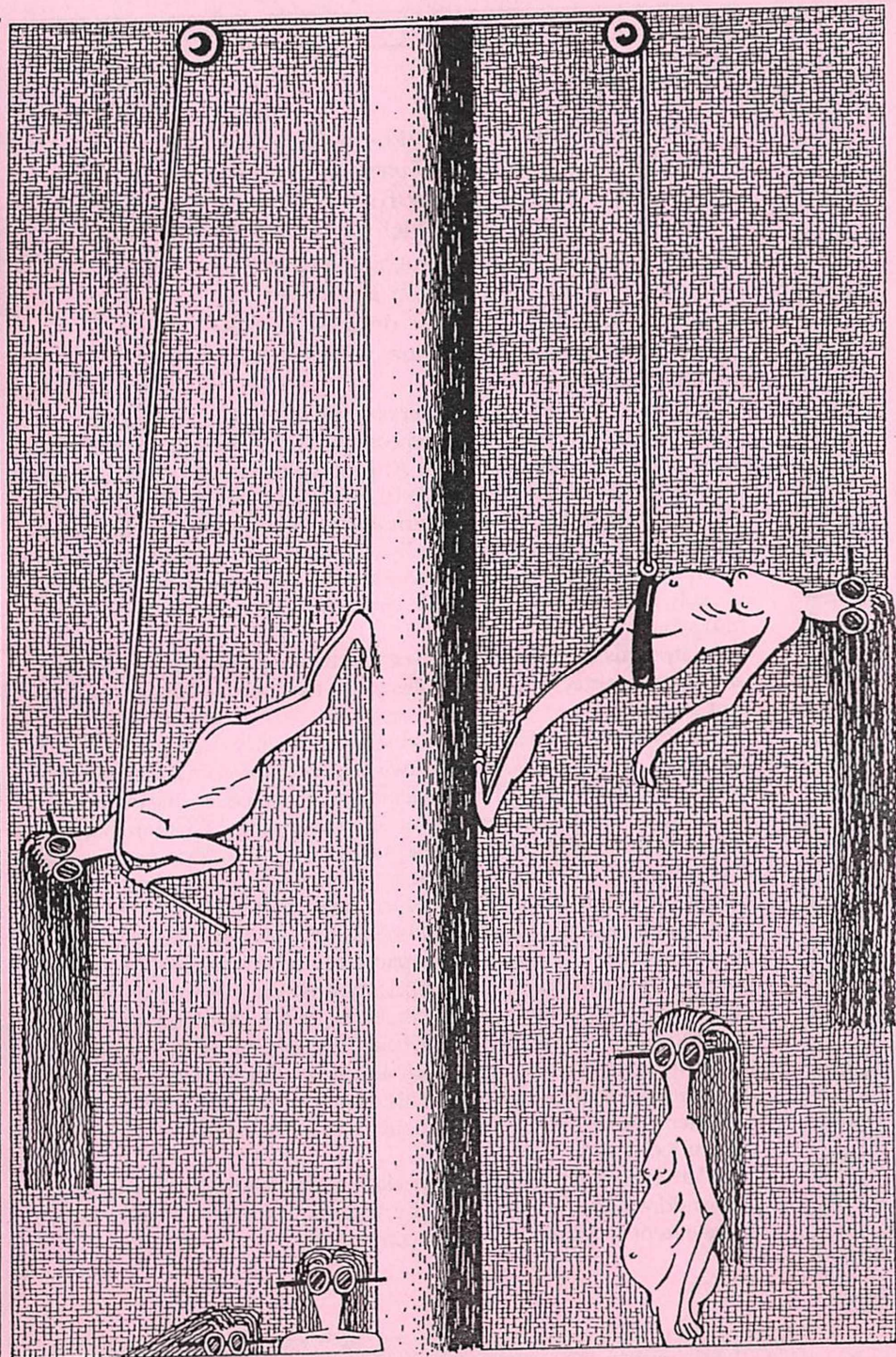


GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG



Götterdämmerung

tommy

I never thought that I would be writing this second editorial for *Götterdämmerung*. The first issue was really what the first line said, utilisation of the facilities which we had access to. I'm very happy to say though, that from the first idea of the zine (which I said yes to, privately reserving all my doubts) it has developed into a second issue, with another on the horizon.

About the claim under the header on the back page we are extremely eager to let someone, anyone, prove us wrong; or at least put up an argument. We ARE completely egotistical and big headed, but go on, shoot us down. I've been hearing all about these various other zines from Northern Ireland for so long now that when these guys came around I was really sceptical about it. These zines from Northern Ireland never turn up so the second issue of *Götterdämmerung* is really gratifying. Go on, do one yourself and make us look complete idiots (as if you could...)

This latest missive sees the return of "Legbreakers Inc." (thanks Chuck) aka the committee, with more tales of the trials and tribulations of life and the like.

We could, given the time, fill the zine up with fairly reasonable articles ourselves, and even have one or two each issue of very high quality. I won't mention the one in this particular issue but just say that in the next they'll all be completely wonderful. That Shep cover! To think that one of our own committee thought of putting it on the back page...

It also sees the re-evaluation of our enthusiasm for this new technology lark. With access to another PC which, through the miracle of modern technology, is compatible with this megabyte Mother. This has meant various contributions could be prepared beforehand so that Committee meetings (open to the general public, though I doubt any of them would have the stomach for it) are more about the look of the zine and putting things together than sitting at a keyboard typing the stuff in. This makes the meetings that much more fun and the consumption of alcohol increases dramatically as well. This does tend to lead to bitter artistic arguments about whose name should appear first but then what are committees for?

Your letters and contributions (especially artwork) are always welcome at the address on the back page; the next issue will be out for Octacon at the end of October. You have been warned.

Cheers.



mark

Fanzine virgins no longer...

With issue two out on time, and number three under way, it's a veritable hive of industry here at Götterdämmerung Mansions. We've made a conscious effort to get the "difficult" second issue out as quickly as possible in the belief that if we make this fanzine thing a habit, there will be no stopping us.

Looking back at the first issue I was appalled at the number of wrong spellings, split infinitives, malapropisms, etc. Our only defence being that all our sub-editing was done on-screen because we rarely get the use of a laser printer for print-outs, ie. the only hard copy we see is the final product. As I'm sure you will agree it is well nigh impossible to do corrections in this manner, (reader-"what's your excuse for the crap writing then?")

For Northern Ireland people, the fanzine has got to be the perfect medium for fandom. Most of us, except for a few up-and-coming tax yuppies, are too piss poor to travel across to Britain for conventions; and cons here, (with the noble exception of NiCon), aren't exactly common.

Having said that though, fanzines, as Tommy has already pointed out, are also few and far between in this fair Province of ours.

Most interesting news of the past few weeks for me is that Robert M. Pirsig has written a sequel to his zillion selling hit of the seventies, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. It's a book I suppose everyone has heard of but few actually read. I remember someone telling me about it back in school and wanting to get my hands on a copy simply because of the brilliant title.

But it was only last year while mooching, (from the verb 'to mooch'- ie, to wander

aimlessly in a trance-like state), in Waterstone's in Belfast, that I came upon a copy by accident. Five days later I was saving up for a Harley Davison and the complete works of the pre-Socratics...

sf fact

Jenny Glover is a much loved and well respected fanzine reviewer.

It's a fact!

If you have never read the book and have reservations that it is some sort of Californian head-up-its-own-ass hippy shite, rest assured - it's not. And what's more I don't think it has dated at all in the past twenty years, (in the same way that Timothy Leary, caftans and early Pink Floyd albums most definitely have).

The reason for this is probably because Pirsig is a real heavy-weight intellectual who knows his western philosophy about as well as he knows his engine tappets, (which is quite a lot). Thankfully he is not one of those awful 60's love, peace and LSD gurus but a down to earth ex-IBM technical author.

Zen.... revolves around a trip he made with his son across the United States on a motorcycle. Interlaced with a rather moving description of his relationship with his son, is an examination of what he believes is wrong with modern western life and thought, going right back to the early Greeks and the schism between science and art. Through his alter ego, Phaëdrus, he comes up with a linking theory that involves the idea of 'quality'. This quality is in everything, even in the construction

and repair of a motorcycle. And quality is inextricably linked to the individuals' view of the world.

And as if all that's wasn't enough for one book he also gives a good guide to taking care of your motorbike.

He doesn't reject science and technology as one might expect but shows that it needs to be fully embraced in a 'quality frame of mind'.

Even if you think his final analysis is a bit batty the book still works on a lot of different levels - at the very least it gives you some insight into the development of philosophy over the past two thousand years which I would say in itself is probably worth £4.99.

One sad note is that his son Chris who appears in *Zen...* was murdered in 1979.

Lila - an Enquiry into Morals, (*Zen...* was an enquiry into values), is released in August and is only Pirsig's second novel, *Zen* being the first. He says the new novel took so long to write because he wanted it to be at least as good as *Zen*. In the meantime he has been a recluse hounded by weirdo fans who think he has the answer to Life, the Universe, etc.

The end of my column is approaching rapidly and in the distance I can hear the sound of the Lambeg drum calling. I'll just rush upstairs and get my bowler hat and sash and pop out to take part in our glorious twelfth of July celebrations. Kick the pope.

James

'I come not to praise *Götterdämmerung*, but to bury it'. So it seemed from our initial locs. But in the end it was 50/50 for and against. In truth, now that we have been bitten by the publishing bug we were going to bring out a second issue anyway even if no-one had liked the first.

Which isn't to say that the comments were not appreciated. The vast majority of them

were constructive and we have taken some of them to heart. This issue is different from the last (well I think so) and I hope you loathe/hate/like it in a fuller manner than the first.

My personal world has been in a constant state of flux since the last issue came out at



the *Götterdämmerung* editorial committee brainstorming session...

the start of May. All the editors, Tommy, Mark and myself, have moved or are in the process of moving as I write. In my case, I have moved twice, once to an interim location and now to my current location - 27 Camden Street - Mark's former abode. Please note that this is the new operating address of the fanzine, as Tommy will have left 107 South Parade by the time this is in print.

There were two reasons for my move. The first was that I wanted a bit more space. My last bedsit was quite small and once I had moved all my stuff and computer gear in you could not have swung a shrew, let alone a cat.

Talking of rodents, this brings me to my second reason. I went home over the

weekend (remember the bus journey of issue one?) for the first time in several weeks and returned to find that a mouse/mice had eaten my muesli and crapped all over the place. However, since I arrived back at around 8.00pm, there was very little I could do. Eventually I went to bed very tired and, just as I was dropping off to sleep, I heard ominous rustlings and squeakings. Banishing all thoughts of sleep, I leapt out of bed to investigate. Found nothing, of course. Repeat as necessary until morning. So passed a very sleepless night where I managed to get a couple of hours sleep, at most.

A b s o l u t e l y shattered, I got up to make breakfast - and found all the plates and utensils covered with a miasma of muesli. My resolve, weakened by lack of sleep, snapped back into sharp focus. So I packed that very day, phoned some friends and went to stay in their house until I found some new accommodation.

Over the next couple of weeks, I looked at a few places - but none were suitable. However, the landlord had a few flats to let - just what Mark was looking for. So within a few days Mark had exited to a flat a few doors down the street and I was in possession of his old bedsit, which is ideal for me, being spacious and getting plenty of light.

I'm only just settling down after a couple of weeks - I'm suffering from the 'can't find anything syndrome'. However, this is immeasurably superior to the two weeks of living out of cardboard boxes

beforehand.

Moving on. I have finished my Master's degree after a tumultuous struggle with my thesis and graduated (hurrah!). However, I have simultaneously joined the vast ranks of the unemployed (groan) and am job hunting (further groan). I seem to have graduated in a year in which jobs,

never plentiful, have ceased to exist. As the rejection letters roll in, I am keeping myself sane by doing voluntary work at a local (Belfast) charity and working on *Götterdämmerung*, of course.

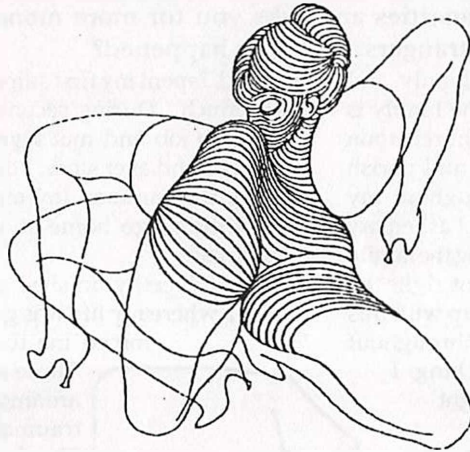
Graduating was a sad event as well as a happy one. Gone are the people I've known for five years - to France, to Germany and

elsewhere. I'll probably not see them for another five and somehow promises to write never seem to stack up.

My parents had their 25th wedding anniversary party a couple of weeks ago (and before you ask, I'm 24). A good night for them - a band, old time waltzes etc. Good taste thankfully prevailed and the night did not descend in the depths of karaoke or kissagrams.

A quick note on the new editorial committee addresses (all on the one street to make it easy for the readers);

James McKee, Flat 4, 27 Camden Street.
Mark McCann, Flat 3, 19 Camden Street.
Tommy Ferguson, Flat 1, 33 Camden Street
... Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6AT.



• Tommy Ferguson goes up and grows away...

always coming home

You can go back but you can't go home. What do you do when your family means nothing to you any more? Your father is still a complete mystery, your mother eats valium like smarties and asks you for more money and your siblings are just so many strangers. What has happened?

I come from a strong Catholic family, and in Ireland that means a lot. The family is the central organisation of the church upon which the idea of community and parish get their full meaning. Throughout my earlier years if I had a problem I asked my mother, if something went wrong the family would fix it. If something went right the family would notice it. I grew up with this and similar images rebounding throughout my life and now it means nothing. I know this didn't happen overnight

and the obvious disassociation began at university. This was an opportunity to get away from the family and to experience a completely new social environment. The freedom and independence of living away from home was an elixir to a socially underdeveloped, spotty Catholic boy who liked reading s.f. Now I didn't have to pretend I that I went to Mass on Sunday.

Girlfriend

As my years progressed at University so the distance grew from my family. In my first year I visited home on a fairly frequent basis; got my laundry done and stocked up

on food. I spent my first summer not doing very much. During second year I got a part time job and met Nyree Campbell, my girlfriend ever since. I didn't go home during the summer any more. In fourth year I didn't go home at all, except for Christmas.

When University finished and I had still no idea where my life was going, finances

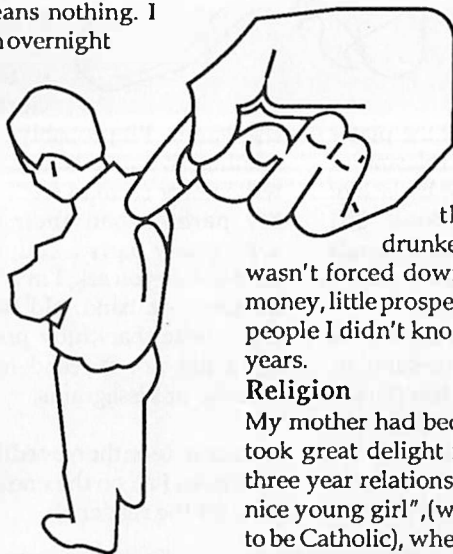
forced me to move home.

Those seven months are amongst the most traumatic of my life. The freedom wasn't gone, merely restricted; the attitudes were still there but after a drunken, blazing row religion

wasn't forced down my throat. I had no money, little prospects and was living with people I didn't know, even after eighteen years.

Religion

My mother had become a bitter hag. She took great delight in reminding me of a three year relationship I'd had "with that nice young girl", (who had just happened to be Catholic), whenever I mentioned my current girlfriend, (who just so happens not to be). Religion wasn't rammed down but was served as a side order of snide remarks and casual references. I still love my mother, but I think I hate her even more.



My father nearly died. He literally threw up half his stomach at work one morning and was rushed to hospital. He lay there for two days whilst they waited to see whether he died or not. He didn't. A pity, really. He is now smoking even more, drinking even more and eating less and less. It's painful to watch him fade away as he just sits there in front of the t.v. and passes away the time, saying nothing. He's never ever opened up in front of anyone, even when pissed. He could be anyone. My brother and sisters are married, all of them first having got their partners

pregnant or gotten pregnant themselves. I'm not condemning this in any way. One sister got pregnant intentionally, knowing that her boyfriend would never propose unless she did. They are all classic Catholic families, trying to break the mould and failing. Their kids are all just as warped and fucked up as we were...are.

I had grown up and gone away. I had come home, rung the doorbell and no-one I knew answered. These people I had once known had grown up and went away as well. All that is left is us and I have no idea who they are.



who killed bambi?

Sergio Leone's masterpiece, *Once upon a time in America* was playing at the local arthouse cinema a few weeks back and I nervously went along to see it. I say 'nervously' because I still remember the first occasion I saw it: It was one of the first times I had ever been to the movies and was certainly the first 'adult' movie I'd ever seen. After four hours of graphic violence, bad language and two quite intense rape scenes, I emerged from the darkened theatre shell-shocked and innocence in tatters. Goodbye *Bambi*, hello certificate X...

Once upon a time... tells the story of a group of young hoods, (lead by Robert DeNiro), growing up in the slums of New York in the 1920's and 30's. In some ways it resembles *Godfather II* in that it covers the same era and is told in flashback, but Coppolla's film is much more cosier than Leone's vision which is harsh and unforgiving. The usual comment about *Once upon a time* is that it is misogynistic rubbish, with at least one totally gratuitous rape scene. This is certainly what I thought after seeing it the first time. Women are treated like shit and are often shown to be enjoying the fact.

But this is no shoot-'em-up mafia story. At times incredibly slow-moving and filled with many symbolic images, the focus of the story is the relationship between Noodles, (DeNiro), and Debbie, (played by Elizabeth McGovern). Debbie is Noodle's virginal fantasy figure, first seen ballet dancing in a flour filled backroom. Despite all the other women Noodles can 'have' throughout his life, Debbie remains untouchable. For me the film's emphasis is on man's, and in particular, Noodle's, image of women as either virgin or whore. With Debbie as virgin and all other women as whores.

I think the misogyny is justified simply because the film is not an objective view of reality but the past seen through the eyes of the character of Noodles. That the guy has some serious problems when it comes to women is confirmed when he meets Debbie thirty five years later and she appears not to have aged at all.

With it's attention to detail and panoramic crane-shots, *Once upon a time in America* has got to be one of the greatest films of all time. Certainly a relief after the rubbish of *Godfather III..* (Mark McCann)



●Mark McCann puts what's left of his best foot forward...

full metal aerosol

4 March 1990

"Warning: Danger of electric shock."

I read the sign on the shower curtain with growing anger. Standing in my 'Henry the Cat' boxer shorts, with my trusty lofah, bottle of Head and Shoulders and bar of Zest soap, I examined the shower fitting closely.

Indeed the thing did appear somewhat unsafe. A hole had melted in the bottom of the unit and droplets of melted plastic casing had dropped onto the shower tray. Trying to wash in this would probably result in a fried scalp. Dirty and depressed I returned to my room.

I live in a house consisting of eight self



'Fascinating, Captain, this verruca seems to have developed lungs ...'

contained bedsits with everyone sharing the same toilet/bathroom. My landlord has a laissez faire attitude to his property that would have done his nineteenth century absentee forebearers proud.

"Fix it yourself if you need it so much", he told me bluntly when confronted with 'Old Sparky'.

With admirable restraint I slunk off and decided to get a shower in the nearby Student's Union. Unknown to me here is where my tale of woe began.

For the next four months I took a bi-weekly trip to the Union where the showers were of the high pressure firehose variety. Exhilarating and hot, but not exactly sterile. Things seemed fine until one day I noticed a lump on my foot. I examined it and made a quick diagnosis: Verruca. Bugger.

5 June 1990.

A trip to the doctor confirmed my suspicions, but I was reassured that an amputation would not be necessary.

"Stick this on it every day until it goes away", the doctor told me. I trotted painfully home with a tube of Salicylic Acid, secure in the knowledge that either the sole of my left foot would melt or the alien fungus' days were numbered.

1 July 1990

Weeks went by, as did tubes of Salicylic Acid. To pass the time I decided to follow Rule One of combat: 'Get to know your enemy'.

I examined my parasitical partner with a magnifying glass studying the network of roots that were establishing themselves near the base of my big toe. Perhaps it was due to poisoning by Salicylic Acid, but I swore I could make out an impressive irrigation system that was the obvious product of a rapidly advancing civilisation. I would have to pull out all the stops to beat this guy. He wasn't fooling around. This was war.

19 July 1990

Salicylic Acid, the Agent Orange of the Foot Fungus world, is not cheap to buy

and my defence resources were rapidly dwindling. Despite ever increasing applications of the stuff the verruca appeared to be not only resisting, but advancing in a Tet-like offensive. Perhaps, I mused, it was building up a resistance to it. I resorted to no-holds barred interdiction. I tried to file the fucker off. Several hours passed and quite a sizeable amount of my skin had given way to the pumice stone. In the mess that was now the sole of my foot the situation was unclear. I had difficulty deciding if the wholesale genocide of the fungal civilisation had been successful. I dropped some more acid on it just to be sure and went through the ceiling with pain.

21 August 1990.

Life was quiet following Operation Scorched Foot. I appeared to have been completely victorious. I even returned to

the Union showers and began swimming again at the local pool. That is, until one day while lying in Botanic Gardens sunbathing, my girlfriend glanced at my bare tootsies.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! you have verrucas!" she screamed.

A wave of nausea passed over me as I scrambled to verify her sighting. It was true. There before my eyes were at least five verrucas on both feet. My mood was not optimistic.

They had appeared to have learned from the previous invasion and had set up a deep subcutaneous bunker system right along the line of my toes. They were here to stay. I screamed and ran off looking for my Acid.

1 September 1990

I was a chastened man after this experience, I can tell you. But fate had not finished its cruel manipulations. I awoke one night with a dreadful itching on both my feet. Yelling I leapt from the bed and scratched



insanely while running around the room. Verruca veterans will tell you that although they can be painful bastards verruca do not, as a rule, itch much. Oh, no this was something else. A horse, or should I say, fungus of a totally different colour. The invisible and insidious Athlete's Foot. Back to the doctor's again who this time took photographs for a medical paper he was considering writing about my condition. He sent me off with a can of ozone friendly Tolnaftate, (with ethanol), and a mission to gas the buggers.

December 1990.

I suppose it was inevitable but I had tried not thinking about it. Having become home and food stuff for the two major fungal infections of humankind I was of course ripe for further invasion. During a Christmas truce with the verruca and Athlete's Foot a third combatant invaded. I was completely at its mercy.

Ringworm is the cruellest bastard of the lot. A fungus of Nazi proportions and as infectious as hell. By the New Year the growth had travelled upwards from the already occupied feet, where I think it had established a non-aggression pact with the verruca and Athlete's foot, and began to search for *lebensraum* on my legs.

I rushed to the doctor's like Stalin retreating to the Urals.

This time it was serious. Big, I mean biggg, ICI tablets that looked like something a vet would prescribe to cows, (they were), and Triamcinolone Acetonide-Neomycin-Gramicidin- Nystatin cream. I was now the testing ground for man's increasingly desperate mycopharmacological attack on fungi civilisation ... and I was losing.

June 1991

A long time has passed since that first contact with the sole verruca. I've changed since then- a wiser, more cautious individual who treats each day as it comes

and who wears white rubber condom-like socks in the shower. The fungi are still here of course but I have come to a kind of agreement with them. They have agreed not to advance further and I've agreed to stop the chemical warfare.

The weapons of ultimate deterrence have, thankfully, not been brought into the arena. No surgeons' knives or sulphate antibiotics from me, and from the fungi no sign yet of the dreaded spegma. Life's simpler now and not altogether unhappy.

If Swamp Thing can get a girlfriend I'm sure I can too someday...



the continuing travelogue of Hugh L. Mc Henry - No.14

dear james, mark, tommy,

we have arrived in Madrid. Weather is quite warm for the time of year. Teaching english as a foreign language for the past few days.

Was in a park in the centre of Madrid yesterday. I was lying on the grass and fell asleep. About 2.00pm everything was okay, at 2.30 I awoke to find my shoes gone. The worst of it was my watch and money were in the shoes.

So I had to walk two miles back through the blazing centre of Madrid in my sock soles. Otherwise everything is going okay. Wish you were here.

Yours sincerely,

•Mark McCann resumés a living legend...

streams of whiskey

"Slainé na failte dora." Written over forty years ago, these are the first words of what has eventually turned out to be one of the most amazing sequences of stories ever to appear under the auspices of science fiction.

The sentence is of course from the opening paragraph of "Notes on some strange happenings in Yeat's Country" by Sligo s.f. writer Conor naBraienenn. The few people who were lucky enough to read the story as it originally appeared in the Irish Language magazine, "Fhuinneog" in 1949, caught only a tantalising glimpse of naBraienenn's vision of an iconoclastic, Gaelic twilight, where mythical figures rub shoulders with modern real life individuals, and take part in present day world events. Held together by naBraienenn's hauntingly beautiful prose, the stories piece together the essence of what it is like to be Irish at the end of the second millennium.

Black and Tans

Conor naBraienenn was born in 1902 in the fishing village of Killybegs and grew up working as a fisherman catching cod in the Atlantic, (an experience used to the full in the 1969 story, "You can't take the ocean out of the cosmonaut..."). By the age of eighteen he had joined the IRA to fight the British Black and Tans, his flying column eventually being caught and spending the rest of the war in the Curragh prison camp. It was here his career as a writer began with poems and short stories composed for his fellow inmates. After the treaty was signed, which ended the war, naBraienenn travelled to Dublin where he won a scholarship to U.C.D. to study Botanical Sciences. To supplement his meagre income he worked part time as a bouncer

in a brothel in the Monty area. naBraienenn has never tired of pointing out that his close friendships with many of the politicians of the day began during this time.

Astounding

Tiring of Dublin's self-satisfied hypocrisy naBraienenn left for Spain in 1938 to join the International Brigades. However, he saw no action having been arrested en route in France for the possession of hand grenades and a Thompson submachine gun. He was eventually released before the outbreak of the second world war and returned to Killybegs. It was at this time that his connections with the s.f. world were formed. US airmen using Shannon as a refuelling point, gave locals copies of books and magazines they brought across the Atlantic. naBraienenn happened upon a collection of Astounding magazines, and his interest was sparked.

"Notes on some strange happenings..." was written in response to this interest in 1949.

Interviews

naBraienenn still lives in Killybegs, a sprightly 79 year old with a love for Breton caps and warm Guinness. His last story was published in 1982 but he says he is working on another episode in the sequence. He rarely gives interviews and only then in Irish. He stubbornly refused to have any of his work translated into English for nearly thirty years. "Notes..." was first seen in translation in 1979 in a

small press edition of modern Irish Short Stories. The "Sequence", as it is called for want of a better word, is made up of twenty-three short stories, two novels and a book of poetry. The first novel, "Tir na Nog", written in 1972 precludes the short stories by laying the foundation of the alternative history of Eire. Two Soviet Cosmonauts crash land in a war torn Ireland and become involved in the search for atomic weapons. Various characters appear, including a gay James Connolly, W.B. Yeats, (who plays a hidden role in the entire sequence), possibly an insane Finn MaCool, and an expeditionary force from Franco's Moorish Fascists.

Lovecraft

What keeps all this together is naBraienenn's constant attention to detail and characterisation. No matter how bizarre things become, for example H.P. Lovecraft as a Dublin sex therapist!, the suspension of disbelief remains...just!

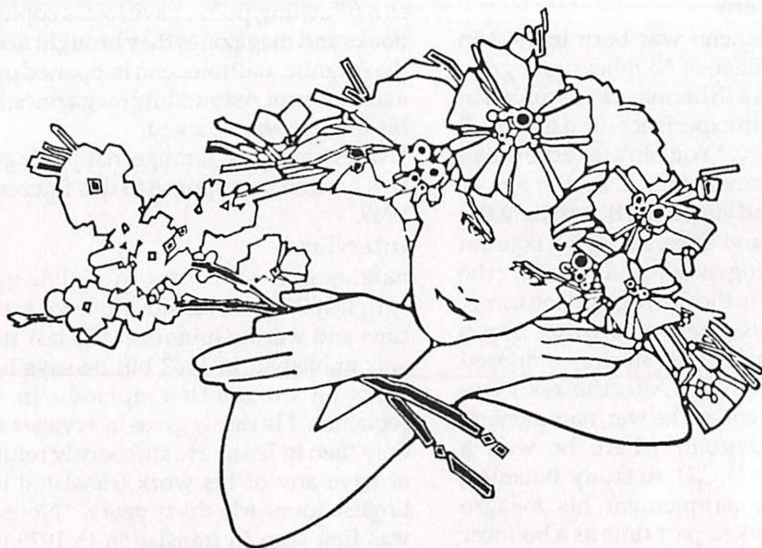
The second novel, which is naBraienenn's magnum opus, is called "Three nights in Swatragh".

The style is much more intense in this

culmination of the sequence with long, almost stream-of-consciousness passages that weave an impression of the narrator's descent in both drunken and mystical depths. Whether naBraienenn pulls this difficult feat off is debatable but it is an admirable try. Taken alone this novel stands out as a terrifying horror story, with the desolate Swatragh setting providing a fitting backdrop.

Superior

It is a pity naBraienenn is not more widely published in english. His eclectic style would be a sure hit with science fiction, horror and fantasy fans everywhere; it is certainly far superior to many weighty trilogies that are around at this moment. naBraienenn himself is a reclusive man these days. I have had some contact with this witty, intelligent man, and he has agreed, somewhat under duress, to attend a s.f. convention in Belfast or Dublin in the near future. It would be right that he should be recognised for his achievements in Irish s.f. and possibly it could be the opening of a whole new audience to Ireland's unknown s.f. giant.



● James McKee on John Brunner and cyberpunk...

mona lisa overhype

Cyberpunk, what is it? Or should I say, what was it? Some would have you believe that it is the greatest step forward for science fiction since the New Wave in the 1960's, whilst others dismiss it as the greatest step forward for marketing since the invention of the blurb.

If you are wondering why I refer to the present and past tenses, it is because cyberpunk has had a very checkered history as a sub-genre. It started with two authors, although others were affiliated with the 'movement'. They created the cyberpunk club and almost simultaneously disbanded it. The two men in question are, of course, William Gibson and Bruce Sterling. It was through two works of theirs that the word cyberpunk came into common usage. The two books were *Neuromancer* by Gibson and *Schismatrix* by Sterling.

Comparison

It is not the purpose of this article to review these works or cyberpunk in general, since this has been done more effectively by other more capable writers (ad nauseam). I simply wish to draw a comparison with the genre as a whole and one writer in particular.

Dystopia

The writer I am referring to is John Brunner. Brunner is an established if disaffected s.f. writer. He became famous (though not rich) in the late sixties and early seventies with a series of dystopia novels. His magnum opus was *Stand on Zanzibar*, which was the longest s.f. work published at that time. This novel deals with a future world society, where overpopulation is a reality.

The novel is multi-threaded and multi-plotted. In common with cyberpunk, it

has powerful corporations, computer nets, the spread of information technology and various characters who manipulate people and technology for their own ends. These factors have been cited as being indicative of the new cyberpunk scenario and here they are, all in a novel published over twenty years ago. But this would be a tenuous thesis indeed if the comparison was based only on one book. However, Brunner has a series of novels from this period which all share these themes. *The Sheep Look Up*, *The Jagged Orbit* and *The Shockwave Rider* could all be categorised as cyberpunk.

Money

I therefore contend that the main elements of cyberpunk were invented in the 1960's by John Brunner. I am sure that similar comparisons can be made with other writers/books and would be interested in comment on this subject. Cyberpunk is nothing new and is a marketing term which should be treated with the contempt it deserves. Books should not be pigeon-holed into this fashionable sub-genre simply to make money. Now that some of the fuss has died down, we can hope that the cyberpunk label will die away. This will allow the true qualities of the works themselves to shine through without being fettered with unnecessary appellations and the talk of 'cyberpunk' as a separate entity will diminish.



• Tommy Ferguson lets his stomach do the travelling.

nauseous odyssey

Well, here is the travel report I've promised everybody, including myself. I arrived at the hotel at 9.30 on Saturday morning- two days late as far as I was concerned. Usually I try to arrive a day before the con is supposed to start so as to get the hang of the place, (translated this means finding the very expensive hotel bar which is usually the only one at a con which sells draught Guinness).

As I was fool enough to miss the ferry on Thursday night and, in the ferry company's, (I'll not mention Belfast Car Ferries) infinite wisdom, they would not let me transfer to the Sealink Larne/Stranraer crossing. That crossing goes eighteen times a day, including return journeys, and could have got me down to the con in plenty of time.



Not that Sealink were worried- they just wanted a letter from someone with responsibility at BCF to say that they would refund my money from the ticket in favour

of their company, (at some extortionate rate, no doubt, but I didn't mind).

Strange coincidence

Alas, 'twas not to be and because it takes nine hours to get to Liverpool from Belfast, I had to wait until Friday night to get the next ferry. A strange coincidence there- it takes the Liverpool ferry eighteen hours for the return journey and the Larne/Stranraer ferry does eighteen return journeys. Friday night at 9.00pm, (I'm taking no more chances!), I land at the ferry terminal. Considering the fact that I had to leave the con at 10.30 am on Sunday to attend a wedding, it hardly seemed worth it, did it?

Assaulted

I thought so myself a couple of times but a third of the original cost of the ticket (£36.00) as a refund persuaded me too ahead. Anyway, back to the ferry terminal and a barrage of both customs and ferry company people await with greedy hands to assail my luggage.

"And what's in the box, sir?" said a rather dapperly dressed customs official.

"Err..." I mumbled.

Compromise

I didn't think the people in the queue behind me were willing to wait whilst I explained fanzines to him. Yet if I replied 'magazines', I'm not sure what he and the rest of the people would have thought. How else to describe them?

"SF magazines". A slight compromise.
 "And what are these, sir", opening the box still further.

Ohshit, I thought, he's found the armalites and rocket launchers which were planned for the hotel.

"Tee shirts", I replied. My mind kept thinking that a synthetic cloth-like explosive must have been invented by this time and the Nikon tee shirts would get shredded and the money we owe the university would never get paid and I'd be sent down for embezzlement...

"Very good, sir. Do you have any..."

"No, no explosives whatsoever..."

"...alcohol in your bag?"

"Yes, I do," I replied in a somewhat relieved voice. I was tempted to add: lots and lots of it. I'm part of Guinness don't you know? Loads of alcohol BUT no explosives, no sir, nothing like that. Of course, I didn't. "I'm afraid I'll have to take that off you, sir. I'll give you a receipt and you can collect it off the bursar in Liverpool."

"That's no problem," I managed to utter, trying to look innocent.

Headless Chicken

As he wrote out the receipt the little voice in my head which had been nudging my awareness for the past few minutes began to succeed:

"And what the fuck are you going to drink on the ferry, you stupid bastard? You know they serve Guinness in dimpled glasses that have handles; and that it comes out of the tap like a headless chicken and when it gets to the glass? It sits like a soda stream classic that your mother poured. You know, when she says: 'don't want to waste the gas...'"

Nyree

I told that little voice to fuck off, but contrary to Judith Hanna's advice on the cover of Fuck the Tories 4, it didn't make me feel much better. As the half bottle of Black

Bush Nyree bought me wandered out of my life for nine hours I realised the predicament I was in. It was bad enough not having anything substantial to drink for nine hours it was the reason that Nyree bought it from me in the first place: I get chronically travel sick.

Sick

I'm trying to think of a way to tell you just how travel sick I get. I could use an example: a ten minute journey into the centre of Belfast makes me nauseous. A simile: my travel sickness is like Iain Thomas in a bar (we both end up violently sick). Medical reasons: vertigo and a nasty stomach, a worse mix than Pernod and Guinness. All of these can give you some indication, but if you saw the colour of my face on that ferry, the texture of my puke in the bog, or the look of horror when they announced a delay of forty-five minutes, you would probably be more aware of my situation. That whole night from 9.30pm on Friday to Saturday at 8.00am was one big nightmare with the difference that I couldn't even sleep through it.

Eventually they let us off the ferry and what was I faced with then? More bloody customs! After Belfast though I thought I must be in the clear unless of course some terrorist had slipped an RPG7 into my rucksack on the ferry. Hence I could walk past these goons with confidence, but I didn't. I shook, I quivered and hoped they wouldn't pick me.

Nyree

"I'm just a student", I thought and tried to look innocent. It somehow seemed inevitable that I would fail. Perhaps it was the cube of carrot which lay on my chin which made them suspicious.

So I got roped off to the one side, extremely worried and embarrassed; my eyes screaming innocence, my bowels proclaiming guilt. They went through

everything with a fine tooth comb. I mean everything! Even when they examined all the fannish credentials in my rucksack they did it totally professionally and efficiently. The analogy will probably bring forth multiple female outrages, but it was as if I'd just been raped in public.

When they were through with my rucksack they noticed the headphones dangling around my neck.

"May I see your personal stereo, sir?"

It wasn't as if it was the latest CD player, I thought, so he's not a Hi-Fi freak.

"Can you show me the batteries, sir?"

I did.

"Can you play the cassette for me, sir?"

Oh, shit! The batteries had died a half an hour ago before disembarking. He'll take

Nyree's Panasonic to pieces looking for electronic detonating equipment.

"Er, the batteries are dead..." So he took it from me, removed the Pogues and, for just a merest second, I thought he smiled. Nah, it must have been a reflection on my glasses. He then pushed the play button and, with no cassette to play, the spools whizzed around.

"Thank you, sir" - totally professional and efficient - I felt lost in a sea of anonymity. This feeling was heightened when I stepped out of the custom house and onto a Brookside set. Before you start to think that I'm stereotyping, it WAS a shooting of the TV series. The next time I travel to a con, it will be in Belfast or I will be unconscious.



• James Mc Kee hangs a hobbit to start a long running series...

blues for ceausescu

Before the Nick Cave book, comes Nick Cave's album (and if you think this column will become a running ad for N.C., then you're right - but only sometimes). Whilst clear parallels can be drawn between *And the Ass Saw the Angel* and the song *Tupelo* for example, the new album *The Good Son* is a complete change of direction, being much more mellow than his previous works with the Bad Seeds.

This work can be considered as a series of ballads. The single *The Ship Song* is the obvious centrepiece, but the other tracks are of equal quality, especially *The Weeping Song* and *The Witness Song*. However, gone is the hard edge, the screamed and twisted lyrics, replaced with a much smoother, more subtle sound - although one which retains its lyrical 'bite'.

Which is in complete contrast to the next album, *Viva Dead Ponies*, from *Fatima*

Mansions. This is their second l.p. release, the band being fronted by the singer Cathal Coughlin. Whilst their debut (*Against Nature*) was melodic, fluid and dynamic - from the stirring pop song *Only Losers Take the Bus* to the introspective *13th Century Boy*, the new album is much more raw. Gone is all the smoothness of old, the lyrics raging back and forth. The single *Blues for Ceausescu*, although not included on the album, shows the band's new sound. Mark and I recently saw the band live in the Limelight - a tiny, seedy, city centre venue. In the packed space, Coughlin's stage presence was palpable, a huge beacon. Mark, unfamiliar with the new material and style was deeply impressed, and I, with some prior album exposure, no less so. All in all a band and sound worth staying with beyond the initial difficult teething period with their new material.

Talking of teething troubles provides a tenuous link with the next band, **The Fall**. I have had mixed experiences with Mark E. Smith and Co. in the past - from the joy of *The Frenz Experiment* to the pretentious and plain boring *Curious Oranj*. So it was with mixed feelings that I purchased *Extricate*.

sf fact

Philip K Dick is dead, alas.

It's a fact!

Okay so I know I'm an album behind, since *Shiftwork* has just been released (and what of *A Sides* and *B Sides*? I hear Fall cognoscenti cry). Point taken, but now that unemployment has struck, I am no longer in the position to acquire as many C.D.s as I would like.

What can I say? After the initial 'running in' period that is mandatory with all Fall material, it has proved to be very, very good. Not quite as good as *Frenz* but very close. And gaining.

All bands change - witness the above and **The Pixies** are no exception. The latest album *Bosanova* is a long time in coming and was eagerly awaited on both sides of the Atlantic. The Pixies have definitely smoothed out their jangling guitars and have created a less glaring style - albeit one that loses none of the life of the music. Definitely a progression. The album is uniformly excellent, my personal favourite being *Hang Wire*. The best album of my year.

At last and possibly least - *The Best of Van Morrison*. I'm not normally a great follower of 'Van the Man' and so the chance to get a good 'starter' compilation under my belt seemed like a good idea. And so it was - up to a point. Old favourites abound - *Queen of the Slipstream*, *Brown Eyed Girl* and *Did ye get healed?* But the remaining choices, especially the duet with Cliff Richard personally spoils an otherwise reasonable collection. The 'Best' it should be, but read the label carefully.

Other recent events - *Something Happens!* at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown. S.H. were very poor, and seemed to have only two good songs and an unremitting sameness. Also **Sonic Youth's** album - *Goo*. Unfortunately I have yet to listen to this one, but I'll try to say something about it the next time.



lukewarm fusion

I have attended two public lectures at the Queens University of Belfast in the last couple of months. The first was entitled *The Universe: A Personal View* by Sir Bernard Lovell and the second was entitled *Cold Fusion: An Update*.

As you may have guessed by now I have an interest in cosmology and physics, but before my collective audience jumps on me, I have to add that I am not very knowledgeable in either. Thus the more interested members should ignore any occasional factual slip in the course of this article.

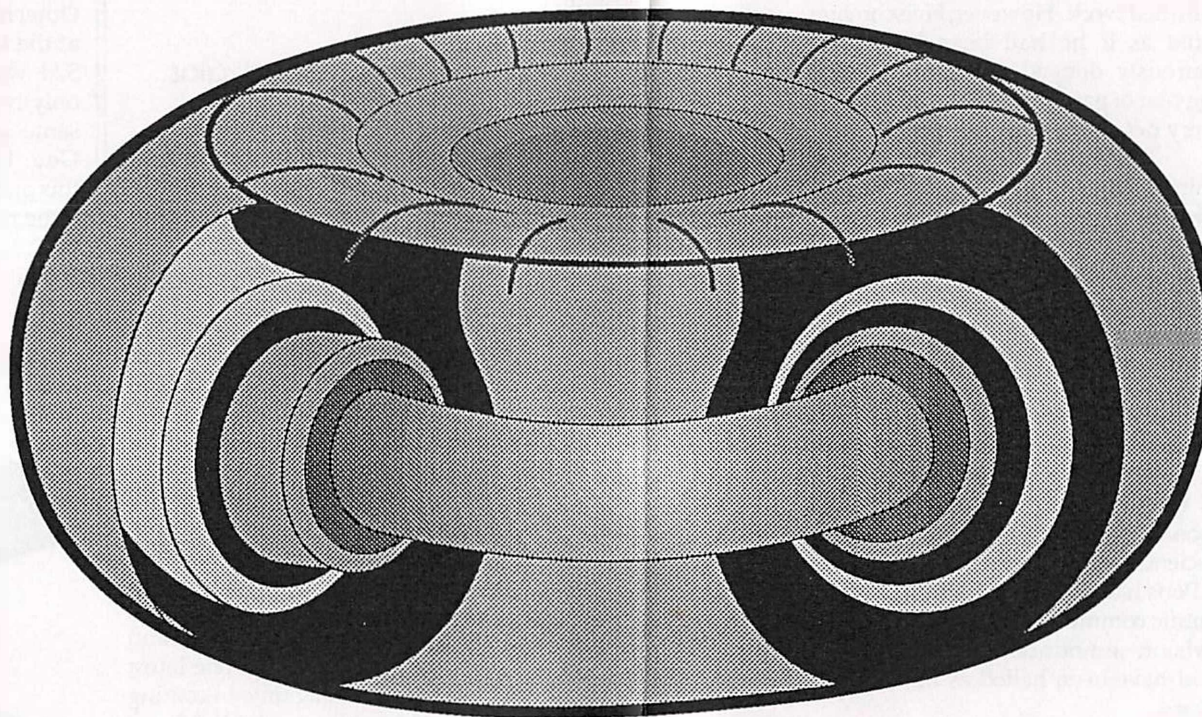
The lecture was to be given by Prof. Fleischmann, of Fleischmann and Pons fame. These two scientists announced the discovery of cold fusion to a disbelieving world in 1989.

The pair were roundly criticised by their peers for their mode of presentation, their experiments and almost anything else that came to mind. Experiments were set up all over the world which failed to corroborate their results and the furore eventually died down.

Pons and Fleischmann decided to remain silent on the subject for 18 months. They have recently started to lecture publicly again.

The lecture was introduced by the head of the physics department at Queen's. He first gave a resumé of Prof. Fleischmann's

career which even with my limited knowledge of public lecture introductions seemed strange. However, there was no denying, it was an impressive list of



this 45 billion dollar reactor has now been replaced by a £4.99 Junior Chemistry set

academic positions and research work. Prof. Fleischmann then introduced himself. A balding middle aged man, he spoke clearly with a slight Germanic inflected

accent. An archetypal scientist one might say, but one with an unmistakable aura of confidence. With a series of overheads and slides, he gave a brief introduction to the various approaches to nuclear fusion. The two most common modes of research have been magnetic confinement and laser implosion. The torodial ring (Totomak, Joint European Torus) technique seeks to

contain the plasma by the use of magnetic fields since all materials would vaporise at the required fusion temperatures of several hundred million degrees. It is the

attainment of these high temperatures coupled with the technical difficulty of the design that have hindered work in this area.

The other main technique utilises multiple high power lasers impinging on a target pellet. This causes it to heat and implode, thereby hopefully producing fusion. Work on both these techniques is ongoing, though Britain seems increasingly reluctant to contribute to the J.E.T. (and successive) programmes, preferring to spend the money on unneeded armaments.

The avenue of research investigated by Fleischmann and Pons (amongst others) is electrochemical. The example given by Prof. Fleischmann at the start of the lecture is instructive. The breakdown of salt (sodium chloride) into its constituent elements normally requires a temperature of approximately 50,000 degrees Celsius. However, by using a small d.c. voltage of 3V and two electrodes this temperature can be reduced to approximately 500 degrees centigrade. This is an oversimplification of the case as all the chemists out there will be aware but it shows the potential of electrochemistry (according to Prof. Fleischmann).

The team therefore tackled the fusion problem by loading a rod of palladium with deuterium, by electrochemical means. The palladium lattice was supersaturated with ions to the theoretical density required for nuclear fusion. Fleischmann and Pons observed a variety of effects which indicated to them that fusion had indeed taken place.

Prof. Fleischmann covered the history of cold fusion experiments in this century, and produced papers supporting his

contention. He also mentioned work done in the U.S.S.R. and several other electrochemical approaches to fusion.

The introduction was good, being readily understandable to interested lay persons with no more than a high school physics background. The explanations of Fleischmann's experiments could also be followed although the slides were much too detailed for general consumption, containing all the relevant equations. I didn't notice any complaints, though, from the massed ranks of young, eager physics undergraduates who seemed to compose three quarters of the audience. The remainder were the general public (me!) and a gaggle of chemistry and physics lecturers along the front row. This included one who must have been a 'plant' as he nodded vigorously in agreement with all of Prof. Fleischmann's statements.

The details of the experimental results were only comprehensible in general, the leap between the introduction and the mid section of the lecture being too large (and yes, I was paying attention). However, the overall points were communicated in detail, if rather forcefully. He also refuted the various specific criticisms made of the initial experiments which I felt to be a very defensive attitude, not without some hurt professional pride. He also indicated the reasons why the many experiments conducted around the world had not duplicated all of the initial results.

The final few minutes of the lecture consisted of the Prof. mentioning the work done in the last 18 months. He would not go into detail, simply stating that he would have given up by now if the work had not be progressing well. All the work was in the process of being patented. But he did indicate that the further research had

produced some interesting results, with the possibility of technological spin-offs in the distant future.

The lecture concluded with a question and answer session. The physics community closed their silent ranks and refused to ask questions. The most interesting question came from the chemistry bunch - 'Was your initial idea formed intuitively?' A fair question, and most research scientists would admit that intuition plays a large part in their work. However, Fleischmann, reacted as if he had been bitten and vigorously denied any intuitive link, citing year of patient struggle with the topic - a very defensive reaction.

Coming to the lecture with fellow editor Mark, with a very healthy scepticism, I left it considerably persuaded of the merits of the research. A well wishing feeling of "well if he's right, good luck to him" also pertained. He appeared to this author to be sincere and committed to his work - to the point of paying for much of it himself - and not the crackpot that he has been portrayed as in the press.

It is interesting to observe how much personality and infighting play a part in the science world. Perhaps if Fleischmann and Pons had not alienated the rest of the scientific community by their preemptive television announcements, their work would have been hailed as a major step forward.

Perhaps they should not be blamed - the stakes they are playing for are high - since efficient fusion could provide an almost unlimited and virtually free source of power. Their only crime is perhaps enthusiasm and the jealousy of their peers.



- Mark McCann says hello and goodbye to the family.

poetic champions

The winter of 1989. Standing in an ancient graveyard in south Derry, not too far from the shores of Lough Neagh. The snow is falling heavily and the mourners at the funeral stand huddled around an open grave, myself among them. My eighty-five year old grandfather is being laid to rest.

The atmosphere is not one of grief: people have pointed out that at his age he has had a good innings and not a bad life. His wife appears sad but somehow relieved. He had been suffering from cancer for quite a while. Better to have a dignified death than the long drawn out agony of lung cancer. I stand at the grave feeling isolated from everyone around. It's the first funeral I've ever been to and what's more I'm suffering from a heavy cold that is making me light headed and detached from all about me.

The priest finishes his prayers and people begin to wander back to their cars to travel to the local hotel for the celebratory piss-up which will see the old man off in style. I wander among the graves, many with headstones dating back hundreds of years. God only knows how old the unmarked ones are. Supposedly the place is of Celtic origin. A thousand years old? My sense of detachment increases and I start a fit of coughing and sneezing.

Two people come towards me and I recognise one as my great aunt Jinny. Fussing over me she presses a huge handkerchief into my hand and introduces the person with her. He's a big man wearing a snow covered fedora and puffing on a huge cigar. Very outlandish for stern Presbyterian Castledawson!

I had known for quite a while that Seamus Heaney was a relative of mine but it was a statement always made to me with an

embarrassed air. After all, being a poet is not exactly a normal career. Admitting your cousin was a poet was akin to letting slip that your family had a history of schizophrenia. Something to be kept quiet about. But at school I was soon to discover that Seamus was in fact, (to quote the Times Literary Supplement)- 'the greatest living English speaking poet'. (I always love the way the British like to include themselves in Irish successes by saying 'english speaking'- as in, Stephen Roche was the first 'english speaking' cyclist to win the Tour de France. Strange how you never hear IRA men called 'english speaking' terrorists. but I digress...)

I was even more impressed to find out that I and my class had to learn Seamus Heaney's poems for our 'A' Levels.

And now here I was at last face-to-face with the man - ('a modern Milton', TLS again). A historic moment which I would be able to write about for years to come. What should I say? Was there some awfully witty and intellectual comment I could make? A reference to his latest play perhaps? *The Cure at Troy*. My knowledge of Sophocles is a bit shaky though. Better to stick to an area I knew something about. With some anxiety I realised nothing was coming to mind apart from the truly stunning, "I like your poems, Mr Heaney", and, "Where do you get your ideas?"

Eschewing these I just continued coughing. Aunt Jinny went on to tell Seamus that I

had achieved an E in my 'A' Level English exam and that I was interested in science fiction.

Oh, great, I thought, credibility shot down in flames. Thanks Jinny!

Something poetical was needed here and quickly." Not a nice day for a funeral", I finally managed.

"No it's not", Heaney replied, not at all unexpectedly.

"This is the first time I've ever been to a funeral", I told him.

"Oh, what does it feel like?", he asked. Good, I thought. His interest has been aroused.

"Strange".

Great, I thought, just great. What a command of imagery and imagination!

"Did you know your grandfather well?" he asked.

"Oh, yeah" I answered quickly, but thought

again, "No not really' You know young people..."

He nodded. "He was in the merchant navy you know. I wrote a poem about him"

"It can't be the same person. My grandfather was not in the navy."

"Oh, yes he was", Jinny interrupted, "You didn't even know that?"

With that we went our separate ways. Jinny took me to her car and left me home.

I was too ill to face the meal.

And so ended my historic meeting with Seamus Heaney. Communication can be a difficult thing to master, I've decided.

Whether it is with world renowned poets or even your own grandfather who died at 85 and who I never knew anything about.

And of course it's too late now to find out. Next time I meet Heaney though I'll

definitely ask him where does he get his ideas from.



● James McKee on Cave's meisterwerk.

madness abounds

And The Ass Saw The Angel is Nick Cave's first book. It is the life story of Euchrid Eucrow, recounted by him as he sinks slowly to his death in a swamp. How his fate has led him to this is not revealed until the last few pages of the work.

Euchrid is a mute, born of a sadistic father and an alcoholic mother. His identical twin dies at childbirth, leaving him to suffer the drunken wrath of his mother and the violent hostility of his local community alone. The local village houses a strange religious sect, who having fallen on hard times, invents a new religion surrounding a mysterious little girl. Unlike Eucrow, they are unaware that the girl is the daughter of a local whore whom the townspeople collectively murdered. She becomes the focus of the hate he nurtures against the world. He believes himself to be the avenging angel of god.

With the murder of his mother by his father and his subsequential death, Eucrow's remaining links to sanity are severed. He fortifies the parental home and fills it with mutilated animal companions. He then impregnates and attempts to murder the girl and is pursued to his suicide in the swamp by the vengeful townsfolk.

The book is uniformly dark, the main characters being a thoroughly unlikeable bunch. The central character, Eucrow, stirs sympathy only rarely, being obviously murderously insane. The book has a very biblical flavour due to its narrative style and religious references. The writing is fluid and descriptively dense, almost baroque. It is not an uplifting tome, but still one well worth reading as it provides one the best glimpses of religion as a great insanity that I have yet read.



• Tommy Ferguson's latest movement.

garret to ground floor

As you may have gathered by now I've moved house again.

Why the move this time? Well, to be perfectly frank, I was evicted. Given a months notice, told to pack my things, booted out, told to go where the sun don't shine... you get the picture. Now I'm not the easiest person to live with. Sometimes I let the dishes pile up, don't bother dusting (God, how I hate dusting) and it takes super human effort for me to even open the door to the THAT cupboard, the one with the hoover in it. All things considered though I'm not the complete imbecile that my friends would make me out to be. What really happened was an unfortunate set of circumstances. Honest.

How many times have I moved house in the past two or three years? How many jobs have I had in the past two or three years? Am I Mr. Average? Answers: a lot, even more and No.

My landlord (who deserves a lot more exposure than this article can really do justice to) had a particularly jolly night out and on the following day, a thursday, a day of special significance in fannish-type circles in Belfast, there is a meeting called

The Garret (of which more in the BSFA column) which meets in my house.

This particular Thursday there was an unusual influx of people from the nether reaches of N. I. known as Lisburn; in fact there was a crowd of seven. Even though I had a large room, these were large people and seven constituted a crowd. So I kept on giving them subtle reminders like:

"Shut the fuck up. The landlord has got a serious problem relating to the spinning universe in the room below us."

This had the effect of making them speak a couple of decibels lower than normal for five minutes whereupon they reverted to gaining the attention of the rest of the group by speaking even louder (Hi Mark...) This social affair lasted until about 12.30 (a fairly early time) when I forcibly ejected everyone from the house.

The following day I looked in vain for my landlord to apologise but to no avail. A week later I returned from work to find a note pinned to the notice board. My landlord had contracted glandular fever, was in hospital getting his glands drained and wouldn't be back in the house until the end of the month where he would remain recovering until the end of September. Shite.

At the end of the month he got my rent money in cash (he's that type of landlord) and gave me a months notice. I had wanted to leave at some stage anyway but was going to leave it for two months when I got my pay-rise and promotion together and could afford a flat of my own.

Now forgive me for thinking this but as outside spectators do any of you think that some of the above details are inter-related? I thought so too.



sf fact

Robert A Heinlein's nipples first went 'spung' in 1943 during a conversation with L. Sprague DeCamp.

It's a fact!

● Tommy Ferguson muses on the life of a lecturer...

thoughts

I was late. Rushing down the corridor, nodding to colleagues, throwing hellos over my shoulder like salt, I try to arrange my notes. Tuesdays, Soviet History, hurried mornings and then lazy afternoons in the bar where I laugh and quote: "I could never get the hang of Tuesdays!"

After what seemed a surreal length of time I reached the conclusion of the corridor and turned left to the lecture theatre.

Stopping at the door I surveyed the gathered throng, hungry for knowledge; eager for debate and always quick to reply. Come the afternoon they'll have their chance, I think to myself, remembering long lost debates of dubious importance over a pint or two and a packet of crisps.

Cocky lenses

Striding to the podium, I ascend the steps and begin to gather my thoughts as the crowd settles and all eyes turn to me. I can feel them then, hundreds of questioning lenses, some cocky and self assured with last year's student's notes. Others confused and anxious not to miss anything. The girls in front with their tight blouses and mini skirts and the guys at the back, nonchalant and casual, their Sony Walkmans already whirring in front of me. Shouldn't be allowed, those damned things. Ah, but it's progress they tell me...

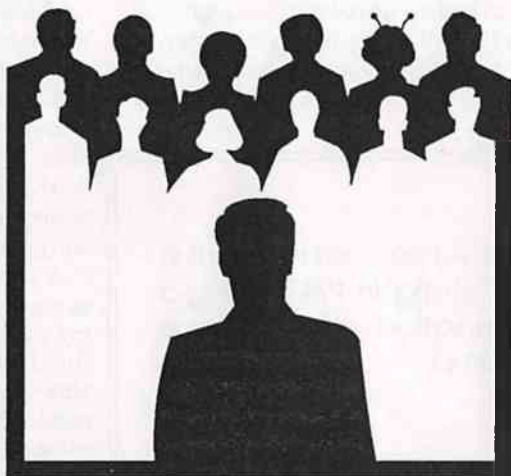
Giggling Bunch

I look up for the first time and greet my audience with a smile and a prepared awkwardness, whilst my eyes and brain scan the crowd. Trouble there, a sleepless night over to the left, frightened face down below me, (which a knowing smile and a nod quickly reassured), and the giggling bunch in the top right hand corner. The usual mix. 'Modern

Soviet history began in 1905...', and I'm off. Another part of my brain takes over and the conscious part goes into abstract thoughts as words like revolution, systems, political orthodoxy, semantic arguments and theories of history flow from my mouth effortlessly.

I take in the lecture theatre once again. Students - they'll never change! Thinking back to when I sat there with last year's notes in my lap I recall wondering what the lecturer's thoughts had been when he was lecturing me...

Pausing to catch my breath I catch the eye of a student in the front row gazing up at me through abstract eyes, and I smile.



● After years of misconception, *Götterdämmerung* brings you the facts

belfast: the decalogue

Most people's impression of Belfast, a city rarely visited by outsiders, have been formed through television news reports which are usually connected in some way with "the troubles".

In its drive to establish the town as the Hibernian Rio, *Götterdämmerung*, in association with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, has put together a fun guide for would-be travellers:

1) Belfast has over 25,000 pubs, most of which regularly serve half price beer to English tourists.

2) With miles of empty sandy beaches and summertemperaturesregularlyinthehigh nineties Belfast is a sun worshippers Mecca. Tourists are warned however to stay indoors between the hours of twelve noon and two p.m. to escape the fierce mid-day heat.

3) Travellers should take note of several obscure locals customs. Under no circumstances should the traveller be induced to participate in the local "Pass-the-Parcel-Bomb" competition, as the locals will invariably be much more skilled.

4) Noted for its culinary and coronary inducing subtleties, the Ulster Fry is the last word in Celtic cuisine. The typical Fry consists of eggs, bacon, fadge, sausages and soda bread served on a thick sauce of purest animal fat. Just the thing after a night on the town.

5) No visit is complete without a stop-off at the Falls Road Theme Park, (children admitted free; closed Wednesdays). Here you can take turns at 'tossing the drogue bomb', 'sniping the saracen', and, 'dodging the baton round'.

6) Travel to the city is cheap indeed. If arriving from mainland it is best to apply for an exclusion order from Special Branch

which will ensure swift if not luxurious transport to the city. If arriving from Southern Ireland most prefer to purchase extradition orders, but this can be a lengthy and haphazard procedure.

7) Things to take along: Kevlar flak jacket, assorted National flags, a spare Irish accent, two passports; foldaway solicitor with habaes corpus; and the fluorescent 'I am a Tourist, don't shoot me' badge.

8) Things not to take along: a car, an American accent, jogging shoes, Union Jack boxer shorts, Scotch whiskey or a sense of justice.

9) Belfast city nitespots: Robinson's Bar (Proper Dress); Shankill Road Marching Lambeg drummers-Defenders of the Faith, No Surrender, Turn or Burn, Ulster Says No, Kick the Pope, Home Rule is Rome Rule, What we have we hold, Remember 1690- Association Club (Proper Dress); La Belle Epoque (Proper Dress); Lavery's Gin Palace (Proper Dress); Falls Road, Bobby Sands Memorial, Ourselves Alone, Our Day Will Come, SS RUC, Brits Out, Free Dessie Ellis, Gerry Fitt is a Brit, Stop Extradition Now, Smash 'H' Block, Stop Strip searching Women's Drop-in centre (Proper Dress).

10) History. Once upon a time there was this English man...



•Gerry O'Connor eats a 480Z...

technician at large

Working in a school for a number of years you can guess that teachers are not at the top of my popularity list. Believe it or not, in the distant past that was the profession that I wished to do. Thankfully I put that to rest with the dreaded exams and now I work with teachers instead of being one. (Would someone please put me out of my misery).

I work in a school (or as they call it up here a "College") and am currently employed as a computer technician (well not for long...) and I can now reveal the nasty side of working amongst teachers.

Being a technician in a large school I have a remarkably free existence. If left alone I will do absolutely no work and generally play games on my trusty PC (more of that later) or spend 99.999% trying to persuade Corel (the program everyone should have but don't have the hardware to run it!!!) Draw to print to an Apple Laserwriter II NT.

I am responsible for the day to day running of the computers in the college therefore have a fair bit of contact with them in the college. My workmates in the school have a nickname for me, called "MUSHROOM". The reasons are simple. These poor things are kept in the dark and fed on shit. Now you have a fair idea of the trust people put in me.

Well less of this nonsense about teachers. I think people become teachers because they had a frustrated life in school and decide to pass that on to the next generation - so a vicious circle is generated.

My experience is from a technical point of view. Hands up who can programme their video recorder. Well, a teacher once asked me where the off/on button was. When I explained that the video recorder wasn't even plugged in at the mains a bright red

glow appeared on their face.

Generally common sense is all that is needed to work in this job. Another is having read every computer manual back to front isn't a bad start. If I had a penny for the amount of times I have been asked how to print out from WORD I would be a very poor man. I just plead insanity and go deaf. This unfortunately has a negative effect. The questioning teacher then proceeds to stick to you like a limpet until you answer the question that you have already forgotten as another teacher has now cornered you on another topic.

And there goes the tea break bell. Now this is another torture. I don't know of many technicians that take their breaks with the teaching staff but if you are considering this, don't. It's a nightmare. You wander down to the feeding pen ready to attack the crossword from the Sun (do you know anyone who can do this great feat?!!). Being amongst the teachers has its rewards. Like apple turnovers and lots of other nice food.

The College has two computer rooms and three networks. One network is an eight station 480Z. How many people out there can remember this piece of junk? Well believe it or not this one even works due to the many seconds that I have spent with it. It is the slowest piece of crap that was ever invented and if I ever get the idiot that designed it I will put him in a room with all

the video tapes of Jeremy Beadle in it. Slow is not the word for this network. You could rewrite the software and still have time to spare before the database is loaded. I steer clear of it as much as I can and leave the teacher who's little baby this is to get on with the poor beast. Oh, did I tell you what size this monster is. Well its black, heavy and the size of a barn (well not that big).

The other two networks are of the Nimbus type. Again RM (the company that makes these horrible machines and also made the 480Z) have given the schools a totally crap machine for today's needs. Teachers on the other hand think the sun shines out of their rear ends. Well you have to forgive teachers. The only teachers that actually know anything about computers are the ones who have their own PC's at home. Three guesses who's this idea was!!!

One of the two networks is housed in a room for itself and this is where my store room is. Well it's more of hiding place. The room has 16 RM Nimbus PC 186's. In the storeroom are the two servers for the networks and my trusty PC. It's great fun when a class of kids (first form usually) with a totally bewildered teacher in tow comes to use the room. This gives me a great buzz as the teacher has no idea how to use the computers or even better power them up. The kids are smarter than the teacher so are quickly logged into their mate's area before the teacher even has time to blink.

Then the network goes down. All thirty plus kids start yelling and shouting for the teacher to help them as the machine has crashed. They automatically reach for me but by this time I am usually trying to wire up the college P.A. system so all hell breaks loose. An all points bulletin is issued for my whereabouts. Eventually I appear and within five minutes everything is back to normal.

The other network is located throughout the school in the head of departments' rooms. The amount of times this network is used I can count on one hand. Well there was time that an inspector was looking over the english computer and I accidentally

sf fact

Peter Morwood is a well known fantasy writer.

It's a fact!

pulled the plug on the network. The teacher involved went spare. My face went a bright shade of red and that was that. Some teachers have managed to put the computers to good use. This came to light when one teacher wanted to do a college magazine that was done by the students to show them what D.T.P. was and how it worked. Well, I was suckered into this and nearly went mad with all the changes and amendments that the magazine went through. I wonder if the certain teacher in question actually can spell as the final copy was full of spelling mistakes (isn't that right Mrs Mc C?)

Well less of this drive, back to my PC.

This beast is a RM Nimbus AX/2 with a 40Mb hard drive and 5Mb of RAM. (has anyone tried to buy RAM from RM? Well it's expensive to the extent that I bought for myself and another machine 8Mb boards and 4Mb of RAM on each for the same price of a 4Mb card from RM (actually CEM but that's for another time)). Having 4Mb of extended RAM is a great bonus and my machine now goes like the clappers. My machine is pretty quick but not as

quick as the PC that makes this mag up. The school also has a hand scanner which I put to good use when I scanned the heads (literally) of the schools into my PC. I then went on to make up wanted posters using the pictures but I never printed them out as I wouldn't live long. The laser printer in question is a Rank Xerox 4030 Postscript/Laserjet II. This printer is used nearly every day by various teachers. My biggest problem here is that the printer has six little buttons on the front and a lcd panel. Well

I had to actually tape these up so that the teachers couldn't tamper with it (how many people know a teacher that cannot leave things alone?) The poor laser printer has survived a year in the school and hopefully will survive another.

As I finish this little note I will leave you with this thought. Would the world be any different without teachers and their like?. I often wonder. Be seeing you.



•Gerry O'Connor wallows in nostalgia.

good old days...

In these days of more and more complicated computers I will now take all ye to the good old days when you could fit ten games on a disk and still have room for a bus or two.

Today's computer games for the PC, Atari (let's ditch this one) and the Amiga (my favourite) come on one disk or more commonly two, three or more disks.

Take an example, *Wing Commander*. Having seen this game some months ago it has great sound (can anyone permanently loan me an Adlib sound board, please) and mega graphics (provided you have VGA or better). Everyone goes "WOW, this is great" and "look how fast it is" when they see this and others games of this type on the trusty PC but little do they know that you need a quick PC (386 or 486, lots of RAM - 4Mb should do and a big hard disk (*Wing Commander* takes up 5Mb).

Some games on the Amiga (my favourite machine) need 1Mb RAM as standard. The more RAM you can throw at some games the happier they are. Some even need more RAM and an extra drive. But the most annoying thing is when you have the game loaded and finished one game the blasted thing proceeds to reload the whole game again.

What the hell was the game doing with the memory? Playing tiddly winks or something? And the old answer you always get from the games companies "This is the protection of the game checking itself".

I will now take you back in time to the days when a game took 20 minutes to load, had crap graphics but were as playable as some of today's greats.

I refer to my and other peoples trusty, loved and often irritating BBC B, Spectrum and the C64. (The 464 from Amstrad is crap anyway so there!!!).

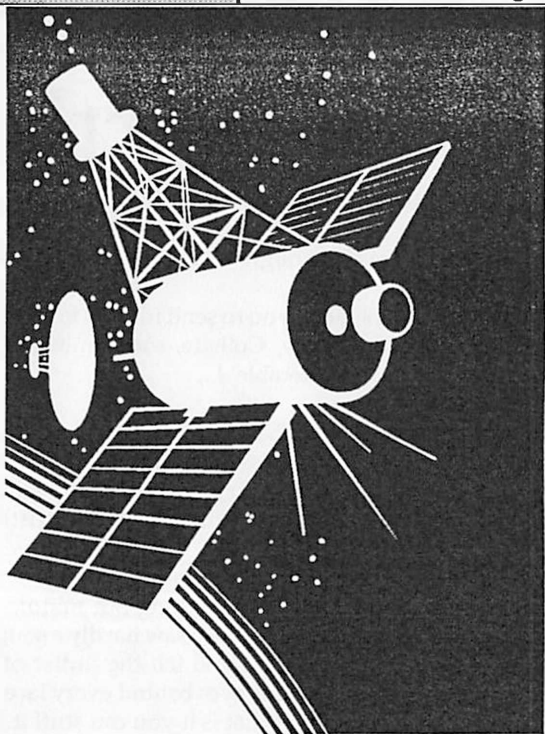
Take first the C64. This computer has reasonable graphics, some great sound for its time (this is where British Gas got their name "SID") but was dogged by its operating system and its hard to use hardware. Also it had the slowest hard disk drive I have ever seen (some tapes even loaded quicker than the disk version).

Some famous games that I can remember on this computer were *Mercenary* (great 3D graphics and pioneered fast or NOVA loading), *Little Computer People* (really addictive), *Way of the Exploding Fist* (Great music and not bad graphics) and one of my favourites - *Thing on a Spring*.

The last game drove me up the wall one Friday night after a late drinking session at a friend's house. We decided to load any game on the C64 and the one we loaded was *Thingy*. Six hours later we were still none the wiser and eventually ended up completing the game before falling into a pile. That's what games at 3a.m. did for you.

The Spectrum was one of the first computers I ever owned (only for a few weeks until I wised up and bought a BBC). This computer had crap graphics (a Nintendo Game Boy can even now do better and that's in mono), a sound system that consisted of a few beeps and squeals and a totally useless keyboard. But the games that I have played on this little marvel were revolutionary.

The Spectrum had a great suite of programs invented for it by a company called Ultimate and this all started with *Sabre Wulf*. Colourful graphics (well it tried) but it played like a dream. It even appeared on the BBC and was a big hit. The next in the long line of games from ultimate was *Knight Lore*. This game was head and shoulders above the rest. 3D isometric graphics and a great plot. This game probably was one of the best games on the Spectrum ever. It sent shock waves through the computer industry and this produced more 3D isometric games than you could



think of. Next came *Alien 8*. Same fabulous graphics in 3D isometric but set aboard a spaceship as opposed to in medieval times. Then came Sandy White with *Ant Attack*. The first game to have a patent applied to it for 3D full screen scrolling. No one could touch this with a barge pole. Ultimate responded with *Nightshade*. A 3D isometric game but instead of being room based it now scrolled in a small window in the middle of the screen. That got around the patent. Next came possibly the best 3D isometric game (room based) ever. This was called *Head Over Heels*. Basically instead of one character running around doing all the work there was one that split into two. Great game. Well that's enough of this. Bye for now. [More from the inimitable Gerry next time round. 'Can you handle it?']



• our regular column for readers' angst.

hit the north

Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Ave., London, E17 8AY.

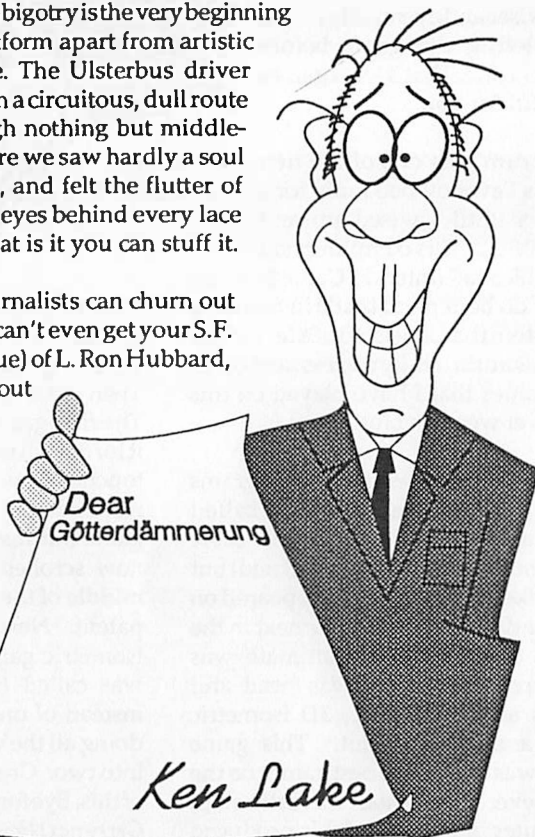
To the onlie begetters; of what ought to be titled Götterdämmerung but isn't...

Heaven knows what persuaded you to send me this farrago of juvenilia with its ill-spelt, ungrammatical text (Ian Paisley, Collette, somnambulant, Jekyll for a start, and you cannot logically say 'more preferable')...

Now like almost everyone on the Mainland I have seen on T.V. only those parts of Belfast where Civil War has been in progress for twenty years, where urban deprivation matches the Bronx, where bigotry is the very beginning of life, where graffiti are the only artform apart from artistic knee-capping... you get the picture. The Ulsterbus driver carefully avoided all this, taking us on a circuitous, dull route by motorway, ring road etc. through nothing but middle-class Protestant areas [*Antrim?*] where we saw hardly a soul on foot, plenty of cars in good nick, and felt the flutter of fingers and the boring of suspicious eyes behind every lace curtain in every house. Frankly if that is it you can stuff it.

I'm appalled that graduates and journalists can churn out such a crappy product as yours: you can't even get your S.F. Facts right - Joy Hibbert is an analog(ue) of L. Ron Hubbard, two faults in one tiny snippet is about par for the course.

I hope you realise that the Inland Revenue article breaks the Official Secrets Act which you signed to act by when you joined them; I don't know how you can expect employed people to be amused or even tolerant of those who skive off work and set out to fuck up the system to avoid working; when employed by an organisation which we all contribute to keeping in existence to pay you



for precious little but childishness.

With the reputation of the people of the six counties being what it is, I'm astonished that anyone should ostracise and penalise your rapist/ etc. colleague, but absolutely amazed that no-one has wiped out the Sunday World once and for all - such scum have no right to pounce off the body politic.

Finally I am of course glad that one of you has found a belief system that functions fairly, albeit an outré one, but cannot help repeating Sam Goldwyn's celebrated comment that anyone who goes to a psychiatrist needs his head reading. The whole psychiatric community has been exposed as charlatans over and over: why waste good money on them when you can always find a pleasant kindly welcoming rather dim girl who will listen to you all night and make you feel as though you are actually talking sense, which is more than I'm prepared to allow on the basis of this first ish.

At least try to get the title right next time.

[Coming from the most socially and economically deprived region of Western Europe we are often subject to the ritual patronising and smug condescension of morally superior states. How refreshing it is, then, to find a reader with a calm and reasoned attitude to the simple problems of the Province. Thanks Ken, it's good to know you care].

sf fact

The comic genius of Mark S. Geston's *Lords of the Starship* has never been fully understood.

It's a fact!

James White, 2 West Drive,
Portstewart, Co. Londonderry, BT55 7ND;
Dear Tommy, et al,

Since I am writing to a bunch of literate, highly educated, liberal minded and cosmopolitan people like yourselves I suppose there is no need to explain that et al is Latin and roughly translated into the vernacular means All the e-ts, so I won't bother.

Thank you all very much for *Götterdämmerung*. The layout and production was highly professional and it was legible unlike TASH [Tommy's previous solo effort] which in places was like trying to decipher sand weathered Egyptian hieroglyphics, although the effort was always worth it. I enjoyed all of the magazine but the piece lifting the lid of the Inland Revenue worried me a bit. Is the human race psychologically and philosophically prepared for such dangerous revelations? I don't know, but it made me start thinking about one of the characters in the article, Smelvin.

Have you ever considered the possibility that Smelvin is an alien, and that it needs to exist in an environment and pong level that is normal to its kinds' life support requirements? That is why it cannot understand or do anything about changing its habits of personal hygiene it would be like somebody from Out There telling us to do something about fouling up all our, nice fresh air, which we are fouling anyway.

Smelvin reminds me of a bloke I used to know in the old days at Short's planning office. He, however, was young, clean-cut, well dressed with sharp creases in his pants, which usually ran up and down instead of cross wise. During periods of intense stress, when a job was needed yesterday or the day before, he was in the habit of picking his nose while working at the drawing board. He would do it by raising one hand and poking the stiffened little finger into the opposite nostril.

One day there was a real panic on and the increased stress sent him right over the edge; he started crossing his forearms in front of his chest, and, with both little fingers erect, began picking both nostrils simultaneously. When word of this reached the publicity department I was sent down to witness the event covertly, which was so strange and unusual and physiologically difficult that I wanted to issue a press release about it, with photographs, natch, but the boss thought the idea in questionable taste and shot it down.

sf fact

This is the last sf fact, definitely, indisputably the very, very last, honest!

It's a fact!

A few months later he met a nice girl from accounts, the young planner that is, not the boss and got married, had three children and gave up picking his nose. It was a great pity, we all thought, because it seemed that much of the richness and colour had just gone out of our lives.

[Thanks James, how about a piece of fiction? Please.]

Steve Sneyd, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD5 8PB;

As I'm currently knee deep in frighteningly brown envelopes from the Inland Revenue, the last thing I needed to know is that it REALLY is run by evil masterminds and not by neutral, if not benevolent, computers.

Great Bus journeys of the world- that one will run and run (or crawl and crawl).
ps If you have any evidence that the Queen collects Van Vogt, PRODUCE IT.

[Nice poem Steve, but it doesn't rhyme].

John Nelson, 19 Cherry Valley, Knock, Belfast, BT5 6PJ;

Nice production values. First thing that struck me. Really nice production values. All the pages are the right way up and I can read 99% of the text. You sure the Ferg had anything to do with this? *[What can we say? It's the TASH Reader's Syndrome...]*

FACT: I was so impressed by Sheldon Perkin's Polaris that I lent it to a friend who wasn't

even a SF buff, and he liked it. I was much younger then and could enjoy SF.

FACT: People in cinemas who complain loudly about the positioning of the speaker systems are a pain in the arse.

FACT: The bus story was 50% too long. A scratch and sniff map might have livened the text up a little. Just something for you to think about for the next time

FACT: I have been manic depressive and attempted suicide but found salvation through watching American Wrestling and following the four demandments of Hulkamania; the saying your prayers, the training, the vitamins and the believing in yourself.

FACT: Don't the bastards realise that sticking the only two speakers side by side, right up front underneath the screen is not by any stretch of the imagination conducive to Dolby stereo.

FACT: I have an interesting bus story about the time I picked up a criminal record in France.

[FACT: We have an interesting story about John Nelson, a penguin and a bucket of week old chip fat].



J Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks MK16 9AZ.

Nice first attempt at a MAC produced zine: *[what, a Big Mac?]* as a Mac/Pagemaker user myself, I recognise many of the typographical tricks you are using with a reasonable amount of restraint. (It's all too easy to go ape with the Mac - there are so many things you can do, and so many fonts, etc., that you can overload the reader). There are a few glitches in there... But no doubt you know these things, and are working to improve them in future issues. *[which Mac produced zine, John? This is done on a ZX80 with a 10Mbyte RAM pack on the back...]*

Content wise, it's fine, plenty of variety (though whether Tommy's revelation that he is now working for the Inland Revenue will endear him to fans is a real can of worms- don't take notes at the next con, Tommy, they'll think you'll you are checking up on them). The real grabber this issue was the Crime and Punishment piece by oops, no credits (now there's a goof for you). The piece highlights two things in our society that are screwed up: the first is the press, who hound a man who has already paid for his crime, in effect putting him on trial again, and punishing him again too. This is, of course, wrong, and wouldn't happen if we didn't have such dregs running our newspapers. The second is the way nobody will give the guy the benefit of the doubt despite being, too all intents and purposes, a nice guy now, he is still made to pay for his past misdemeanours what should really happen is that society should round on the reporter and prosecute him for harassment.

[The Crime and Punishment story was anonymous to protect the identity of the ex-offender involved, as copies of Götterdämmerung were available in the place where he once worked].

Shep Kirkbride, 42 Green Lane, Bellevue, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA2 7QA.

I don't know what it is about the issue of Götterdämmerung that inspired me to come up with this weird piece [cover], but nevertheless it was wrenched from somewhere deep inside me and you lot are definitely to blame for this little bastardised piece of Shep. My wife says that she didn't really know me until I came up with, so I think there is probably a divorce somewhere along the line.

[Legbreakers Inc., McCann, Ferguson, McKee for hire, transport extra cost, all work considered, Mrs Kirkbride]

Caroline Mullan, 9 Graham Road, Wealdstone, Harrow, HA3 5RP

Thanks for Götterdämmerung- what an apocalyptic title for such a fair young fanzine... Not sure which of you wrote 'Crime and punishment', but the problem is not unique to him. Only answer I have ever found is to take people as they take you, but that isn't to say it's a good one. If you think the bus to Magherafelt is boring you should try driving through Kansas!

[Which part of Northern Ireland is that?]

Jon May, Zaehringerst 49, D-7500 KARLSRUHE 1, Germany

Thanks for Götterdämmerung - I enclose a disk with my quazazapper contribution and glossary in various formats - Word 4, Word 3, RTF and Pagemaker 3.0: you should be able to read one of these. *[For some strange reason the disc wouldn't fit in the ZX tape recorder so we tried filing the edges off, but ...]*

I quite like GÖDä (though James McKee seemed to be forcing it a bit and Mark McCann made me feel like *[unreadable]* in his inappropriate mention of fucking to express mild annoyance). *[What do you fucking expect?]* The layout was almost wonderful: just the 'continued on page 9' stuff irks me, but that is a personal *[Continued on page 37...]*

Terry Jeeves, 56 Redscar Drive, Newby, Scarborough YO12 5RQ

Many thanks for thinking to send me a copy of 'G' - and from Belfast too! I have happy memories of four months there (in 1941) on a radio course at Queens. As an RAF bod, I was billeted in the Central Presbyterian Hall in Howard Street. So is it still there? *[Almost.]* G's cover reminds me of an american ex-colonel I once knew. He painted shapes like that - in primary colours and priced 'em at £40. I don't know if he ever sold any. Interesting question about the rapist murderer (if true). I'd say that since he paid for his crime, he should be judged and treated on his current behaviour. If he treats you as a decent law abiding citizen, then grant him the same courtesy. Also enjoyed the bit about the Infernal Revenue. I've just had the first year since 1959 when I haven't made cash lolly out of cartoon or short story/article sales. I would have made around £150 in 1990/91 had not two magazines stopped answering letters requesting payment and another going into receivership. BUT when I duly declared this plus expenses of around £40 (as I have done every year) I was told that I couldn't claim the expenses as I hadn't made any income in that year from sales. BAH! *[We won't mention the coincidence of the magazines folding after accepting your material...]*

We also heard from:

Chuck (*off the wall humour*) Connor,
Maureen (*I received your fanzine*) Speller,
Ken (*more like hilarious than merely humorous*) Cheslin,
Nina (*a loc will follow*) Watson, John D. (*what's the D. for?*) Rickett,
Jenny (*an excuse to play with D.T.P., aims to shock and titillate*) Glover,
Joy (*Tommy's lost your letter*) Hibbert, Neil (*and arise Sir*) Curry,
The Döppleganger - (Anthony Shepard), Ian Bambro, Pamela Boals.

For all those who wrote in with their very interesting personal problems, we are extremely sorry to have to inform you that due to historical circumstances beyond his control, Marshal Josef Stalin, better known to us as 'Dear Uncle Joe', is unable to reply. He is currently acting as a mediator in the terrible Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian dispute with his usual tact and aplomb. We expect the usual swift resolution of these minor territorial problems and Joe will be back at Götterdämmerung Mansions in time for the next issue.



Götterdämmerung

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

Vol 1. No. 2

Northern Ireland's Leading Fanzine

Summer 1991

Please note our new correspondence address. Tommy has been evicted by his draconian landlord and is wandering the streets of Belfast. All letters should be now sent to James' address below.

Meanwhile, in our sizzling summer issue:

- a living legend - Conor naBraienenn
- who needs magneto-thermohydrodynamics?
- always coming home
- the big match - brunner v. cyberpunk
- mark's courageous fight against bodily flora
- i've got them old time computer blues

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Northern Ireland.

Contributions can be accepted on 5.25" or 3.5" disks in any IBM format. Even if you're still in the typewriter age we can take your efforts. Artwork graciously accepted from any source.

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