

THE SPACE WASTREL

2



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THE SPACE WASTREL

is a balls-and-all-who-gives-a-fuck-we're-having-fun iconoclast fanzine.*

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All art here-in, -on and -about by Craig Hilton. Many thanks Craig.

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Availiability of The Space Wastrel 2/2 is strictly by whim (though we won't forget those who traded, locced, or contributed in response to 2/1). TSW 2/3 and future issues are available for the usual hut NOT a naughty in the bushes.

*From Terry Frost's review of TSW 2/1 in the SF Truth 1/2. Mr Frost also says that 'describing TSW is like describing an orgasm. It feels great at the time and eludes analysis afterwards'. Well! All we can say is: thank you, and we refute any personal implications. We think.

WorldCon and All the Rest, Too

----- OPINION by MICHELLE -----

I have been mulling over an idea lately and at last have got it to the point where pen can be put to paper. My idea, which springs from the North American NASFiC, is this: that in the years when WorldCon is in the USA, the rest of the world should have a major international convention, that does not confer awards or have a business session. I will refer to my Rest-of-the-World-Convention as ResCon at ease.

I doubt if this is a revolutionary idea, however no-one has mentioned it in my hearing, so in this article I'm setting out some of my reasons for thinking ResCon would be a good thing. I would love to hear other fannish opinions - both Pro and Con (sorry, couldn't resist!) - on the idea. If you have anything to contribute, write to me at The Space Wastrel editorial address. Particularly opinions on the mechanics of organising the ResCon ballot, as correct procedure is something I'm rather vague about.

The first and, to me, most obvious reason for ResCon is the growing international nature of fandom. Recently countries which previously were virtually totally inactive in fandom have been holding successful Cons and sometimes several in a year. A few examples are Sweden, Japan, Finland, Norway, New Zealand. There is far more Convention fandom outside North America than there was ten or fifteen years ago, and there is, as a natural result, increasing interest by countries other than the USA in holding a WorldCon.

Okay, so let them bid for WorldCon. For a number of countries, tho, there are a couple of problems with this. One is that the voting numbers are in the USA and the USA is going to continue to hold the majority of WorldCons, even in the face of apparently strong non-USA bids, because of this - which is fine. The USA has the most fen, so that's fair. A second problem is that the fannish populations in a number of countries are simply too small to provide the level of professionalism required in a WorldCon. But that doesn't mean that they couldn't put on a perfectly enjoyable international convention, on a scale smaller and less formal than WorldCon. In support of this, I'd cite my own fannish background. I am now resident in Australia but got involved in, and committed to, fandom in Aotearoa/New Zealand. New Zealand fen are real nice people but fannish numbers there are too small to hold a WorldCon. There are four fannish centres in New Zealand and the most active of the cities would have, at a max at any one time, about 35 fans. Mostly quite a few less. They know they can't really hope to bid for WorldCon, but I can assure you that this doesn't stop a number of Kiwi fen nourishing secret yearnings towards holding a Con more major than the New Zealand NatCon.

New Zealand is a good example of another problem that a number of countries face when bidding for the WorldCon: isolation. WorldCon in Melbourne, Australia, in 1985 attracted around 2000 people to register (less to attend of course), which I guess is a nice cosy size for a WorldCon. But how many people would or could go to a WorldCon held in New Zealand, Eastern Europe, South America, or even Perth in isolated Western Australia? Or the Bermuda Triangle? One thousand? Eight hundred? Maybe only five hundred? That's making WorldCon awfully exclusive, and basically the group it cuts WorldCon down to are reasonably affluent fen. I think this sort of exclusivity is unfair with regard to WorldCon, a Con which should by its nature be accessible to as many fen as possible. What validity would decisions made or awards given at such a small worldCon have when faced with the numbers in fandom and at WorldCon today? On the other hand, why should inaccessibility be allowed to

be a total barrier to holding an international convention? Isolation doesn't mean that a fannish community has nothing to offer to other fan, or that it wouldn't be a funplace to go for a Con.

This leads me to my personal reason for wanting to have an international convention every year somewhere other than the USA. Like many fan in a number of the more affluent countries I am increasingly interested in travelling abroad and 'seeing the World'. (I don't mean that fan in poorer countries and personal situations don't have the same interests, just that sadly they don't have the same opportunities. It's only recently that I have come to consider I have such opportunities myself. That never stopped me from daydreaming tho.) In particular North American fan seem to be more interested in getting out and meeting foreign fan in exotic places, and if that sounds like fun that's because it is. Today, there are large numbers of fan who have the financial security to make regular trips overseas - or overland - and what better way is there for them to get to know foreign countries than with foreign fan at a Con? I believe that having a major non-USA Con each year would make fandom a more interesting group to be in, not to mention one with a more thorough self-knowledge.

So far I have looked at the benefits ResCon would provide small fannish communities which will never win the bid for WorldCon. There is another group for whom the benefit from ResCon could be even greater. This is the newer fannish community which is too inexperienced to hold a WorldCon but locally have sufficient active fan and which may eventually have the international appeal to hold a WorldCon. I believe Sweden and Japan are excellent examples. They are holding successful Cons now (I believe Sweden had 3 in 1985) but could do with more practice and international exposure before really being ready to win the WorldCon bid. In retrospect, Melbourne was an example of the former, and if the Netherlands loses the 1990 bid, it too could join the group. These are countries which could do with the practice provided by ResCon or who are ready for WorldCon but do not yet have the voting numbers or international prestige to win the bid. Or who just happen to pick the wrong year. (I mean, against L.A.?)

Which brings me to the cost of bidding these days. Apparently Atlanta spent US\$20,000 to win WorldCon for 1986 and LACon 84 has set aside US\$10,000 for the 1990 bid. This is a hell of a lot of money to spend and have nothing to show for it if you happen to lose the bid. It's bad enough in the USA where there are large numbers of fan and a high standard of living to support fund-raising for bidding costs. In Europe and most of the rest of the World the high cost of bidding could set a fannish community back years. It is not unlikely that it could put a group out of WorldCon bidding for two decades, until an entirely new fannish group had arisen, for no gain. Generally I am concerned about the outrageous cost of bidding for WorldCon and, once again generally, it's a cost that cannot be alleviated. However I believe the holding of two international conventions each year - WorldCon and ResCon or WorldCon and NASFiC - would make bidding more financially viable and also a more hopeful, less tense experience. With a little luck there would cease to be one-bid years; it might add a little excitement.

There are plenty of arguments against ResCon of course, Just as there are arguments against everything within fandom, and without. Before I look at these I would like to clarify one point of policy as regards the ResCon I propose. In order to win ResCon it would always be necessary to bid for WorldCon - I consider this to be most important. On to the arguments against I've heard so far, in brief.

RESCON WOULD STOP FEN FROM WANTING TO GO TO WORLDCON IN THE USA. Well, it sure wouldn't stop me. The USA still has the most fen, you could reasonably argue it has the most active fen, it certainly has the most BNFs and the most writers, Convention-wise, it has the experience and the facilities. Nothing could stop fen from wanting to attend WorldCon in the USA; to a lot of us it's still the fannish ultimate and always will be.

RESCON WOULD STOP FEN FROM VOTING FOR WORLDCON OUTSIDE THE USA AS THEY'D KNOW THEY WOULD HAVE RESCON ANYWAY. Would it? I don't know. NASFiC doesn't stop North Americans from bidding for WorldCon in the USA. ResCon might build everyone's confidence about major conventions outside the USA, which is the result I'd hope for.

RESCON WOULD SPLIT FANDOM INTO THE USA AND THE NON-USA FANDOM. I don't think this is so. Twenty years ago this would have been the likely result. I don't believe this is so anymore. If postal rates don't split fandom (and they don't really), then nothing will.

RESCON WOULD DETRACT FROM THE IMPORTANCE OF WORLDCON. NASFiC doesn't. There'd be no awards or business meetings and it would be necessary to bid for WorldCon in order to hold ResCon, so it shouldn't detract from WorldCon at all. What ResCon might detract from, would be importance of losing the WorldCon bid.

RESCON IS UNNECESSARY. So's WorldCon. But it's fun and ResCon would just add to the fun. Anyway if we want to get non-USA fandom to be a little more together, I think it is necessary.

That's the arguments against I've heard so far. You're welcome to add to them. I have heard one interesting alternative proposed: that the WorldCon rotation be extended to cover areas outside the USA. For example: East Coast USA, Europe, Mid USA, Asia, West Coast USA, Oceania. I think this is an idea which has its merits too, but not an alternative. I think I might support a change in rotation as well.

In parting I would like to say that I realise that a number of people will see this as 'getting even' with NASFiC. In fact, that's not the way it's intended at all. Then again, tho, if there's a NASFiC, why shouldn't there be a ResCon?

MR WARNER CONTINUES TO STIR HIS COCKTAIL: A Sort of Column-Rave: Musical Thing

I was both flattered and dismayed by Terry Frost's Recent piece of analogism in SF Truth. Comparing us with Thelonius Monk's 'Genius of Modern Music II' is both highly complimentary and highly elitist - though quite frankly compared to Mr Monk I don't think we even come up to scratch. (By some divine coincidence I just happened to have bought the abovementioned album not long before publishing TSW 2/1.)

Anyway, enough of the fanzine self-analysis, I think it's bad enough that people end up publishing their own stuff ('Vanity Press' as they call it in poetry circles) because no-one else will, let alone criticising or worse, complimenting oneself in those same publications. (Here be cue for certain faneds - ye know who ye be - to flush embarrassedly - ahem!)

Several people have in the last year or so published criticism of music and its records. Even my old school chum Greg Egan has written an erudite discussion on the merits of Laurie Anderson. (Here one must add a naughty parenthetical

aside: at age 11 Greg had particular fascinations for differential calculus, for astronomy, for conquering Europe in a game utilising a hexagonal pencil converted into a D6 die, and for the fact that a woman's vagina actually sloped at an angle and was not vertical as intuition supposed! But I digress... Onward! Out of these damned parentheses....)

If everybody else can have their grumble/rave, then this gives me an excuse to ramble on like an addled old man (William Burroughs, Colonel Dmitri Pyatnitski, Eric B Lindsay, etc.) about how terrible music is today and how the only good records were made twenty or more years ago - and you just can't tell young people these days because you can't drag them out from their walkman headphones for long enough etcetera etcetera (rambles off into sunset... for the most concise put-down of modern music by an addled old man listen to Quentin Crisp's 'Stop the Music for a Minute' on the 'Miniatures' album). But I won't...

I have learnt from numerous complaints that my taste (or lack thereof) in music is far too esoteric/eclectic to be defensible in any but the most dubiously subjective terms. I think the only one common adjective I can ascribe to the (700) records in my collection is 'extreme'. They can be extremely noisy, sensuous, hard, soft, harsh, hypnotic, brutal, odd, harmonious, melodic, dissonant, arhythmic, obscene, crafted, piercing, somatizing, silly or serious - but they have to be extreme. Anything that limps off the turntable, bellyflops out of the speakers and then passes from your memory faster than your last act of micturition is very quickly consigned to the ignominy of the racks of the second-hand record shop. Ugh! Those places give me the horrors. Endless bargain bins of blandola, menopausal middle-of-the-road, failed radicalism and over-hyped under-achievers. It reminds one somewhat (rather fondly) of fandom.

Well who was it who said that it's a proud and lonely thing to be a fan?

So... the year in music. The records that I list hereunder were (mostly) purchased during 1985/6 and are awarded the Mr Warner seal of excellence (disagree with me if you dare!).

'Clear Spot' - Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band. (Recorded 1972)
Acid-soaked psychedelic blues with gonzo poetry lyrics sung in a gruff delta growl. If you're going to talk about SF in music (and I'd rather you didn't) you may as well sing the Captain's 'Big-Eyed Beans from Venus'.

'Let's Stay Together' - Al Green. (Recorded 1971)
Immaculately arranged, sweet, searing, heart rending, sublime black american soul from a man who later became a reverend - maybe just to prove that the devil doesn't have all the best songs... And the last track! - 'It Ain't No Fun to Me' - a solid sugar-coated whump of killer funk.

(MORE COCKTAIL: LESS STIR)

'That's Where It's At!' - John Lee Hooker. (Recorded 1979?)
OK - so I'm a sucker for anything by Mr Hooker - but this one's on the Stax label ferchrissakes! No blasting Stax horns - just John Lee and some anonymous bass guitarist moanin', stompin', wailin' and layin' down that old time Hooker boogie. There are hundreds of bands making money from playing a few of this man's songs. Go to the source.

'L.K.J. in Dub' - Linton Kwesi Johnson (1980) and 'Man Ah Warrior' - Tapper Zukie (1977).

Actually I've had both of these for some time but they are so bloody good I had to mention them. 'L.K.J. in Dub' is one of the best reggae albums I've ever heard - from a guy who's supposed to be primarily a radical black political poet! Tapper Zukie really tests your patience on first hearing. His sound is

initially very alien - even to those who have been conditioned by Bob Marley, UB40 and etc. This is almost indecipherable rastafarian patois laid on top of some crucially heavy dub reggae. Like some religiously self-righteous zombie, Tapper Zukie exhorts the faithful to dance and to believe in Jah.

'Mister Heartbreak' - Laurie Anderson. (1984)

Greg Egan was right. Laurie is slow, methodical, smoulderingly psychotic and occasionally incandescent. Play spot the famous musician in the credits. Hear Laurie and Wild Bill Burroughs fiddle while the good ole USA burns.

'Metal Circus', 'New Day Rising' and 'Flip Your Wig' - Hüsker Dü. (1983-5)

It took me a while to catch on to this group, and when I did I bought these three discs over a short period. I know you can't really imagine a minneapolisian group who fly in between hardcore and heavy metal and yet manage to evoke memories of sixties pop harmonies, so I won't make you try. But dammit Janet, these three boys pump out El Fantastico Pop at snarly thousand miles an hour.

'I Only Have Eyes For You' - Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy. (1985)

If there was ever an excuse for buying an album for just one track, this is it. The title track is of course the old doo-wop number, slowed down and languishing seductively in a plush brass setting. This just oozes cool.

'Psychocandy' - The Jesus and Mary Chain. (1985)

This group Initially appears to be all hype but they've carved a new musical niche for themselves. Aching teenage pop with an overlay of feedback that challenges the Velvet Underground's title to 'Sultans of Screech'. Then the little buggers toss in a perfectly acceptable top twenty love song entitled 'Just Like Honey' which sounds so normal that even Ms Muysert likes it!

'Live - Smell of Female' (1984) and 'Can Your Pussy Do the Dog?' (1985) - The Cramps.

Skeletal rockabilly, really bad 'splatter' horror films, really bad jokes, the worst of fifties and sixties pop culture and a very tacky line in sexism. But I like 'em. They provide the soundtrack for when you go 'Surfing in the Swamp on a Saturday Night'.

'Earl Bostic Blows a Fuse' - Earl Bostic. (1946-1958)

This is a recently issued compilation of old material. It's chockfull of jumping, jiving, juke-box jazz. Short on the syrup and strong on beaty squonking saxophone.

'Third Decade' - The Art Ensemble of Chicago. (1985)

I had a horrible idea about analogising this LP to a particular woman - but... anyway this modern jazz in a comfy bed but with some hideously jagged edges occasionally peering out from under the covers. It seduces you and eases its way into your consciousness like....

(EVEN MORE COCKTAIL: STIRRED DRUNKENLY)

'Agape-Agape Love-Love' - Popol Vuh. (1983)

A german group whose main claim to fame would be that Werner Herzog (director of 'Fitzcarraldo', 'Nosferatu', 'Coeur de Verre' and 'Aguirre: Wrath of God') uses them almost exclusively to provide backing music to his films. Grand and reverent 'new age' music: they make me think about all the things I like about cathedrals - without the religion.

'Yu-Gung' - Einsturzende Neubauten. (1985)

More krazy krauts with a gift for challenging music. 'Yu-Gung' is their most accessible vinyl venture yet - perhaps even danceable. Their name means

'collapsing new buildings' and their music is largely the result of rending, tearing, drilling, cutting and hitting bits of metal and concrete - with some angst-ridden screaming for icing.

'A Tribute to Jack Johnson' - Miles Davis. (1972?)

I cheated here. I bought a new copy of this recently only because I lent the original to the dreaded Ian Nicholls who left it in a warm car for too long. However, this is great bouncing electric blues with flares of the Davis horn. Back from the days when John McLaughlin was a guitar maestro and Herbie Hancock's keyboards were choppy and astute.

'Rebirth of a Feeling' - The String Trio of New York.

Acoustic bass, violin and soprano guitar swing hard, mesh and solo beautifully on a cross between jazz, bluegrass and classical. Aesthetism with guts! (Heh-heh, sneaked that pun in.)

Which brings me to Thelonious Monk again. Luckily some blessed benefactors of jazz aficionados have decided that huge quantities of the old blue note, riverside, vanguard, prestige, jasmine and other labels should be re-released, resulting in some fabulous gems from the like of Monk and Sonny Rollins hitting the racks again - twenty years on.

I'm told that my tastes are softening and I suppose that the burgeoning jazz section of my collection is evidence of that. However I still posses a few discs that will set your hair on end, your teeth on edge and your mind into jelly. This foul and evil idea is currently lurking in my mind that next ish I should review my personal worst ever musical experiences. (Believe me, some of them were not just records, they were experiences.) Some suggestions from LoCcers could be most amusing - just don't mention Slippery Jim and the Ratettes.

See you round like a record.

JULES.

Gut Rot versus Noble Rot

—TASTE by IAN NICHOLLS—

There is something terribly untoward in the way most fans treat alcohol. It is almost as though it were some strange, alien juice, something to fuel them into flights of fantasy. This is, I suppose, understandable as there have been fan parties and conventions where the only sane way to conduct oneself is to achieve anaesthesia as quickly as possible. I have been guilty of this myself, as anyone who saw the effect of Black Sun cocktails upon me at SwanCon 10 will gloatingly testify. But there is more to booze than sheer potency, and here I will possibly alienate a few of my meagre collection of friends: I do not believe that Inner Circle O.P. is as good or flavourful as the underproof equivalent; I do not believe that Highland Park scotch is superior simply because of its greater alcohol content. There is, may I be so bold as to say it, such a thing as subtlety.

Let us look at wines. Most fans have a taste in wine which can only be described as execrable and infantile. They tend to buy either by bulk or label. The enjoyment of subtle bouquets, the fine tastes, become submerged in a desparate attempt to throw as much down their throat as is possible in a short amount of time. There is, my readers, more to wine than that. It is unfortunate that there are writers who seem to foster this ignorance of ignorance.

Let us take the case of a famous French wine, Chateau d'Yquem. Keith Laumer mentions it many times as being a favourite drink of Jaime Retief. And so it should be; it is undoubtedly one of the world's great wines, and quite in accord with the sophisticated demeanour of the character. I have heard many fans speak of this wine with longing in their eyes, as though they were initiates of its mysteries, along with Mr Retief. Unfortunately, most of them don't know whether it's red or white.

The Chateau d'Yquem lies in the Barsac/Sauternes district of the Graves region of France, just outside Bordeaux, to the west of the Garonne River. Graves is one of the oldest vineyard areas of France dating from the middle ages. The Sauternes area is about sixty kilometres from the town itself, and, like the rest of the Graves region, is planted with Sauvignon, Semillon and Muscadelle grapes. It is gravelly clay, covered with a top layer of sand, green and heavily wooded, with isolated vineyards in occasional clearings. The Chateau itself is squarish in plan, the main building being two-storied, with three storied outlying towers. It is white, ivied and set in the midst of godly green fields. If you go there on just about any day of the season, you will find it busy, pressing grapes in the small wine presses it uses.

You see, the secret of Chateau d'Yquem is not only the grapes, but also in what grows on the grapes. Botrytis Cinerea is what it's called, and it's known to winemakers as 'the noble rot'. (Sounds a bit like a late Robert Heinlein novel.) This is a mould which grows on the skin of the grape, causing it to shrivel, concentrating the sugar. Because the rot affects the grapes at different rates, they must be hand-picked as they are ready. This means that the grapes come into the press a few baskets at a time, constantly keeping the presses busy. There is also the great care taken by the wine maker; production only averages 108,000 litres per year.

What you wind up with is a wine which is sweet, but not sticky; a wine which possesses great fruit, incredible, mouth-filling flavour, and is not aggressive. The major problem with Chateau d'Yquem is that it slides down so easily that you can drink a great deal of it without noticing how much you are drinking. Simply stated, it's a wine which can make you very drunk very, very quickly.

But. Ah, you young virgins, do not fear that you will be plied with this evil brew in an attempt to deprive you of your inhibitions. At over a hundred and fifty bucks a bottle, the chance is quite minimal. On the other hand, if you encounter someone who invites you back to his or her apartment and then drags out a case of the stuff, sell your virtue dearly, but sell it; it is a small price to pay to enter the ranks of the world's wine snobs, and you will be privy to an experience (in wine, at least; I have no way of knowing what the rest of the evening will be like) which you will treasure for the rest of your life. Just don't tell me about it; I'll get jealous. (By the way, THE year for Chateau d'Yquem is allegedly 1967, but I have a lingering affection for the '69.)

Just to fill up the page, I think that strong drink deserves a bit of a mention, also. There are various amounts of bullshit spoken about the relative strength and flavour of distilled liquors. In a fit of disastrous honesty, I must admit that drinking 135 or 150 proof rum is somewhat like drinking nail polish. The process of distillation is basically the process of heating a water/alcohol mixture, driving off the alcohol, which is then condensed back into a liquid. By all rights, this should produce a colorless liquid which is 100% alcohol. It doesn't. What happens is that certain other bits and pieces in the solution, called volatile fractions, are also condensed out with the alcohol. Also, since you will find it difficult to get a starting brew which is more than about 16% alcohol, as the percentage of alcohol in the mixture goes down, more and more of the vapour is composed of water, which is also condensed out. What that means

Continued/13

NINE

SHAW THINGS

THE WOMEN IN BOB SHAW'S S.F.

It was a few months before Aussiecon II that I started to read Bob Shaw again. I thought that it was the least that could be done considering that he was, in effect, a special guest of honour at the con through the efforts of the Shaw Fund. The arrival of Orbitsville Departure at The Space Merchants provided the starting point I had been waiting for. It was an unexpected but welcome sequel to Orbitsville - a book which had left a good impression when I read it nearly ten years earlier. But Orbitsville Departure, opened with pleasant expectations, proved to be the beginning of an epiphany about the values portrayed in Bob Shaw's work - and about the changes in my personal values and understanding since I first read him as a teenager. It was the frequency of unmaning blows to garry Dallen, the protagonist of Orbitsville Departure, that was the first signal that there was something awry in Bob Shaw's universe. Although, in hindsight, the following passage in the first chapter should have given it away:

It was good that she was self-willed and self-reliant, but - the thought refused to be dismissed - how much *better* everything would have been ...

To put it simply, the worlds portrayed by Bob Shaw are jejunely sexist. Just as they are characterised by male protagonists with names like Garamond, Garrod, Garland and Garry Dallen; Bob Shaw's novels are characterised by wives who are stupid or manipulative (or both), other women who are stunningly beautiful, available to our Ghero and whose competence or intelligence is lauded by the narrator without it ever being demonstrated, and, in Orbitsville, Elizabeth Lindstrom, a misogynists delight if there ever was one.

Elizabeth Lindstrom deserves special examination. The President of Starflight, a multi-planetary corporation that owns interstellar travel in Orbitsville, she is the most powerful female character I have encountered in Bob Shaw's writing. It is indicative of his limited and sexist portrayals of women that Bob Shaw sees the need to make the President of Starflight physically disfigured by choice, mentally unbalanced as well and then to describe her throughout the text in terms strongly reminiscent of spiders. Even more revealing are the thoughts of the Ghero, Garamond in this case, as he awaits an audience with her.

... his distaste for her was personified, physical. It influenced his attitude more pervasively than did his intellectual unease over the fact that she was the richest person who had ever lived, and so far above the law that she had been known to kill out of sheer petulance. Was it, he had often wondered, because she had the mind of a man that she chose to be an unattractive woman in an age when cosmetic surgery could correct all but the most gross physical defects? Were her splayed, imperfect teeth and pallid skin the insignia of total authority.

To round out our picture of her, we shortly find out, 'that Elizabeth gave off a sweet, soupy odour which closed the throat when one was anxious to speak clearly.' There is no need to belabour the point that Elizabeth Lindstrom, for all her titular power in Orbitsville,

does not exactly offer a positive role model for the young female reader. What does need to be demonstrated is that the misogynistic view of women that Elizabeth Lindstrom's portrayal typifies is endemic to Bob Shaw's fiction; that Elizabeth Lindstrom is the logical extension of ideas about women that are present to some degree in all Bob Shaw's fiction and not a character that can be dismissed as simply constructed for the individual requirements of Orbitsville.

Five novels span the years 1969 to 1983 for Bob Shaw. They are The Palace of Eternity (1969), Other Days, Other Eyes (1972), Orbitsville (1975), Ship of Strangers (1978) and Orbitsville Departure (1983). Two common elements in the portrayal and perception of women characters link all these novels; two elements that are in no way complimentary. The first element is that of the wife, the second being the other woman. The wife is characterised by the following; she is physically unattractive and less intelligent than her mate, although she tries to make up for this by cunning manipulation. The other woman generally causes the Ghero to go weak at the knees with a lust that isn't differentiated from love, has 'intelligent' stamped on her forehead by the narrator so that we realise she isn't dumb and, interestingly, is at least ten years, and more often twenty years, younger than the wife. It is also interesting to note that in the earliest of novels under consideration here, The Palace of Eternity, the roles of other woman and wife are held at different points by the same character. Lisa Grenoble makes her first appearance as the other woman. She is young and physically attractive. Mack Taverner, 'kissed her once, drinking in the incredible reality of her the way a thirsting man gulps his first draught of water. Her tongue felt hot, hotter than any human's ought to feel.' As well as being hot, Lissa Grenoble is also manipulative, a fact that Mack Tavernor spends a lot of time thinking about before General Farrell kills him. After that Lissa marries General Farrell and becomes that second common element in a Bob Shaw novel, the wife. Her son lets us know in no uncertain terms what she has become:

He went to his mother first. She held him briefly against the massive slopes of her bosom, and he could feel the steady movement of her jaws, the munching which never seemed to cease, night or day. ... Long ago, he remembered, she seemed to believe him when he told her what his father said and there had been terrifying rows, but now her mind was always somewhere else and he had ceased to try.

To explain what is perhaps obvious, Lissa Farrell is munching on a never ending stream of cake and no longer has the figure she had ten, or twenty, years before. In Other Days, Other Eyes the protagonist is Albon Garrod. His wife is Esther Garrod. A struggling inventor, Garrod married for money only to find that his wife is a rich bitch in the best Dynasty tradition - if he talks to other men at cocktail parties she intimates he is a homosexual. Luckily he doesn't talk to other women in her presence until it's too late for mere intimation. Esther is blinded when she lets herself into Garrod's laboratory against his strict instructions. Garrod finds himself unable to proceed with a divorce because Esther plays on his guilt to keep their loveless marriage together - perhaps I forgot to mention that Garrod is very rich in his own right by this stage. But Garrod is saved by the timely arrival of the other woman, in this case Jane Wason. When they meet she is, 'wearing a black evening dress so fine and sheer that her breasts seemed to have no more covering than a film of glossy paint and there was a soft triangular bulge of hair below the plummy curve of her belly.' Determined in his resolve to leave Esther after his first sexual experience of the book, our Ghero flies off into the sunset with Jane Wason on his arm, defending liberty, equality and fraternity in his spare time. If you think I exaggerate, I invite you to read the last two or three pages of whatever edition of Other Days, Other Eyes is closest to you.

Orbitsville is the novelistic home of Elizabeth Lindstrom. Its other inhabitants include Vance and Aileen Garamond and Denise Serra. There are no prizes for guessing what the characteristics traits of the two women are. The Ghero certainly has a clear understanding of the woman he married:

Garamond gave a shaky laugh as the mental chasm opened between himself and his wife, but he felt no annoyance with her. Their marriage had always been simple and harmonious, and he knew it was based on deeper attachments than could be achieved through mere similarity in interests or outlook. One of the first things he had learned to accept was the certainty of lasting incompleteness on some levels of their relationship, and usually he knew how to accomodate it.

In case it's not perfectly clear, Garamond knows that his wife is a dummy. He also knows that, 'his wife absorbed most of her information semi-instinctively, through images,....' Aileen's one saving grace is her intuition, which leads her to make statements like, 'I'm not stupid, Vance.' Thanks to the narrator though, we know better. We also know, thanks to the narrator, that Denise Serra is a very attractive alternative to Aileen Garamond. A physicist is a far better proposition than an illiterate dummy, and we are assured that Denise Serra is indeed a physicist even though she does little to demonstrate it. And then there is the time Denise and Garamond are having their first conversation and:

Garamond suddenly became aware of how much he enjoyed simply looking at her. He had accepted the phrase "easy on the eyes" as pure metaphor but now was surprised to discover that letting his gaze rest on the physicist's pale sensitive face actually produced a soothing sensation in his eyes. The phenomenon entranced and then disturbed him.

Later that night, Garamond thinks to himself that there would be, 'no communications problem with a woman like Denise Serra who shared his background and his interests, and who produced the curiously pleasant sensation in his eyes....' Which raises the question of what a starship captain is doing married to an illiterate, but that is definitely outside the ambit of discussion that Orbitsville allows. Ship of Strangers has an even more limited range of discussion when it comes to portrayals of women. Only two of the linked stories that make up the book deal with human women. In one, dissension breaks out aboard ship over the use of 'dream-tapes' that allow the intrepid explorers to experience a fantasy home life while they sleep at night. After putting their heads down on their pillows, the crew of explorers find that they are at home with their stunningly beautiful and astonishingly compliant wives. It is worth noting that the only attractive wives in Bob Shaw's writing exist as computer generated fantasies. But even more disturbing to the crew of the Sarafand is the arrival of, shock, horror, a woman crew member. 'Surgenor was doing his best to be clear-headed and rational, but no amount of effort could purge his mind of the notion that he was about to begin the jackpot trip to end all jackpot trips.' But even here Shaw repeats a familiar pattern. Christine Holm turns out to be Dave Surgenor's long awaited other woman - and with the decommissioning of the Sarafand he can easily leave the ship and computer that had so long functioned as his wife. There is a twist, however, to the pattern in Orbitsville Departure. Cona Dallen is a member of the literati, a historian, while Garry Dallen is but a bureaucrat. Cona does have a problem with her weight though, a problem that is exacerbated when her conscious mind is blown away by a Luddite Special (or anti-computer gun) and she becomes a chocolate eating, perambulatory, masturbating adult sized baby. After Cona's mind has been blasted, Garry Dallen really does have a stupid wife. As Garry Dallen struggles to cope with an extreme example of what all Bob Shaw's literary

husbands have to deal with, Silvia London enters stage left to present him with an alternative to the wife who is no longer the woman he married. Her role is that of Lissa Grenoble, Jane Wason and Denise Serra; to provide interludes that are "easy on the eyes." From the repetition of these elements in Bob Shaw's fiction we can see that there are two distinct portrayals of women that begin to take on symbolic value. The first is the stupid, overweight/unattractive and manipulative wife/mother. The second is the young, physically attractive and unattached woman. The wife/mother is not sexual, the unattached woman is. The problem with this view of women, as typified by Lissa Grenoble/Farrell, is that whatever you (the male Ghero) marry - she's going to end up fat, dumb and sneaky.

Having got this far, I suppose it's worth considering the consequences, if any, of it all. Does it mean that we should all stop buying and reading Bob Shaw books, simply because he has a limited and unfavourable number of ways of portraying women? I don't think so. I read Bob Shaw when I was an impressionable teenager and I think I've turned out alright. The consequences of this article and the thought that preceded are somewhat more personal as far as I'm concerned. In criticising five novels as I have, four of which I read and enjoyed as a teenager, I am, in a sense, criticising the person I once was. It was an epiphany for me to realise how much I had changed, how much the way I viewed the world had changed, in ten years from 1975 to 1985. It's a somewhat uneasy feeling for someone as self confident as I. If I can look back to 1975 and discover weaknesses and flaws in myself, what will I think when I look back at myself today from 1995?

I suppose I can only wait and see.

GUT ROT VERSUS NOBLE ROT: continued

is that you wind up, after distillation, with a distillate which is mostly alcohol, about 90%, and the concentrated volatile fractions, and water.

Alcohol is tasteless. Water is tasteless. The only thing which gives flavour to a distilled liquor is the volatile fractions which are boiled off with the alcohol. Brandy is made from wine (or should be), vodka is made from either potatoes or grain. Various other spirits are made from other grains or vegetables. Rum is made from sugar cane. So is molasses. The flavour of rum and the colour of rum comes from the amount of burnt sugar and molasses which are added after distillation, since the amount of coloured stuff in the base mix is minimal. As in all coloured spirits, a certain amount of flavour and colour also come from the oak casks used to age the rum, but how anybody can taste that particularly subtle flavour in a drink which is dehydrating your mouth is beyond me. Basically, the better the balance between the alcohol in a spirit and all the other stuff, including the water, the smoother the drink will taste. O.P. rum is basically a device for getting smashed as quickly as possible, somewhat like dropping an anvil on your own head. Me? I'd rather have the anvil, or U.P. rum, which is smoother, softer, much more balanced and much more drinkable. I suppose this statement will cast doubts on my masculinity, but I defy anyone to promote their masculinity after a bottle of Inner Circle OP or Bacardi Gold, anyway.

❧ RHIALTO ❧

the Marvellous

WRITTEN BY JACK VANCE. BROUGHT TO THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC BY COLLINS BOOKS IN 1985. CONSIDERED AT LENGTH BY DAVE LUCKETT.

It is interesting that the works of Jack Vance exercise the fascination that they do, over me and many others. RHIALTO THE MARVELLOUS is one that has that effect, despite its major problems.

Firstly, it is difficult to say what RHIALTO THE MARVELLOUS is about, at all. Surely not about Rhialto himself, for Rhialto, despite great age and immense powers, is a child, introspective, umbrageous, but as devoid of humour as he is of honour; a cold, prosy, and rather silly lecher. He simply hasn't the stature for us to be interested in him, and isn't in the least engaging, either; not a lovable rogue like Magnus Ridolph, for example.

Nor does the appeal of the book depend upon the actions of the plot, for they meander on with the same inconsequence as a random-choice maze, with the action becoming diffuse, motivations mutating in unexpected ways, complications crowding in, being replaced by newer ones, staying unresolved and being dropped. For example: One of the magicians of Rhialto's group does various mischiefs which he persuades the group to blame on Rhialto. It is an intrigue which is transparently false, but the group falls for it, and punishes Rhialto in his absence by confiscating his property. Rhialto returns, proves his innocence by producing alibis which were already known to some of the group, and demands compensation, citing a codex of laws to which the group, lacking all other restraints, have voluntarily subscribed aeons before. His adversary demands that the true and original copy be consulted; this is inscribed on a jewel under the care of a... well, call it a djinn, for want of a better term. When the jewel is produced, Rhialto points out that it is an obvious counterfeit - so obvious that it simply doesn't work as a plot device. The rest of the story involves the restitution of the real jewel and the unmasking of the malefactor, with endless twists and blind alleys, portentous appearances and pointless conversations.

Still less interesting is the motivation for all this. Apparently the villain disliked Rhialto. There is a long exposition of the petty slights which caused that state of affairs, but there is no suggestion of stature there. The villain's spite is as picayune as his revenge is inept. The subterfuge is obvious, the wranglings of these great men - they are all men, incidentally - as peurile as a playground squabble.

In fact, impartially considered, the characters are ludicrous. They are almost all-powerful, able to conquer time and space at will, with a bewildering array of spells and technology at their command. They have no government save that to which they have themselves subscribed; their lives are those of aristocrats in a servile society. Yet, while their conduct is regulated solely by considerations of self-interest - they trick, defraud, and covertly damage each other (and everyone else) at every opportunity - they overtly treat each other with a formal deference and show of legality. They are childishly transparent about it, as if the use

of ornate language can conceal and excuse the silliest malignity; but though they dissemble, few of their schemes come off, any more. They are, in a word, effete. One gains the impression that anyone with the ability to use direct means would instantly destroy them. In fact, form is all they care about. When the villain of the story above is finally brought to justice, his crime is not that he defrauded and attacked a member of the group, but that he trifled with the letter of the law. The fact that he would use any devious means at all to gain the most petty of ends is accepted without demur. It is his attack on the forms that cannot be endured.

Yet most of the people in the stories are like that. The "sandestins" - demonic familiars of the magicians - attempt to evade and betray their masters. The people of other aeons whom Rhialto visits generally attempt confidence tricks, with which they have little success, to cater to their other vices, which range from avarice to cannibalism. The whole plenum, with very few exceptions, is made up of people as unattractive and as self-seeking as Rhialto himself. Despite the formalism of their clothing and address, the only motivation of most of the characters in the book is selfishness. They are, in fact, evil.

(Nor are their vices punished. In one of the stories, Rhialto and the Preceptor (Head Magician) Ildefonse re-encounter a mage whom they had tricked and betrayed aeons before. They need him, and, as he does not remember them, they use him for their own purposes. When he does recall the circumstances of his betrayal, and prepares to take revenge, they bind him, rob him of his magic and his mind, and Rhialto enslaves him, using him as a replacement for his butler, who had died in Rhialto's service, and whose corpse Rhialto disposes of with as little emotion as if it were a sack of rubbish. Unabashedly he profits from his evil, as matter-of-factly as people usually do.)

Of course, evil can have great stature, too. Lucifer, Iago, Richard III and Adolf Hitler all exercise enormous fascination because of their evil. Evil is profoundly sexy, compellingly dangerous, wild. But Rhialto's evil, and that of his colleagues, is of a different order altogether. Despite their vast power to do harm, it is merely adolescent, selfish and petty. It excites no admiration for its scope. It is the evil of a bureaucrat abusing his authority, not that of a dark and malign genius. I can't imagine anything more adolescent than a seduction contest, unless it be to laud and honour the winner of one. Yet Rhialto and his colleagues conduct one, for reasons of personal aggrandisement, and acquire or lose status thereby. Status, but not stature. These are little men. Insignificant. They don't matter.

So, the fascination of the book is not in the plot or the characters. Rather, it lies in the world and the setting which Vance has created, a setting which he displays for us with a sly infectious delight which we can hardly help but share.

That Vance should find his world delightful is understandable. That the reader, despite all, can be made to feel the same way is indicative of Vance's power. More specifically, there is something about the Dying Earth which suits Vance's style, and I think it is this: that this particular setting, like many Vance worlds - Durdane, Dar Sai, Sarkhoi, Tschai - projects a studied formalism which overlies a total anarchy, and that contrast is quaint and piquant - and powerful.

For despite the sheer silliness and vanity and mostly-petty wrongdoing, this celebration of unrestrained, if ornately described, behaviour is set against the sombre background of all. The Universe - not just the Earth - is dying. Indeed, in one of these stories, we are actually shown the curtain of Chaos and Old Night which is slowly engulfing the stars. Though Rhialto and his group are all but omnipotent, they cannot prevent this. Someday soon, the last suns will flicker and die.

It is that background which allows Vance the full scope for the flavour of his language. Nothing matters anymore except the forms which humans have set up for themselves. Against that huge death anything that humans - even the most powerful humans - do, is insignificant. Like the soon-to-be-engulfed survivors from ON THE BEACH they behave as they wish, competing for human recognition, and asserting their dignity - not that they achieve it - in pathetically formal terms, clinging to appearance and custom, insisting on proper social order, and acting as though chaos did not rule within and without. It is a curiously powerful image, one that is powerfully complemented by Vance's baroque prose.

In fact, this is an instance of a storyteller - and Vance is that rare article - devising a background which suits, not the story he has to tell, but the way in which he wishes to tell it. The detail lavished upon that background - upon even unimportant aspects of it - produces an atmosphere which fascinates in its own right. I am unfailingly charmed by ornaments like this account of one of the peoples of the Dying Earth, the Sxyzyskzyiks of the Sousanese Coats:

"Their culture comprised a staggering set of precepts, the mastery of which served as an index to status, so that ambitious persons spent vast energies learning finger-gestures, ear-decoration, the proper knots by which one tied his turban, his sash, his shoe-ribbons; the manners in which one tied the same knots for one's grandfather; the proper and distinctive placement of pickles on plates of winkles, snails, chestnut stew, fried meats and other foods; the curses specifically appropriate after stepping on a thorn, meeting a ghost, falling from a low ladder, falling from a tree, or any of a hundred other circumstances."

All this, despite the fact the the Sxyzyskzyiks and their culture have little or nothing to do with the plot, and provide, at best, only a minor interlude. Yet it pleases and satisfies, in the same way as do the grotesques and decorations on a Gothic cathedral. Certainly it would be meaningless without the setting; but these fripperies and ornaments overlies a vision of the end of all things. Taken together, they say something about human beings.

It is that which saves Vance from being merely a stylist, at least in this book. He has used setting and style to say something about human beings. Other writers produce plots one can believe, or characters who behave like real people. The ideal, rarely achieved, is to have all working together. Perhaps Vance falls short of that. But what he does is valid, and, incidentally, delightful.

NETHERLANDS

FOR WORLDCON 1990

LOCT IN SPACE!

Editing and commentary are by Michelle, except where otherwise noted. Most comments are brief and some letters have none - this is just because I think the letters concerned are fine on their own - it's not victimisation!!!

Robert James Mapson: P O Box 7087, Cloisters Square, Perth, WA, 6000, Aust.

What has happened to TSW? The pages are numbered (in numerical sequence, even) and sentences tend to fall into comprehensible paragraphs. What has happened to the habitual CRAZINESS! we have come to expect from the costumed compensatory colleagues of WlAoRnNeEyR? Where is Mescahale-Spla-Exclamation? Has the RigelConglomerate been forced into liquidation? In Joyce's Wordythings: "Are you all in this vibration? I say you are. You once nobble that, congregation, and a buck joyride to heaven becomes a back number. You got me? It's a lifebrightener, sure. The hottest stuff ever was. It's the whole pie with jam in. It's just the cutest snappiest line out. It is immense, supersumptuous. It restores."

There's not a lot in TSW2/1 to restore one, or to distinguish it from that nebulous platonic concept of the universal archetypal 'zine'.

Julian, sorry, Mr Warner: 'Twas of course Mr Mapson who was partially responsible - through occasional spiritual intercourse - for much of the silliness of the early TSWs. Indeed though I personally introduced Mr Mapson to fen at SWANKON 5, the rumour still persists that he is fictitious and the product of some Rigelfourlian warped mind. It has even been suggested that Mr Loney and I are responsible for that sporadic agit-pop dadazine Forbidden Worlds. That's like claiming that Shakespeare wrote all the works of Bacon. Maybe TSW's midway between prototype and supertype - going up!

Back to me: Well, the content of Mr Mapson's letter gives me the overwhelming impression that we're doing something right. It also makes me wonder if what we are seeing is the long term results of glue sniffing? Or junk food eating?

Harry Warner, Jr: 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, USA

It was very good to see again The Space Wastrel. If you are to be trusted with your intimation that this is the first issue in five years or more, I can't believe it. Time has collapsed so badly for me, making one year dash frantically into the next, that I would have imagined you'd published as recently as a few months ago. Just the other day I received a fanzine from Marc Ortlieb and marveled once again at what a prolific fanzine publisher he is, only to discover when I read his editorial that it is his first general circulation fanzine in two years.

But all those editorials seem positive evidence that five years actually did pass. What amazes me is not that you saved those intended editorials all those years, but that you were able to find them when you decided to publish this issue. I always save such things but never yet have I succeeded in finding them when I need them. The current problem along those lines that is most sensational is my inability to put my fingers on twelve thick volumes of the collected novels of Bulwer-Lytton, which I'm sure I put just inside the door to one of the spare bedrooms a few years back and haven't seen since.

I don't normally read conspiracy books, on the theory that they result from a conspiracy in the publishing industry to separate all of us from reality

and thus permit publishing houses to sell the Britannica as the longest fantasy novel in existence. I did read The Passover Plot some years ago and I thought I found a fatal flaw in the chain of evidence the author linked together to prove his theory but that discovery leaked out of my memory cells like the whereabouts of all those 19th century novels by Bulwer-Lytton. One major problem with conspiracy books, if I may judge by what I read of them, is that most of them are mutually contradictory. There just wouldn't be time for the world's wealthiest people to engage in as many secret machinations as they've been credited with by this and that book exposing their conspiracies. If Earth had right now as many different sets of ETs wandering around it as various flying saucer and other authorities have described in their books, at least two or three wars would have broken out among the BEMs due to overcrowding.

I should know by now to expect the unexpected in The Space Wastrel, but finding Mr Warner's serious side manifested in the long article about the SDI was a surprise. I found the article quite reasonable, and that's a major contrast to the excesses and emotions that dominate in most writings and speeches on the topic. In my ignorance, I suspect that no layman can be sure he's right in being for or against SDI because only part of the information about it is unrestricted. All I can do is look for symptoms that might provide clues. One is the seriousness with which Russia has been taking the SDI concept. If it were completely impractical and inefficient, wouldn't Russia remain silent on the topic, in the hope that it would become full-scale reality and thus lull the United States into a false sense of security? Another is the fad for referring to it as 'Star Wars' in this country. This poohpoohing is identical with what happened when I was young and there were rumours that the United States was working on such fantastic things as an atomic bomb and electronics that would permit surveillance of the skies and the seas beyond the range of vision and that Hitler was developing rockets that would carry bombs to England: such rumours were called Buck Rogers by the people who knew all the obstacles that existed in the path of such futuristic weaponry. Buck Rogers then, Star Wars today; the parallel is striking. (And I don't think it's correct to warn that the SDI could become the United States' Maginot Line: the latter was a defense based on the assumption that France would be fighting World War One again, the former is meant to cope with what might happen in World War Three.)

But I don't feel sure that the SDI is the very thing to do. I just don't know if it would work. I'm very skeptical about most of the criticism it has been getting and less skeptical about the paper you read because it seems to be based on reasoning, not on hatred of Ronald Reagan, the usual inspiration for criticism of the SDI.

The illustrations are fine, nice and big and ingenious and funny. Better yet, your typography is black and sharp and large. My eye-sight has deteriorated since the last time you published The Space Wastrel and nowadays, any fanzine that I can read easily automatically is enrolled among my favorites.

Like Harry Andruschak, I've stopped buying prozines from the newsstands. The only salvation for the prozines, I suspect, is to build circulation via subscriptions. A couple of music magazines I read regularly sell about 90% of their copies via subscriptions, through energetic promotion. If the prozines tried to do the same thing, they would be largely freed from the inefficiencies and financial squeeze involved in newsstand sales.

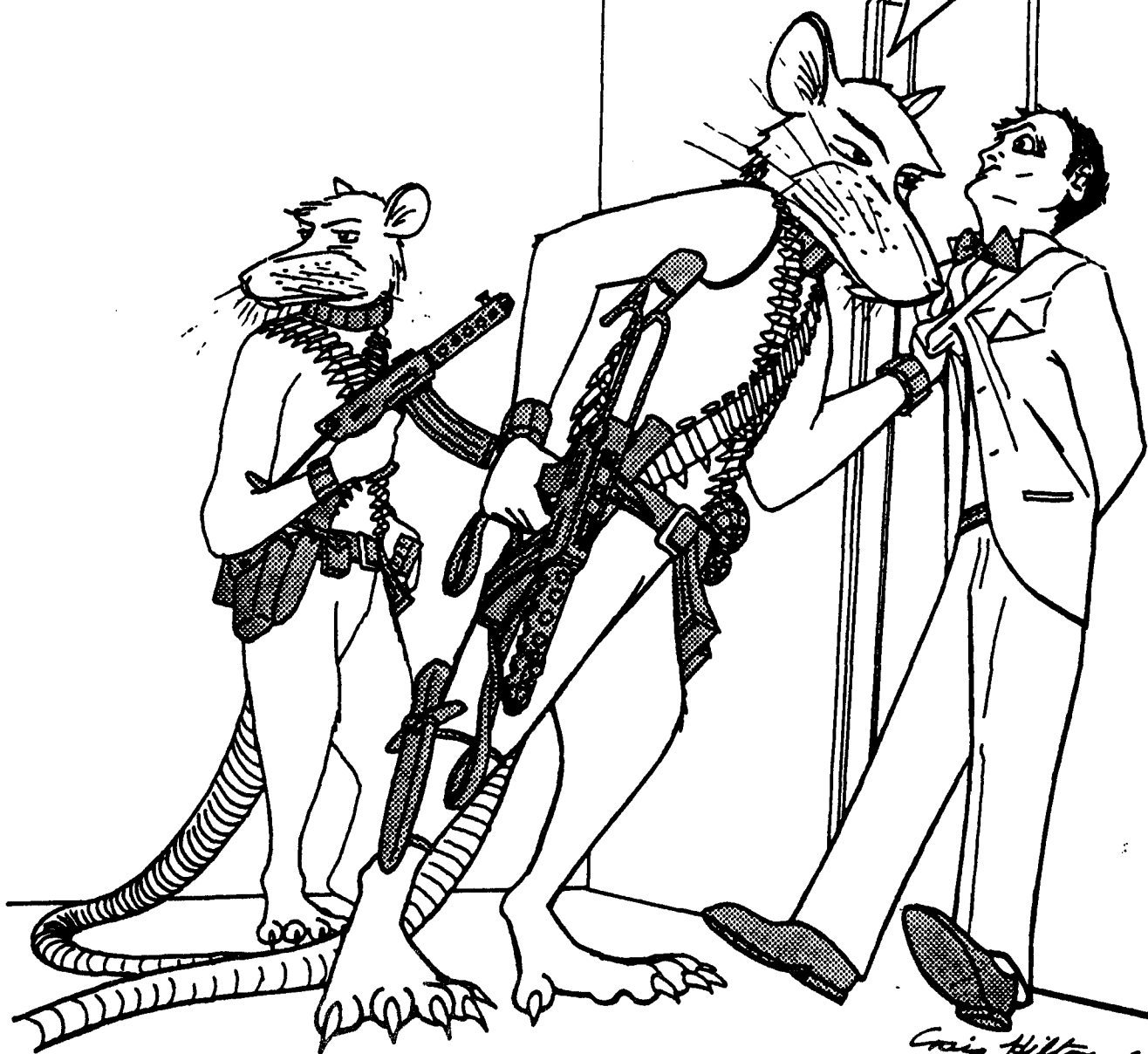
Sorry to disappoint but the serious side shown in the SDI article was Mr Loney's. We're fundraising at the moment to mount a cross-continental search for Mr Warner's serious side and Mr Loney's silly side, which seem to have absconded with the antique fanzine collection!!

Marc Ortlieb: P O Box 215, Forest Hill, Vic, 3131, Australia

I remember my brother showing me something called - I think - the Gemstone Files, which was a multigeneration xerox which tied in the Mafia, Howard Hughes, The Kennedys, Aristotle Onnasis, and just about everyone else. Joe Kennedy



What
no weapons policy?



Craig Hilton '84

broke a promise to a Greek shipping consortium, which had John F Kennedy killed, and Onnasis got Jackie Kennedy as compensation... that sort of stuff. (Whoever wrote it probably spelled Onasis correctly.) Personally I found the Illuminatus Trilogy far more plausible, and far more amusing.

While, from a literary standpoint, I must agree with your evaluation of RINGWORLD ENGINEERS and all other sequels, I must admit to understanding the motivations of some of the authors involved. If you were guaranteed half a million bucks for writing a book, wouldn't you write it, even if you knew that it wasn't a crash hot book? There's nothing wrong with wanting to rip-off the public. Caveat emptor.

I think it was Asimov, in his story "The Power That It Gave" who came up with the ideal computer for a missile. Humans are, after all, not immediately destroyed by ionizing radiation. All you need then are human guided missiles to take out the in-coming bombs. It's good maths. One person per bomb rather than several million destroyed by each bomb. It'd solve the unemployment problem too. (Perhaps that's the reason behind all the electronic games parlours. It's already been suggested that they are recruiting grounds for World War III, but I don't think that people have considered the thought that the players might be physically present when the little light says "Game Over".)

(Nice Hilton artwork, indeed I notice that Craig's cartoon on page eleven anticipates my suggestion, and probably even planted it in my mind. Devilishly clever these cartoonists.)

John Berry: 4 Chilterns, South Hatfield, Herts AL10 8JU, UK

I like the formality of your introductions, a rather superior gimmick (not forgetting Ms Muysert), but in keeping with the serious space topics discussed throughout your fanzine which is anachronistic under the title The Space Wastrel. I have been keeping press cuttings on space flights since the Gagarin flight, and now have some 40 volumes, even including satellite sightings I have made in many parts of the world. Therefore, I read the space articles with tremendous interest, and congratulate you on the research and perspicacity shown.



Brian Earl Brown: 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA

I was astonished when the first issue of the second series of The Space Wastrel arrived. No, I was appalled. I thought TSW was a bad dream that had gone away. I was astonished to find the two articles by Mr Loney both coherent and interesting to read.

I don't make a hobby of conspiracy theories but I will agree that some are pretty amusing - like the Holy Blood thing - children of Jesus for god's sake! (Not intended to be a pun.) I was surprised to find that secret scientology doctrine includes ancient astronauts and good aliens/bad aliens trying to rule our lives. Trust El Ron to be a Sci-Fi writer to the end.

The speech on SDI was admirably thorough for its briefness. Scarey to learn of Pournelle's direct involvement - another Sci-fi writer gone potty. I agree fully with your analysis of SDI weaknesses. If TSW were more like this, it would be an enjoyable zine.

(The letter was signed: Tersely Brian Brown.)

TSW is more like this, this time round. Hope it qualifies as enjoyable this issue. We've decided to keep bugging you with it til you say you like it!

Irwin Hirsch: 2/416 Dandenong Road, Caulfield North, VIC, 3161, Australia

The main thing which struck me about the issue was how it seemed such a grab-bag of articles, as if you and Julian wanted to pub-your-ish but weren't sure what to put in it. The overall effect, upon finishing reading the fanzine was one that didn't really encourage involvement. There was nothing wrong with the various articles, but they didn't merge into a solid whole.

Julian's editorial(s) were interesting, but I wish his round-up wasn't as brief. I mean, what's exciting about a list of people, places and events? Your SDI article/talk was interesting but it wouldn't have been out of place in the Features section of a decent newspaper. Your bit on the conspiracy books was the most enjoyable feature of the issue, not the least because you managed to add a touch of humour in the way it was written and the humour seemed relevant to the matter discussed. The letter column was in need of a good editorial knife. Only Seth's letter, and possibly Harry J.N.'s letter had anything of substance in them.

(Mr Hirsch's criticism was solicited by Mr Loney and is a brief excerpt from a personal letter.)

Thanks Irwin, I think your criticism of TSW 2/1 is most constructive. I feel this ish is stronger for a couple of reasons. One is that everything in it has been written since December 1985 and it doesn't have the time shift effect and out-of-date problem that TSW 2/1 did. The second is that everything in this ish has been written specifically for TSW, which sure makes a difference, and most of it is directly related to SF/SF fandom. I am much more pleased with the contents of this one than I was with the last and I hope you find it more enjoyable, too. Of course fanering is an extremely subjective experience and it could be there are problems with TSW 2/2 that I've overlooked - only time and LoCs will tell.

Brian Forté: 4/532 South Road, Kurralt Park, SA, 5037, Australia

A question: where do I find a whim that I may pay the asked for exchange?

Another question: where did you get my address? (It's actually several years not my address but mail to there can still get to me.) I don't mind, I'm just insufferably curious.

However, receiving a fanzine now, especially one containing a spiel on conspiracy theory gives me pause. Let me tell you about it.

I work at Moomba at the moment, makings scads of money and getting bored shitless. It just so happens (that's always the way) that the company I work for (Amdel) has recently employed Paul Day, ex-proprietor of Adelaide's 'The Black Hole' bookshop, to work up here. As a consequence he is now a co-worker. He is at home at the moment, having finished his latest two week shift about a week ago, but on his last couple of trips he has had occasion to regale me with a tale or three from AussieCon II. Now I've been gafiating for several years but if it wasn't for being up here I would have gone to said Con, and even Paul's vaguely cynical tales began to stir more than just nascent re-interest.

Then along comes my birthday. Even at my tender age I generally forget this so-called event but a non-fan friend who remembered had the remarkable good taste to send me a copy of Fred Pohl's 'The Way The Future Was'. I devoured it just two days ago whilst on night shift at Tirrawarra. All of a sudden I'm feeling something vaguely akin to homesickness.

Today, 19th of January, and I'm back in Moomba proper, my home for the next five weeks as well as the previous eight (bar four days in the second week of December). A pile of mail lies awaiting and what should lie amongst it but a re-directed copy of 'The Space Wastrel'. The space next to whim in the availability column carefully marked.

I don't believe you.

Maybe if it was another fanzine, one from someone I knew I'd accept it as another in a series of coincidences but, and please excuse my ignorance and accept my low level of involvement in fandom before I sort of dropped out, I don't think I've met either of Messrs Loney and Warner.

No, there is something far more insidious going on here and I'm going to find out. I've got to admit, it is very well done. But there are flaws nonetheless.

Sure; Paul is trained in chemistry and so is quite suited to the work up here but Amdel has lots of labs: who directed him to Moomba?

Sure; a non-fan friend could pick the book simply because they know my taste and are thoughtful gift-givers but it's a hard-cover copy and they're bloody hard to get (or they were last time I looked): so who did they get the copy from?

What's that you're reading?

"The Galactic Bard", the new filk song book by David Luckett and Craig Hilton. *hah hah.*

Hey.... Isn't this advertising?

In a non-professional publication? Heaven forbid!



Sure; my old address is probably floating around lots of half forgotten places just waiting to be picked up: but to get a fanzine with an article on conspiracy theory, and an article on SDI, which sort of sideswipes my field (when I get round to actually finishing the bloody degree): who's dropping the oblique hints?

You see that's the problem you've got, you just can't help showing off a bit and those of us ~~paranoid/enough~~ on our toes can always catch you smirking behind the façade of innocence. I know you're out there and the more I look the easier it is to see. There's little things that give you away when you know what to look for. Like not sending the fanzine to my new address so that I won't become suspicious, and letting it be Paul who comes up to Moomba since his cynicism should make it look like you don't want to rekindle my interest. Oh, there's lots more but you know them already don't you.

All I need now is a good reason and I've got it sown up. It can't be just me after all I wasn't involved for all that long before and besides I'm ill-tempered, opinionated and bloody difficult to get along with if I put half a mind to it. No, there's got to be more to it. If only I could find the reason, I could finish this letter nu!

Hey!, I've got it. Some secret body out there wants all their fan humour translated into yiddish, that way it will still be terrible but it will sound terrific.

You want to know a thing? It's not for my health I sit here writing this dreck. In fact sitting here in front of this meshiginah computer is not necessarily the most sensational thing I've ever done let me tell you. So anyhow, you got someone wants yiddish humour, you get them to give me a call, proper directions I'll give them. To my mother's house, and you got your mind where your tuchis only should be.

So, that's my problem solved with, what about yours, what for you sending people 'ha ha I've got a secret and you don't know it except I do so there' bits of mail. You're lonely? You want someone nice? I've got a cousin, just right for you. How do I know? Trust me I know these things.

Hey, a blink, maybe you might twitch your schnoz. It wouldn't hurt, you should make with the sign that your hearing all this. Like a ~~schlemiel~~ I'm sitting here typing all this and your not listening, I don't need this you know.

So now your listening, well let me tell you something. This article on conspiracies you wrote, a mechaieh it was kein ein houra. And the bit about Ronnie 'I don't know what I'm talking about but it sure sounds neat' Reagan's farblondjet star wars schmeer. Well just say a mensch I don't think he is. A mensch! Ha! A shtumie is what he is, and altogether too much time on the ga-ga tube he gets for a shtumie let me tell you. But one should not speak ill of the dead; he's not dead you say, you didn't see his last spiel on the ga-ga tube. I tell you, he hasn't had a sparkle in his punim since before I was a bar mitvah boy, longer even. They should run a country under such a momser? No wonder they walk around with that shpilkess look on their punim, collectively I mean and you should pardon my frankness.

Hey look, I've got work to do (ha!) and besides I think we've got our problem sorted out, you send me more of you meshiginah bits of paper and I'll stop nuhdzing you already. No really, if your for kosher schmackfel hard up, I'll oblige, like a mensch I'll oblige. Nu! So you tell your friend with the chutzpah to stop playing with my paranoia already and I'll stop writing this fershlugginer letter, hey why not both be happy, we got the room.

Oy veh, the yiddish was cosmic! What you mean, is this a plot? So is there now some law against plotting? Let me tell you we've got rich friends, we've got friends in high places, powerful friends, not just peanut farmers! You got no chance, no place to run...

Look, really, I enjoyed your letter/paranoia tremendously, it's time you stopped gaffiating -- we need all the sick jokes we can get in fandom. Please accept TSW 2/2 as a welcome back to the family. ~~The Medical Family~~/that/ls. I look forward to hearing from you again.

Frank Macskasy Jnr: P O Box 27274, Wellington 1, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Mark's assessment of the SDI reads logically. The thing which frightens me isn't the SDI programme per se - but its immense cost. A trillion dollars, plus, is one figure I've heard. One trillion dollars. An inconceivable amount of money; open to budget over-runs; mismanagement; and plain, common, rip-offs.

Now imagine if half that were spent on aid to under-developed nations, and the other half to space exploration!!!

January 29th was a depressing day for me; I woke to the news on my radio-clock, and the announcement that the Shuttle Challenger had exploded 74 seconds after launch. God, how horrible. Then I saw the 6.30 news, saw the seven astronauts walking merrily into their bus, to be driven to the launch pad... and then they had 74 seconds to live before that blasted fuel tank exploded. Shit.

Thanks Frank, couldn't agree with you more. An incredible and tragic waste.

Harry J.N. Andruschak: P O Box 606, La Canada-Flintridge, California, 91011

Yup, we had 100% success with the VOYAGER TWO-UNRANUS encounter. Then came the CHALLENGER disaster. JPL now has the GALILEO Jupiter Orbiter and Probe spacecraft sitting at the cape with no way to launch it. Obviously, we will not be able to launch for the May 1986 launch window, and since windows are every 13 months, that means we cannot launch until June 1987, July 1988, or even August 1989, assumin Nasa HQ doesn't cancel the mission altogether.

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I wonder of the CHALLENGER fiasco will make people think twice about the SDI and its chances of working 100% the very first time it is really needed?

Well Harry, that may be quite a relevant comment, but I'm afraid I don't give you a snowball's chance in hell of getting the average person to think twice. Hmmm....

Harry's was our last LoC folks, so now all that's left between you and the end of The Space Wastrel is....

The AFTERWORD!

In which I would like to say thankyou for your attention - I hope reading the zine was a pleasurable experience. If you liked it we'd love a word of encouragement, LoC, trade, article or, in particular, some artwork. All the art in this ish is by one artist and while we're very pleased with what Craig has provided for us; (1) variety is the spice of life and (2) we are worried about what we'd do if Craig was run over by a bus. We will run any sort of art and almost any size. The only restrictions are that it must be reasonably good and we need it by next ish.

All the best to everyone. See y'all in June!