

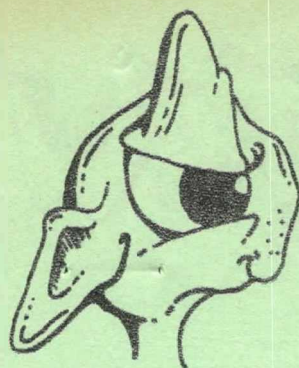


T&W

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*...the one and
only...
The Space Wastrel*

This is The Space Wastrel for April, 1987, and is Volume Two Number Seven. TSW is edited and published by {Ms} Michelle {Muijsert}, Mr {Mark} Loney and Mr {Julian} Warner.

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* The Space Wastrel: P.O. Box 428, Richmond, Victoria, 3121, Australia *

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* * * WHY YOU GOT THIS * * WHY YOU GOT THIS * * WHY YOU GOT THIS * * *

- ☐ You contributed/You locced/Your name is mentioned/You paid {like, wow!}
- ☐ We like small furry animals
- ☐ We can still remember the last time - in fact it's written in our diary in invisible ink {just apply heat...}
- ☐ We trade and when we're particularly broke we turn tricks but we hope you won't hold that against us
- ☒ This is goodbye, not au revoir, unless something mutually satisfying occurs
- ☐ I'm damned sure there's some good reason for your inclusion on the mailing list...

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Alonely In The Trackless Wastes

Editorial M4M Opinion by MICHELLE MUIJSERT

* * * * *

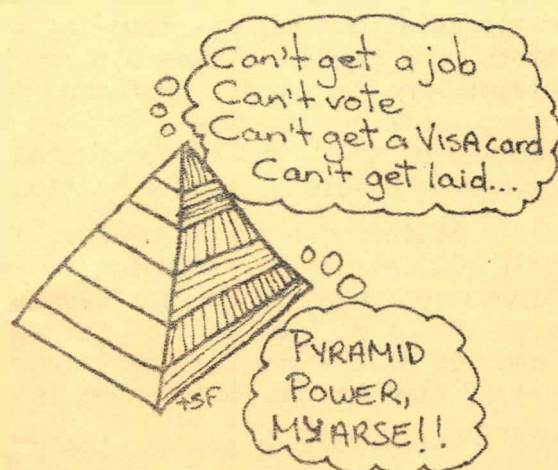
I hadn't been involved in fandom all that long when the Herpes scare happened along. Or perhaps it had happened along a while earlier but we'd only just worked off enough sexual energy to feel nervous about it. Anyway, the Herpes scare served as impetus to draw up a sexual roadmap of local fandom and to make the - devastating - discovery that if the offending bug once got loose amongst us, we were pretty much all for the high jump. Fortunately, it didn't.

We were not by a long shot the first fannish group to draw such a roadmap nor was ours by any mean the most complex and potentially devastating around. Also, luckily, ours was drawn up for purely hypothetical reasons. No horror stories about Swedish fen and three-day, peak-time, freeway maps in our circles. What is noticeable hereabouts, though, is that the current AIDS crisis has not prompted any such maps. One could observe quite correctly that AIDS is not something to be flippant about, but then neither was Herpes. No, I rather think we have Neo-Conservatism and the non-Sexual Revolution to thank for the present lack of comparative cartography zapping about the place. Times have changed.

It would be facile to say we've all got older and become involved in Permanent Relationships. Of course we have. That happens to every fannish generation and, for that matter, every non-fannish generation as well (but who cares about them?). What does seem to have happened is that Permanent Relationship seems to have become synonymous with such terms as Closed Relationship or at least extreme discretion and cautiousness. Which has left us with a rather different fandom, one which presents an almost unlined, somewhat characterless face. Gone are the controversial declarations of love and lust in our fanzines' pages, the scandals, the oh-so-efficient gossip grapevine, the heartache, embarrassment and vivification of messy affairs and sudden terminations. It's really very peaceful these days. Personally I think it's a trackless waste.

Yes, on a personal level it's nice to be in a stable relationship. But it'd be even nicer with a bit on the side and better still if one could have a gossip about it with friends who were close enough to discuss one's personal habits with. If you think I miss the 'Bad' Old Days of Sexual Tension and Truth'n'Dare, you're damned right. Those roadmaps may have directed us to personal mortification at times, but I also think that they led us to the Heart of Fandom. At least they were roads that we travelled together. Fandom couldn't have become what it is today without them.

So what am I saying? Just rambling I guess, since with the advent of AIDS the old days are hardly likely to come again, nor would it really be wise to wish them too. This is sheer nostalgia. Those Were The Days, My Friend type stuff. Anybody else out there miss the relatively carefree days of youth? Wanna light a candle to them at a Con some time? See ya there.



STRAFED By The STORK

So Evan John Luckett Beasley (note the surname, folks) arrived somewhat after midnight on the morning of 15th October last, so this is old news. I was then thirty-five years of age, and it has been a hard day. I am now - uh - ninety-three, give or take a decade, and I swear I'll never do it again.

I have a theory about infants, which is this: babies are equipped with a quantum white hole, which closes up around the time they turn two. There can be no other explanation for the amount of noxious substances of all kinds that the infant excretes, eructates, micturates and barfs, quantities far in excess of the amount of food it can be induced, by threats and cajoling, to take. Reliable estimates from Luckett Labs (The Future Today...but who needs it?) are that a baby eliminates at least seven times its own body weight in fetid goo every day, mostly over its parents. The likely reason for this strange adaption is psychological - it's to develop the infant's sense of humour, and thus fit it for fandom, or Federal politics.

Not that this baby requires much cajoling to feed; Sally has the only case of R.S.I. of the mammary glands that I've ever heard of. He gargles milk with a sound, which, if I hadn't heard it before, I would have attributed to the noise made by a fly-by of a dozen punctured balloons, each one the size of the Hindenburg.

Close observation of the habits of the human infant has led me to new and startling conclusions regarding the nature of time itself. There is, for example, Luckett's Law of Synchronicity, which states that baby care takes up more than the actual amount of time available, and which opens up the intriguing possibility that babies create a time-warp about themselves for this purpose. Then there is the Three AM Observation, which states that the time taken to do anything with an infant at that hour approaches infinity. The Sun has gone out, the Galaxies are imploding, the heat death of the Universe approaches, and it's still three am and the infant is still yelling about something. This appears to be a special case of the General Law of Relativity.

Infancy is the only time in life when most people get immediate, instant, day and night service, hand and foot. It's the only time when they don't have to do ANYTHING but eat and sleep. It's the only time when they attract lavish praise for distinctly antisocial and disgusting acts, as in "That was a good burp!", or "Oh, what a clever boy to poop in his pants!". It's the only time in a male's life when attractive and intelligent women will plead with him for the favour of a smile. The least you'd think would happen is the expression of some appreciation. But no. Removing the infant's soaked and putrid nether garments, and replacing them with clean, dry, fresh ones elicits a threnody of complaint. Proffering its preferred food in its natural and aesthetically pleasing container produces, in that moment before greedy acceptance, an expression of shock and horror suitable to the countenance of a Methodist elder were the same object to be flourished at him in chapel.

We are cultivating a portable baby, which implies that a volume of materials roughly equivalent to that which the average person would require for a trip to Tierra del Fuego is carried everywhere we go. This leads to yet another observation, that the ratio of the mass of the support system to the mass of the baby is always greater than one and is proportional to the square of the amount of time the support system is expected to function.

With all the above, we are nonetheless determined to take him to England for

Worldcon 1987, God help us. I can see it all now:

Customs Official: Have you read this card, sir?
DL: With difficulty, yes.
Customs Official: Have you anything to declare?
DL: Four tonnes of assorted excreta.
Customs Official: Travelling with a baby, are you?
DL: It's a fair cop. I'll come quietly officer.
Customs Official: I wish you wouldn't do that, sir. It gets all over me.
DL: You misunderstand, officer. Despite the infelicitous expression which I used just then, that substance actually emanates from the baby, not me. Have a Wet One.
Customs Official: No, thanks. I'm trying to give them up. {beckoning to superior} Now, sir, if you'd just take off all your clothes and bend over... {to colleague, sotto voce} We got a right one here - high as a kite, he is.
End Customs Official: {calling across} Bert, have you got the rubber gloves and Vaseline?...

I wake up at nights in a cold sweat over this and many other possible horrible situations. Can you imagine me in a stately home, recommending to a peer a method of removing crap from an Aubusson tapestry, or explaining to a gallery attendant how the puke came to splash as high as the Gainsborough? The possibilities are endless.

And then there is the Worldcon itself:

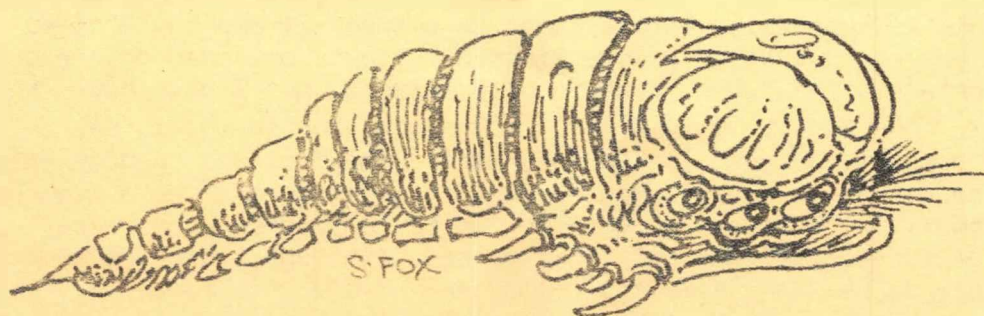
Panellist: So I said to Ted, Ted, I said, if you're going to stir... and blow me down, the next thing I knew was, he had.
{Roars of laughter, cut through by a noise resembling a hammer-drill hitting a nail in a concrete wall.}
Chair: Will somebody stop that?
DL: It's only a crying baby...
Chair: And here's me thinking it was the Libyan Air Force practice-landing on the roof... {to Chief Dorsai} Throw the bum out!

And so on.

The torrent of babies continues in Western Australian fandom. Sue Margaret and Iain Henderson are due next, followed by Lise Summers and Jay Plester. If this continues, all fannish meetings here will be distinguished by that faint smell of cheese which is characteristic of those who associate with babies.

Am I putting you off? Sorry. All this is a reverse defence mechanism. What I'm really saying is that the problems and privations are immense, and there are moments when you could cheerfully strangle the little bugger, this miniature absolute dictator which you have created to rule your life, but despite it all, it's all worthwhile.

He's in the cot beside me, smiling and cooing at his mobile as I read him this aloud. I wouldn't have it any other way.



GRAPE-SHOT

Where would we be without TASTE? by IAN NICHOLS?

(Though before we begin, we'd like to remind you that the opinions Ian expresses - interesting as they are - are hardly ever those of your Editors...)

Well and truly caught out. Tim Reddan is dead right; sec is not the sweetest champagne, doux is, and demi-sec is sweeter than sec. My brain was out to lunch when I wrote that, and I can only plead distraction by the Chopin letter as an excuse. To make amends, and to up the ante in the wine snob stakes, I'll talk a little more about champagne this time, but first there are one or two matters to clear up.

Mark's disclaimer about the Heinlein article is sort of appropriate, in that it was written for a specialist audience, and comments from the specialists in that field are notably lacking. Next time we will both, I believe be wiser, and write for the audience which appears to read TSW. That's not knocking you readers, so don't froth at the mouth, but it was an error of judgement to expect rational criticism from people who are unaware of the terms of reference.

One of those terms of reference, which I used, was "Marxist" criticism. It seems to be a button on everyone, available for pushing. I should have made it explicit that I was using it to indicate a post-structuralist model of literary criticism which related the text to the conditions of its production. It does not mean that I am a card-carrying Communist, nor, f'chrissake, that I think Heinlein is. As a matter of fact, I thought I'd made it clear that I wasn't indulging in a critique of the author at all, only of the text. All those people who are accusing me of playing the Heinlein-bashing game can get the axe off the grindstone. I didn't do it, boss, honest.

The other bit is my reply to Chopin. It may, to some, seem to be a little over the top, but you should have seen the one that Mark and Michelle and Julian refused to print. I'm afraid it's not in my background to bear insult with a good British upper lip. I'm more inclined to reach for a broken bottle. The thing that annoyed me most about the entire episode was the sheer *gulllessness* of it. Chopin is obviously a nom de plume, and I would have thought anybody who wanted to slag off on me would have at least had the class to use their own name. Of course I could be wrong, and Katherine Chopin could really exist, in which case I would be more than happy to take up any issue she cares to debate, in public or private, at CapCon. Just come up and say hello. Or, better yet, contribute an article to a 'zine. (Let it be noted that here I agree with Ian for once. Come on, K.C., let's see your stuff. - MM) If it's good, I will be the first to praise it - no joke, and the world of fandom will have something good to read. If it's not, it will garner the criticism it deserves, and I hope that Ms Chopin will learn from that criticism the difference between gross insult and the correction of errors. Which brings me back to Tim Reddan's letter and the cock-up over Champagne.

What the bloody line should have said is "sec is the sweetest French Champagne commonly available in Australia, with a range in between it and brut." {You can believe, if you wish, that this is a Nichols cop-out, but read on, read on.} Doux is certainly the sweetest style of Champagne, but I have never seen it in Australia. Then again, my tastes, as I've said, run to fairly dry Champagne, so I probably haven't looked very hard. The Moet and Chandon Petit Liqueur is even sweeter than doux Champagne, but it's designed to be a liqueur, so it doesn't count. Both doux and demi-sec can be considered wines more appropriate to be served with dessert than entree, although there are some who say that there is no wrong time for Champagne.

The actual sugar content of the wines is somewhat like this: Brut = less than 2%; extra Sec = 1.5% - 2.5%; Sec = 2% - 4%; Demi-Sec = 4% - 6%; Doux is over 6%. As you can see, there is a bit of room to move, and the classifications are not ironclad. You can easily get a Sec which is almost as sweet as a Demi-Sec. The actual style depends upon the maker. However, the sweetness depends only on the maker, not upon the grape, age, the year, or anything else, and to understand why it is necessary to know a little more about how Champagne is made.

All bullshit to one side, nobody knows who produced the first Champagne. Dom Perignon, the cellar-master of the Abbey of Hautvillers at the end of the seventeenth century, is often called "the father of Champagne", but that may simply be that the pun is too good to resist. He certainly made huge contributions, and laid the foundations of the modern Champagne industry, but it is certain that Champagne, as a sparkling, blended wine from that district, existed before the Dom started putting it in stronger bottles and tying the corks down with string to keep the fizz in. {By the by, it's highly unlikely that the remark attributed to Dom Perignon about drinking stars is anything but apocryphal; if he had used a metaphor to describe the sensation it would not have been a visual one; he was blind.} The chief contribution that the Dom made was in the blending of wines, and his blindness may well have contributed to his uncanny ability to marry wines.

It may well have been the English who discovered the latent wonders of the wines of the Champagne region, and it's typical that they let the word get back to the French, who promptly filed the numbers off and claimed the idea as their own. The wines of Champagne used to be shipped in barrels to England, during the seventeenth century, in the lulls between the Brits and the Frogs pummelling the shit out of each other. It had usually spent a couple of years maturing before it was shipped, so one would think that all fermentation had stopped. One would be wrong. You see, the Champagne district lies about 90 miles to the north-east of Paris, where that Ol' man river, the Marne in this case, has been chewing away at the chalky plains for millennia. It gets cold up there. The wine would ferment fairly quickly at first, then slow down. When this happened, the doors of the Maison where it was stored would be thrown open, and the cold air would stop the fermentation. That's when it would be shipped to England. When the wine was bottled, and stored, it would warm up, and the interrupted fermentation would re-commence. The gases produced by fermentation had no way to escape from the bottle, so they were forced into the liquid. When the bottle was opened, or when the cork was forced out under the pressure from inside, the wine fizzed and sparkled. Nobody knows who the genius was who experimented by adding a little more yeast and sugar to the par-fermented wine, but he created Champagne as we know it today.

During the process of fermentation, every last bit of sugar in the wine is used up; the wine is bone dry, and far too dry for most people's tastes, so wine and sugar is added to sweeten it. {Now for another bit of esoterica: there is available a totally dry dry Champagne, and it has on the label "Champagne Naturelle". I have no idea where you'd get it in Australia, I've only seen it overseas. It will pucker your lips, but you may like that.} This is why the sweetness of the wine depends on the winemaker.

These days, the Champagne industry is huge. One firm has 15 miles of underground tunnels as its cellar, and uses a small electric train to get people from one end to the other. Most firms are based in either Reims or Epernay, with the majority in Reims. If you go down the Boulevard Jamin in Reims, then hang a left into the Champ de Mars, you'll go past Heidsieck Monopole, Mumm, and Irroy, with Charles Heidsieck off in a little side street opposite the park, in between Rue du Champ de Mars and Rue Gosset. Wander left again at the Place fr la Republique and you'll go near Krug, Lanson and Veuve

---Ian Nichols/Grapeshot-----

Cliquot Ponsardin. Down at the other end of town, around the Rue des Coutures, Boulevard Bancroft and Rue St Leonard, you'll find Jacquesson, Piper Heidsieck {who, incidentally, make one of the finest champagnes you'll find in the town, and one of the driest}, Delbeck, Taittinger, Charles Heidsieck {again} - Ruinart Pere Fils, Pommery and Greno, Henriot {I've never liked Henriot, but I'm not too fond of Krug, and there's royalty that swears by it}, Abel Lepitre, and Veuve Cliquot, again. On the other side of the tracks, over in Courlancy, is Masse and Lanson again.

In Epernay, you can wander down the aptly named Avenue de Champagne and find four of the most important firms right there: Moet & Chandon {who, incidentally, make Dom Perignon Champagne - and a bloody good drop it is, too}, Perrier Jouet, de Venoge, and Mercier. Pol Roger is off in a little side street called Croix de Bussy, and Marne & Champagne is a little further over, in Rue Maurice Cerveaux.

Okay, that's the guided tour, and I'll finish up with a couple of quotes, since we seem to be in the quote business these days. In praise of Champagne, Madame de Pompadour: "Champagne . . . is the only wine that lets a woman stay beautiful after she has drunk it." And on cheap Champagne, Edward Bunyard, from the Gourmet's Companion: "Cheap Champagne, a deadly potion, one that the Borgias must regret was created too late for their use." And finally, one of the great wine stories, showing the dedication of the true wine snob: A prominent wine taster one day suffered a fractured skull when his carriage overturned, and was carried unconscious into a nearby house. A doctor who was called began to clean the wound with old wine, some of which trickled down and touched the taster's lips. He suddenly blinked and opened his mouth. Everyone bent forward to hear his last words. Weakly, and through the death rattle in his throat, he whispered "Clos d'Estournel, 1848..." {Don't blame me, it's an anecdote related by a certain Hubrecht Duijker.}

Love and kisses,

Ian.

* * * * *

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MEMO FROM THE PERTH DESK

MADGE YULES REPORTS FROM THE "STATE OF EXCITEMENT"

* * * * *

As SwanCons of late have not been excessively high-energy affairs, one tends to gear down rather than tense up as they approach, but after all, W.A. fen have always had a very relaxed approach to conventions.

None - to my knowledge - have ever been quite so laid-back as was MicroCon. SwanCons have traditionally occurred on the Labour Day Weekend in January, but this year SwanCon XII was scheduled for a later date due to the America's Cup hotel accomodation squeeze. Staunch traditionalist Ian Nichols decided that a Con should still be held on the Labour Day Weekend and thus MicroCon was born. No more than about twenty other traditionalists attended. The Con was advertised - in the very loosest sense of the word - such that many people after the event expressed surprise at being told MicroCon had even occurred.

The venue was an old church in Maylands which has been converted into a school for children who have various learning difficulties. The Programme was chalked up on the blackboard, Sally Beasley was Guest of Honour (a most politic choice - this ensured that all three Lockett/Beasleys would attend), a banquet of various pizzas was consumed, computer games were played, songs were sung, slides were shown, hoary old tales were told, points were argued and all was wound up with a dead-dog party in Bentley.

It was all very traditional, very relaxative and only just a wee bit exclusive. Kudos to Mr Nichols.

* * * * *

The Real Thing - SwanCon XII - on the theme of "Breakthroughs" was held at the Airways Hotel in Adelaide Terrace in the city on the weekend of the 27th of February to the 2nd of March. The Con would serve to break-in a con committee of relatively young and inexperienced members, with the helping hand of nanny John McDouall in the guise of Guest of Honour.

Part of the "Breakthroughs" concept was the expression of the need for "Old Guard" and "New Guard" fandom in W.A. to pull together for future mutual benefit - notably for the Perth in '89 NatCon bid and the Perth in '94 WorldCon bid.

To their credit, the concom did well - they kept a consciously low-key con humming along very nicely thank you and may have managed to instil some comradely spirit into fellow fen.

As much normal SwanConnish stuff went on - one is inclined only to remember the eventful things. The Rail Baron Tournament produced a memorable quote from mild-mannered Matthew Clarkson - playing his first-ever Tournament game. To Ian Nichols' psychological blatherings and blandishments he gave vent to a fulsome "Fuck you, Nicko." Unfortunately Ian survived to play in the final.

For the second year in a row, a cocktail party was held. Our self-catered effort was a great improvement on the lacklustre fizzog that "Miss Maud's" supplied last year.

Mr Warner and Mr Nichols provided an interesting counterpoint to each other during the evening. Earlier, as Mr Nichols warned of the pitfalls of convention attendance and prescribed remedies for self-wrought ailments, Mr Warner was "warming-up" on two or three gin and tonics. During the cocktail party, Mr Warner proceeded to obtain more than fair value for money from the many available cocktails and was eventually invited away to an evening of video-

---Madge Yules/Memo From The Perth Desk-----

watching at Don and Ann Griffiths' home. Unfortunately he fell fast asleep during the evening and had to be dragged in a most ungainly fashion to the vehicle of Rob Cox and Trish Crowther - who had volunteered to bed him down. Don and Ann's front garden still has two fine ruts where those unconscious feet dragged. Legend has it that Mr Warner was then too comatose to remove from the aforesaid vehicle and awoke in the wee hours in the company of a vagrant cat and a horrible hangover.

All of the skeletons from John McDouall's closet were impeccably dressed and eventually turned out to be other people's fantasies. So much for yellow-paper journalism in Guest Of Honour interviews.

Grant Stone informed us that SwanCon XI still owed money to a printer, but the matter was cleared up by the end of the con.

The Masquerade would have been disappointing but for the appearance of the {awfully-named} Acoustic Aardvarks. The "Varks" presented a well balanced set of popular and fannish songs which were played with a competence that over-rode any "first big performance" nerves.

At the auction prices escalated - as ever - for the committee members' pies for the pie-throwing, and the vegemite shield attained yet another record price. A sort of "alternative breakfast" shield was also instituted.

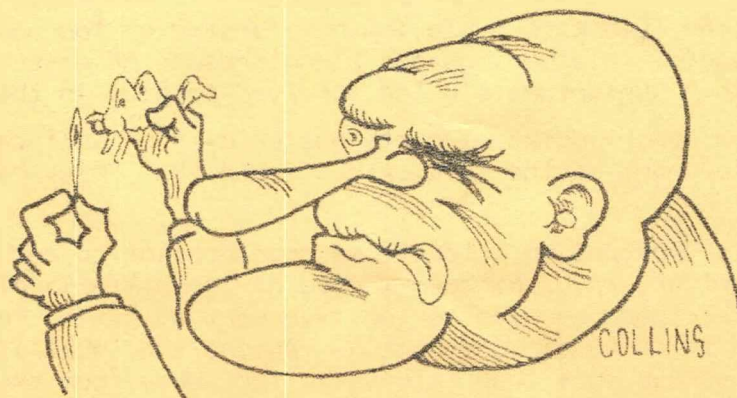
Stephen Dedman impressed us with his developing proficiency in short-story writing and reading. Watch for his name on a Harlan Ellison edited anthology which is to be published R.S.N.

At the "future fandom" panel, Gina Goddard tried to impress upon us the need for a new unity - which, if attendances at post-Con events are any indication, appears to be coming about.

Nothing naughty happened at the Dead Dog Party at Don and Ann Griffiths' place, but then there were all the room parties for that sort of thing...

* * * * *

MM: Some of you loyal Australians out there will notice a slip with regard to local customs that indicate that Madge Yules is not in fact a human being, but an alien masquerading as a fan while plotting the end of the world. This discovery caused some consternation at East Coast TSW Editorial Offices as Mark and I had always thought that this close associate of Jules was Homo Sapien Insanus like the rest of us. You learn something new every day. Anyway, the point of all this is that the first letter communicating to us what it was that gave away the alien imposter will win a weekend with Madge Yules in a motel of her choice. So how's that for generous?... And you wanted to go on 'Sale Of The Century' to make your fortune, tut, tut, how unnecessary...



SKEL & the Art Of

MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE

Being a letter from Skel that we thought too impressive in its size and scope to allow it to be relegated to the LoCool. Skel ruminates on a number of things, but the prime and most significant of these is:

* * * * * Zine Philosophy * * * * *

I don't think you should pay any attention to Joseph Nicholas (after all, why should you be any different to the rest of fandom in this regard?). Your instincts are correct to go by the responses you receive from individual fans, and to take no notice of the opinions of mythical bodies like "Britain and North America", even though those opinions are expressed by the official spokesperson for those bodies (and who presumably has a signed contract to that effect). Incidentally did you notice how "Britain and North America" became, just one paragraph later, "the rest of the world"? Sorry New Zealand, South America, Africa, Europe (to name areas from which I cannot recall seeing any consensus of remarks about Australian fanzines) - I'm afraid you belong in some alternate dimension.

Pretension, condescension, and patronage seem to be one of the themes of the inverted half of this latest issue. ((This LoC is in response to Number 5, the monster issue with the LoCool inverted.)) To these I shall return (he says, MacArthurishly).

In all honesty I must admit, twitting aside, that there is some truth in Joseph's remarks. There is this Golem abroad in British fandom, upon whose forehead is inscribed the name 'Australian Fanzines'. In truth it does not bear any relation to the actuality of Australian fanzines, but it is proving awfully difficult to kill. I suffer from precisely the same problem myself, and I can give you examples. Take for instance Bruce Gillespie's SCIENCE FICTION COMMENTARY. Now nobody would really try and criticise this for a lack of quality. Despite this my reaction to it would always be, "Oh Shit!" Well, the full reaction was, "Oh Shit! Heavy!" The 'Oh Shit' part was because I 'know' I don't like 'heavy'. And yet... every time I read that zine I enjoyed it. Despite this, the very next time an issue arrived my reaction would be just the same. It's almost as if, in computer processing terms, my response were written to a workfile that was deleted at the end of the run, whereas my preconceptions were constantly read as permanent data.

My response to THYME is somewhat similar. "Oh Shit! Parochial interests!" Yet in the same way, I have enjoyed every issue I've seen. These preconceptions are hard to shake, and it isn't helped when, in the case of THYME, the UK agent (a certain Joseph Nicholas) writes "Another boring Australian fanzine" on the mailing label. There is nothing inherently uninteresting about Australian concerns. I don't get THE NOTIONAL, and have neither of the two parodies on it, and yet the to-ing and fro-ing concerning these is most interesting. Would someone send me some xeroxes?

Anyway, by taking the trouble to write to you Joseph is basically undermining his own arguments. If you have no credibility outside Australia, why is he writing to you? Apparently he hasn't thought this through. Someone else who hasn't thought things through appears to be Richard Faulder. Now let me see if I understand his arguments:- SDI will have a destabilising effect because it has the potential of allowing a first strike.

This destabilising effect is bad, and must be combatted by pointing out the system's unworkability. However, if the system is unworkable it cannot allow



a first strike capability, and hence needn't be undermined by being shown to be unworkable. With logic like this is it any wonder that the opposition to SDI has to date been somewhat ineffective?

My own feelings about the SDI are somewhat ambivalent, and what is more SDI is a particularly sharp fence to sit on. On the one hand I can accept that the current stand-off of mutual nuclear annihilation does seem to be working in global terms. All destabilisations have been gingerly entered into and kept away from centre stage. Of course this may be of small consolation to people in places like Vietnam, but I at least am grateful that everyone concerned seems to appreciate that

mutual annihilation is too high a price to pay for being pissed off at somebody. At the same time I do not like this particular sword of Damoclese hanging over my head any more than does the next person. I do not however see unilateral disarmament as a viable option {OK, if you do, then you disarm, but I won't}. What therefore is needed is an initiative that will lead to multilateral disarmament. SDI is an initiative. Whether or not it is the initiative is another matter. What we have is a situation which needs destabilising, but which we daren't destabilise.

Arguments that SDI will not protect the citizenry of the USA seem to me a bit irrelevant in this regard. What it means of course is "I will kill you, but you will only severely cripple me." Obviously 'winning' this war would be worse than losing all the other wars ever fought, but this is only the worst-case scenario. What it does mean is that, in future, or to be more precise, in one particular future, mutual destruction will become unviable as a stabilising influence. Surely even those who are categorically against SDI cannot ignore the fact that suddenly, since its acceptance as an initiative, there's positive progress on the front of disarmament talks? It may succeed, it may fail, but for the first time in years there is real hope that something might be done.

Enough of talk about trivialities like Nuclear Annihilation. Let me move onto more important things, like fanzine reviews. It suddenly occurs to me that in saying that, I am not being entirely ironic. It seems to me that certain concerns are obviously of greater than fannish import, and that if one wants to discuss them one should do so in an arena where that discussion may have some meaningful effect. By advancing arguments about such causes in fanzines you are not only wasting those arguments (he says, effectively shooting himself in the foot), but you are also wasting the medium. The best use of fanzines is surely to discuss fannish concerns, for where else can those concerns be discussed? Apart from in-person socialisation at fannish functions, there is no other medium for the discussion of fannish concerns. It seems a shame to waste this medium in discussing matters for which there are many forums.

Fanzines are a unique medium (even if one accepts and paraphrases Ernie Kovacs' statements about television by saying that fanzines are called a medium because they are "neither rare nor well done.>"). It seems a shame to fritter them away on concerns that can be, and are, better and more usefully dealt with elsewhere. Should we not better concern ourselves with topics that The New Socialist is not discussing? After all, if we don't talk about fanzine

reviews, who else is going to?

We have only to turn to the editorial 'Policy on LoCs' in the copy of TSW that I have before me to see that we ought to be concerning ourselves with fanzine reviews. "Why not write to us about the other zines you receive?" it says. "Fandom is supposed to thrive on interaction, after all." Yes, true, it does, but much of the interaction in terms of fanzine reviews often strikes me as no better thought through than some of the other subjects I've already mentioned. What for instance is the purpose of a fanzine review?

Well, there may be more than a single purpose. Who for instance are you writing the reviews for?

How knowledgeable is your audience? Are they basically less knowledgeable than you are on the subject {in which case you would presumably seek to impart information about the zines you are reviewing}, or are they as knowledgeable as you {in which case what you are imparting is information about yourself, about your opinion as it compares to theirs}. In all cases however what you can also convey is information about basic philosophy in regard to fanzines and fandom.

Thus, when you write basic fanzine reviews you are in effect, or so it has always seemed to me, being condescending {see, I told you I'd return, didn't I?}. You are in effect saying that your opinion is worth listening to. Either because it is more knowledgeable than the reader's, or because it is inherently interesting as something for the reader to compare his or her opinion against. Well, at least it can seem that way and if so there will always be some who will so see it. The simple fact is that fanzine reviews must state your opinion of the zine in question. You can't just lay out the facts before your audience, summarise the bare bones of the zine, because if that was all you did those of your readers who are already familiar with the zine would get nothing from your review.

As both you and Michael Hailstone accept, an opinion is merely that, and holds no more weight than the readers are prepared to give it. But anyone who is acting as a reviewer must give that opinion otherwise they sell their audience short. What really is condescending, is wrapping the whole thing up with a 'recommended' or a 'not recommended' at the end. If you've done your job right the reader should be able to glean your opinion from the review. It is patronising to assume that the reader will be unable to do this. It is also condescending to presume that it is part of your job to recommend, to say in effect "I presume my opinion to be worth following".

Another reason of course why opinions are of so little use as something from which others may seek guidance {which obviously they may do if they so wish}, is that the main way they can do is by accretion. In order to know what value I should place on your opinions I need to have read a lot of them so that I can stack enough of them up against my own to form a credible sample as to how your opinions differ from mine. Then, whether they agree or disagree, I could use them as a yardstick if I so wished. Now this is the most oft cited justification for fanzine reviews as such, and even then it is a bit of a hit-and-miss technique.

But let me back off a ways and come back at this from a slightly different angle. Premise: anything in a fanzine is there to entertain and/or instruct. In fact I think a case could be made out that simply goes with 'entertain', the 'instruction' element being only viable insofar as we are entertained by the act of being instructed, by learning. I don't mean that we should or rather need to be instructed in an entertaining manner {although it helps}, but rather that the process of learning is to many of us an entertainment in and of itself. However, having quibbled that quibble I am going to go with the initial, more all-encompassing version of my premise anyway.

Thus we see, you and I, that what I dealt with earlier is the 'instruct' side

of the fanzine coin. Whether the readers are being given information about the fanzines under review or, because they already have that information, whether they are being given information about the reviewer - either way they are receiving 'instruction', and the inherent entertainment of the learning process.

It is however possible to increase the entertainment element of fanzine reviews. One easy way for instance is to go for what is known as the 'Kill The Fuckers', or KTF approach. However much you may like or dislike this particular school of criticism, one has to admit that when handled with even a basic degree of competence it can be extremely entertaining to read. But that is only one way, and one which I find distasteful because to me it is the critic taking the easy way out and letting the 'victims' pay for his laziness.



A far better way is to put some effort into the reviews by putting them into some context and in effect making the various reviews part of a coherent whole. This is a lot more work but it is far more satisfying for both the reader and the critic. There are many sorts of contexts which one can create for such a piece. One could use for instance a historical context, reviewing and critiquing fanzines on a developmental basis, showing how they have changed over the years, how they have changed fandom, and in turn how changes in fandom have reflected themselves in various fanzines both general and specific. A drawback to trying such a piece would of course be that such an approach would not be available to everyone. It would need to be done by either a fan who'd been around awhile or alternatively, by a particularly perceptive fan with access to a wealth of older fanzines.

Another way of tackling such a piece would be to go for a philosophical context. This is far more accessible simply because we all have a philosophy of fandom and of fanzines, even if we haven't taken time out to codify that philosophy. All of us who are involved in fandom and/or fanzines care about them. Specifically fanzines. They take a lot of effort and involvement. We aren't just counting cracks in the bus shelter ceiling, waiting for it to stop raining. We care about fanzines. They mean something special to each of us, and if we stop and think about that something - think about what it is they mean to us - then what we are fumbling around the edges of is our very own fanzine philosophy. We all have got one, and no two of them are exactly alike. Just look at the scope there for entertainment and instruction!

Thus, instead of just a grab-bag bundle of unrelated opinions, each review could illuminate some facet of the overall philosophy. One wouldn't even need to pay too much specific attention to which zines were reviewed because surely the very ones the critic wanted to review would contain within themselves, and within the critic's need to review them, just the raw material required. Such

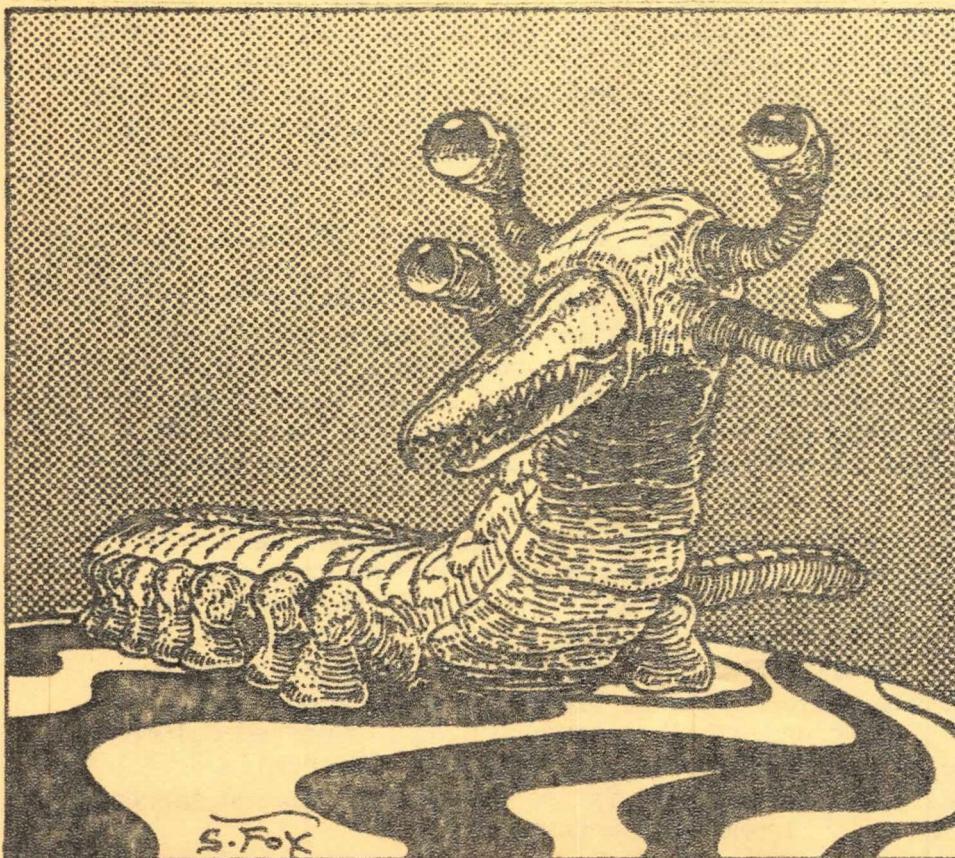
an approach tells us not only about the critic, and about the specific fanzines being reviewed, but also about the critics views of fanzines in general. In this there is so much more scope for interaction and involvement by the reader.

My philosophy for fanzine reviewing for instance, as you may have guessed, is that the reviewer should shoot for the moon, and not settle for 'just a bunch of unrelated reviews' unless they are convinced, by having tried and failed, that they can't do better by themselves and their readers. In my philosophy "sercon - looks immaculate" just does not cut it. Only your conscience is served by such an 'acknowledgement'. Aren't you trading on LoCing their fanzine? If they were that desperate to know you'd got the damned thing they'd have sent it by recorded delivery, surely. Besides, if it was one of my fanzines, and you couldn't be bothered saying more than that I'd figure it would be better appreciated elsewhere. Just what sort of itch do you think you are scratching with such 'acknowledgements'? To one person you are saying "I got it". To everyone else you are wasting space.

Anyway, as you can see, your latest issue got me thinking - some old thoughts, some new in this context - and I figured the least I could do is share those thoughts with you. I like TSW, and it has all the credibility it needs as far as I am concerned. I don't write four-page LoCs very often, which in itself quantifies my appreciation. To me at any rate.

I presume you pass on comments to your contributors? To that effect I cannot close without expressing my appreciation also of Anthony Peacey's article. I found it moving and then, upon consideration, I was impressed at how well he constructed the piece, wove all the strands together at just the right time. Damned fine work!

SKEL



A(NOTHER) MAIL REVUE

by Michelle Muijsert

So what's good in fanzines? What fits in with the Muijsert philosophy of zinic memorability? The bizarre, the outlandish and the controversial; the esthetic; that which is thought-provoking or innovative; humour; that which can be related on an emotional/personal level; and, inevitably around here, the odd dash of bad taste. Other things too, no doubt, but I hope you'll allow that a fanzine which can come up with a combination of, or all of these, qualities is bound at least to command some attention. Competent writing is a distinct plus, but can't make up for the lack of any of the above in my book. Entertainment should be diverting after all.

Which brings me to the most diverting experience I've had in a while: FACTSHEET FIVE 21 (Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Ave, Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502, U.S.A. - subs \$US2.75 per ish or Trade). FACTSHEET FIVE is not really so much a zine as a service; a listing of and platform for the entirety of the Underground Small Press. Whether your scene be SF, poetry, socialism, libertarianism, rock, technology, feminism or any number of other special interests, you'll find a contact or more probably several in the FACTSHEET. The thing that fascinated me about this publication is that it's like a series of doors into other, unknown worlds. Mike's comments on the publications that he receives are sharp and have the effect of lighting up another mental plane for a fleeting instant (cf: Matthew Arnold's "the thoughts that rain their steady glow/ like stars on life's cold sea"). Such a reminder of the variety of human interest and effort in this society of ours, which is so often apparently disapproving of diversity from the 'norm', is heartening in these apathetic times.

Apart from my emotional response to FACTSHEET FIVE, I guess I should also mention that it is clearly presented and presents a more than satisfactory amount of information about the publications it lists. It also runs columns on music, small press books and poetry, as well as a lettercol and a variety of public service ads. I was particularly amused by a full page ad for PISS ACROSS AMERICA which suggested that in view of the Reagan administration's concern about drugs, it's time that American went public about urination. Patriotism is a wonderful thing...

Just as diverting as FACTSHEET FIVE in its own way is ABBATOIR Vol.1, No.1 (Bryan Barrett and Lucy Huntzinger, respectively Box 6202, Hayward, CA 94540 and 2215-R Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94114, USA). ABBATOIR fulfils on a number of levels - it is humorous, innovative and can be related to on several different fronts depending on whether you're merely an observer (like poor old moi), are intending to go to the British worldCon or are in fact mentioned in its none-too-coy pages; inevitably some of those in the last category will consider it controversial and possibly in downright bad taste. Bully for them.

Speaking as an observer, I can safely say that my own reactions were intense amusement and a considerable amount of wry nostalgia for the days when I was a Con Girl on The Make. For those of you who haven't seen this excellent little zine, it commences with everyfan's guide to talent in Brighton, works through the necessity of Hawaiian Shirt Aid for the U.K. to reminiscences about D. West (who merits a whole column to himself), a vital guide to cool on either side of the Atlantic and a rather compromising classified column. Sad what people have to print these days to raise funds. The really wonderful thing about all this great stuff is the correlation between spareness of prose and sharpness of wit. Irony and sarcasm, even.

Of course ABBATOIR will be of considerable use to those who are attending Conspiracy with the intention of having a good time and a bit on the side. At least you'll know who to avoid. I guess you could say that ABBATOIR and FACTSHEET FIVE have quite a bit in common in that they are both intent on providing a service to fellow human beings. Such devotion to helping others really is touching.

And to anyone who was offended by ABBATOIR, I think Bryan and Lucy have a message for you: Don't be an emotional hedgehog, darling.

Speaking of emotional hedgehog-ism, I trust no-one will be offended if I pause for a moment to note that I haven't left room to insert my normal rating symbol and that these two publications rate a full erection on the Muijsert scale.

TIMBRE 4 is out and I guess the full erections couldn't last for ever. This one's flagging a bit - only about 2/3 up I suppose. {Available for the usual from Tim Jones, 20 Gillespie Street, Dunedin, Aotearoa by the way.} That makes it sound as though TIMBRE is terrifically disappointing which it isn't of course. Tim is a fluent and engaging writer and the major fault of number 4 isn't that it isn't as good as number 3, which isn't that much of a criticism. The more minor fault, and kind of an inevitable one after the momentary link between Australian and New Zealand fandom promoted by AussieCon, is that Tim makes a number of comments about the political situation with Australian fandom that indicate he isn't too au fait with where we're at. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, as the old saying goes. {I'm sure there's a lesson for me in there somewhere if only I hadn't taken my glasses off as I typed that comment.} This isn't really a problem or at least it shouldn't be considered as such - fen passing judgements about things they don't know enough about is too common in fandom for one to get het up over it if one has an iota of common sense - it's just that I think of Tim as being above such things. Oh well, one's fannish illusions can't last forever.

Neat things in TIMBRE: An article from Mae Strelkov with a very real atmosphere of the exotic Argentinian landscape to one who lives at this rarified distance; an explanation of cricket - the Best Game In The World - for the so-far-unaddicted; more political stuff on SDI/wars/non-violent resistance; some very competent fanzine reviews (ignoring the problem mentioned in the last para, that is); a strong word on trading policies of multiple editor fanzines; a piece on the development of national character in New Zealand. As an expatriot who feels more like an exile, I was interested in this and will be looking forward to hearing more about how Tim's opinions on this have developed once he's been overseas for a little while. Like any small country, New Zealand and its citizens suffer appallingly from cultural cringe. Tim is quite right in saying that these are very painful times for Enzed - adolescence is always a difficult and tempestuous time - but I think perhaps the country is doing better than Tim thinks in developing. New Zealand at least seems to be aware of its problems and have some idea of what the light at the end of the tunnel might look like. Australia, by comparison, has developed quite a culture of its own but doesn't seem to be aware of the weaknesses inherent in its society and where it might be going. Affluence as an aim probably won't make for richness of social character.

Anyway, I wander. TIMBRE is as usual cleanly edited and presented and leaves this reader hoping for more in the near future. I don't think that one's letterbox could be graced too frequently by communications from Tim Jones. By gum, you're right, that is a hint about frequency.

Which ends the long reviews and leaves me to make an all too brief listing of the rest of the zines we've received since December. Please remember that brevity indicates a lack of space, not of enjoyment of your publication!

HYPERTENSION. Lana Brown, Box 4188, Wanganui, New Zealand. Available for sub. Newszine packed with media, convention and club info.

CRY HAVOC! The Official Newsletter of the Wellington Branch of the (NZ) Association for Science Fiction. Local and general news and some reviews. Available for trade or membership from Box 6655, Wellington, New Zealand.

LARRIKIN. Irwin Hirsh (2/416 Dandenong Rd., Caulfield Nth, VIC 3161, Aust.) and Perry Middlemiss (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, VIC 3001, Aust.). Small monthly zine available for the usual. Regular as clockwork but a bit variable in quality. January issue seemed to me the best so far but its strengths (zine reviews, satirical humour) haven't been followed up on.

THYME. THE Australian newszine. Going strong I would have said - up to issue #61, running around 20pp or so an issue and never boring - BUT disaster seems to have occurred! Or has it? It seems THYME has lost an editor and the remaining one has buggered off to the Northern Hemisphere for the next six weeks. What will happen? Will Bob marry Claire? Will Carol divorce Andy? Does Hunk really have AIDS? Stay tuned and in the meantime keep writing to Peter Burns, Box 273, Fitzroy, VIC 3065, Aust.

PHLOGISTON. Alex Heatley, Box 11-708, Manners Street, Wellington, New Zealand. Quarterly high quality genzine, available for sub and now - especially for TSW's readership - the wonderful, fabulous USUAL! Write and get a review copy now before Alex changes his mind.

CRI DE LOON 9. T Kevin Atherton, 3021 N. Southprt, Chicago, IL 60657, USA. This ish is all LoCs and in places a little inaccessible to non-Americans however it's still fun, though arguments about elitism in fandom worry me a little. Elitism? In fandom? Man, we're too WEIRD looking for that (and just FORGET about the way we act)...

CRI DE LOON 10: UNFUNNY BUNNY in THE TORTOISE 'N' THE UNBUNNY. I just love these mini-comics! More! More!

DUM VIVINUS VIVAMUS! Lyn McConchie, C/- Box 279, Wellington, New Zealand. The usual, bi-monthly. Humour zine - fun!

TAU CETI PHOENIX/APOCRYPHA. Larry Anthony Dunning, Box 111, Midland, WA 6056, Aust. The usual. Mainly a gaming and media zine but this ish has the LoCs on last issue's True Confessions Session - no amazing revelations but quite interesting reading. C'mon, Larry, what was in your wallet? What happens when you eat in public? Why was Sean's back bleeding? What is the horrible thing in the closet that turns grown men into Big Macs with a single glance? You can tell us....

THE MENTOR. R & S Clarke, 6 Bellevue Rd., Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Aust. The usual. High quality zine which runs mainly short fiction with book review supplements at regular intervals. Like the new A5 format complete with art section. Nice.

L. This zine is generally known as untitled and is subtitled 'Pussies Prefer Penguin Creme'. Produced by Ali Kayn whose address is often the cause of some confusion and available mainly if you're Carey Handfield. Ali doesn't want this production reviewed so I'll content myself by saying that Number 2 is due out soon, I'll be reviewing it in TSW 8 and with any luck, it won't be so shrouded in mystery. (???)

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH. Garth Spencer, 1296 Richardson St., Victoria, B.C. V8V 3E1, Canada. Available for the usual assuming Garth is ever wealthy enough to produce another one - he's been having problems finding a job. TWATG is an interesting perzine which exposes Garth's preoccupation with organisation to close scrutiny. Sorry Garth, fandom is basically an anarchic sub-strata and I guess most fans like it that way. On the other hand this preoccupation could be useful in pursuing a career in computer programming... now, that's very fannish.

GLAROOON 2. John DeChencie and Lawrence C. Connolly, 1060 Barnsley Drive, Library, Pennsylvania 15129, USA. Attractive genzine with a weakness in that it is neither controversial nor personal enough - this doesn't make for a thriving LoCcol. Good reading anyway though.

NEOLOGY. ESFACAS, Box 4071 PSSE, Edmonton, Alberta, T8E 4S8. Clubzine available for sub or the usual. Lotsa artwork and club news.

YGGDRASIL. MUSFA, Box 106, Union Bldg, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC 3052, Aust. Edited by LynC. It seems this may be the last YGGDRASIL as MUSFA has died the death. This one is very lightweight indeed though it has one or two nice pieces of artwork.

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW Vol 2 Number 1. GPO Box 1294L, Melbourne, VIC 3001, Aust. Sigh, here I am with a review copy and not very much to say. Very sercon, very tidily and competently produced, generally of a very high standard. Particularly liked John Foyster's criticism of TRILLION YEAR SPREE. For serious SF readers, well worth the \$2 per ish or \$10 a year charged.

TRAPDOOR L. Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA. Genzine available for the usual. If a zine has such people as Greg Benford, Redd Boggs, Terry Carr, Lucy Huntzinger and

---A Mail Revue/Michelle Muijsent-----

Dave Langford writing for it from time to time, then you know it's doing okay. When all of them appear in one issue... well, nuff said. Excellent stuff.

DEFENESTRATION. David Singer, 165 Westchester Drive, Los Gatos, CA 95030, USA. Very pretty. Contents are mainly LoCs but there are plenty of them and mostly interesting.

TORUS. Box 186, STN M, Toronto, Ont M6S 4T3, Canada. Lloyd Penney, Keith Soltys and Michael Wallis. This is a first issue and, considering this, of an amazingly good standard. Good clean layout and plenty of artwork (which is usual for a Canadian fanzine I guess), and a number of interesting and well-written articles (less usual in a first effort from 3 first-time faneds). Add this one to your trade list.

LIGHT IN THE BUSHEL 3. Richard Brandt, 4740 N. Mesa #111, El Paso, TX 79912, USA. The usual. Not as good as #2 - not enough personal writing from Richard. Some good letters on the Hugo vote counting system.

ENTROPION. Nick Shears, 9 Kestrel Close, Downley, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP13 5JN, UK. The usual. Nick has an interesting life zapping around the Northern Hemisphere. I'm sure it doesn't seem that way to him, but to we little-travelled individuals (what? you're ALL seasoned globe trotters out there?) it sounds rather wonderful. Keep it up, Nick.

THE DILLINGER RELIC. Arthur D Hlavaty, 819 W. Markham Ave., Durham, NC 27701, USA. The usual approximately. Personal writings including book reviews, political opinions and a reasonable amount of zapping round the States to conferences.

GONZO. Steve Green, 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham, England, B27 7SD. The cover bears the intriguing question 'What Are You Doing About That Hole In Your Head?' Damned good question. Though I think that Steve might actually have been asking Maggie Thatcher's government, not me. Either way, it's got me foxed.

HARBINGER. Steve Roylance, 1592 Malvern Rd, Glen Iris, VIC 3146, Aust. Impressively ornate S.C.A. zine.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK. Melbourne Science Fiction Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, VIC 3005, Aust. By trade or sub. Frequent and well-filled clubzine with some good pictures of aardvarks.

THE ROGUE RAVEN. Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave S.W., Seattle, WA 98166, USA. The usual. Personal writings which allege amongst other things that only North Americans refer to soccer as soccer because they have their own version of football - everybody else calls it football. Sometimes I really wonder about Americans. (Despite the lunacy of this comment I enjoyed TRR, really I did.)

SECANT 1. Greg Hills, Box E469, St James, NSW 2000, Aust. (This address is already out of date - watch this space next time for a more up to date one.) The usual. Some of you may remember Greg as one of the very few really successful faneds New Zealand has ever had - active in the late seventies through to about '82. Probably not though. I do of course because Greg was a formative influence on me when I was first becoming involved in fandom in Wellington. As the old saying goes 'he taught me everything I know' (except what I figured out for myself of course). Anyway, rest assured that despite the way I have turned out, Greg is a very good faned. SECANT is his first zine in about four years and promises a return to the old form. #2 is due out in time for EasterCon (ie at the same time this comes out).

KOBWEBS ON THE KEYBOARD. Glen Crawford, Box 1, Avoca Beach, NSW 2260, Aust. Glen, too, is emerging after a lengthy gaffiation. #1 could have done with tighter editing and a tidier layout however Glen's adventures in Mundania have certainly been a bit harrowing and make interesting reading.

THE STRAIGHT BANANA. Tim Reddan, Box 162, Toowong, Q. 4066, Aust. Yet another Australian first issue, this time from a new faned. Tim is stuck in Brisbane with the media fans which must be a little hard on creativity however Tim uses his natural insanity to overcome this obstacle (how do I know Tim has natural insanity? he's in Brisbane with the media fan...) and has come up with an enjoyable, lightweight perzine which includes an appreciation of BNFs (onyx Carey) and strange cocktails. Well, why not I ask you? Liked the hand coloured banana.

THE KRYPTONITE FANZINE. Frank Macskasy Jnr, Box 27274, Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand. The usual (including a nude pin-up of Katherine Chopin - I told you fandom thrived on inter-action). I must admit that when the first TKF arrived and it was very lightweight, being compromised wholly of a trip report and fanzine reviews by Frank, and made no mention of frequency I thought the zine would be a oneshot. Eight or ten weeks later #2 arrived, complete with articles on comics, comics and more comics from four different contributors as well as fanzine reviews, LoCs and a politically sound cartoon strip from Tom "If You Can't Offend Them, Make Them Sick" Cardy. As an accessory after the fact, I predict that TKF has a successful career

ahead of it.

THE SWAMP GAS JOURNAL. Chris Rutkowski, Box 1918, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 3R2. Small zine available for the usual concerning UFOlogy.

STICKY QUARTERS. Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA. Quarterly, the usual. SQ 16 is tri-colour and much better laid-out and printed than other recent issues. I'm impressed. And bemused. Has somebody surgically removed Tarel's funny bone? Or is he allergic to laughter? (I know people like that - not a damned thing you can do for the poor souls.)

THE MAPLE LEAF RAG 24/25. Garth Spencer, 1296 Richardson St, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3E1, Canada.

I absolutely loved some of the illustrations in this - beautiful. 48pp is pretty good for a newszine but it's a pity that so much of the content appears to be frictional. Perhaps Canadian fandom needs a large supply of KY jelly? Or perhaps they just enjoy grumping? Doesn't seem to get in the way of carrying a fair bit of genuine news thank Ghu.

THE MATALAN RAVE. Michael Hailstone, Box 258, Manuka, ACT 2603, Aust. (Note: COA) Michael wrote to me recently and advised me that I should admit that TMR has been looking better lately and that I shouldn't pretend to speak for all his readers in saying that the Rave was being sent out to people who basically don't wish to receive it. Well, yes, on both these fronts. #16 is much cleaner in both typing and printing and has a rather nice Birkhead cover. The LoCcol is also a lot less negative than it has been in the past, with letters that indicate that the readers derived some pleasure from reading TMR. A marked improvement.

SIKANDER. Irwin Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, Caulfield Nth, VIC 3161, Aust. The usual. #13 is much like other Sikanders - competently laid-out, high standard of writing, some nice artwork, good printing, few laughs. Irwin must be the most consistent fanned in the universe. No? Well, how about in Australia? Thought you'd go for that.

BAD NEWS FOR TIGGER

It's time to mount a Save Tigger Campaign! It's hard to believe, but his owner, Marc Ortlieb is planning to have him put to sleep soon. The terrible news is contained in #24 (which also features a devastating private cover by RobMcGough - now we know what Tiggers like) along with the threat that the inevitable can only be delayed for another issue or two. As fanned we sympathise with Marc re. the lack of time that is behind Tigger's demise (actually we can't imagine how he ever found the time to do all the stuff he does) but we will still miss the little beast. Marc says that he intends to continue LoCcing and will be doing articles for other people - us first, us first, PLEEEZ - so at least we won't be losing him as well. We will keep you posted on the exact date of Tigger's upcoming demise and may consider holding a wake, with Marc's permission.

TIGGER, C/- Marc Ortlieb, Box 215, Forest Hill, VIC 3131, Aust.

YOU WERE HOAXED

Actually I was hoping to have a whole list of names under here, however most of you out there are either quite smart or just very lazy. However, IRWIN HIRSH and PERRY MIDDLEMISS were seen to take the bait on a number of occasions. Yes, guys, INTREPID was a hoax. In fact you caused my friend Irish (a fan, by the way) who lives at the address listed some consternation by sending her SIKANDER before she had a copy of TSW with the hoax in it. Quick work. I would like to congratulate JACK HERMAN on not being sucked into putting INTREPID on the Ditmar ballot despite our best efforts. As for the rest of you, I'll get you yet...

GRIPES

Now I know that it isn't nice to differentiate between fanzines on the basis of nationality, but I have a gripe that seems to pertain to one country in particular, though they aren't entirely alone in their iniquity. Okay, Canadians, why are you people so intent on producing fanzines that don't list the addresses of contributors? Just want to keep your fanartists to yourselves, huh? Well, it's anti-social. We would like to put more Canadians on our mailing list but we can't if we don't have their addresses. I don't expect immediate reform, but have a heart and at least print the addresses of those contributors who'd like to communicate with the outside world. (The New Zealanders could also benefit from doing this in a number of cases.)

LOCT IN SPACE

WAHF: ...Now, who else have we also heard from? A quick scan around the study at several piles of correspondence, fanzines, artwork and masters for TSW7. leaves me convinced that it would be hopeless trying to find out at this late stage of TSW production. And then there is always masculine intuition, which tells me {ML here, by the way} that all letters received appear, even if only in part, somewhere in the pages that follow...

The more perceptive of our readers may have noticed a lack of editorial comment in LoCt in Space from Mr Warner. We two, the Victorian based section of the editorial consortium {and many thanks to Sue Margaret for that fine phrase} are also concerned about the effect that a mere 4000km are having on Mr Warner's input. But Jules is coming over for Eastercon and we expect to be able to ~~imprison~~ convince him to stay then. Stay tuned to TSW8 for further details...

Enough of the domestic details though, let the LoCs begin with...

A POSTCARD FROM PIMLICO

Changing the picture Mural in Creek Road, Greenwich, London
Painted in 1985 by Jane Gifford, Sergio Navarro, Nick Cattermole and Rosie Skille d'Ingerthorpe
Photo: Christopher Phillips

10 March 1987

Joseph Nicholas
22 Deansh Street
Pimlico
London SW1V 2ER
United Kingdom

By air mail
Paradise



Dear Wankers

I would send you a proper letter were it not for the fact that, faced with a choice between your fanzine and the latest issue of END JOURNAL, I know that the latter will prove infinitely more interesting.

Joseph

P.S. Julian Warner is even more pompous and long-winded than David Luckett. Is it something about El Salvador Solidarity Campaign Perth that affects you all in this strange way?

LONEY & MUIJSERT
P.O. BOX 273
FITZROY
VICTORIA 3065
AUSTRALIA

---Dave Collins---

I have heard that there is a British fan who throws away unopened any Australian fanzines he is sent. This surprised me as it is only common courtesy after someone has gone to all the trouble of publishing and sending you their fanzine to reply in some way, even if it's a request not to be sent any more issues.

As for Joseph's list of six Australian fanzines, I wonder what makes him think

---Loct in Space/Postcard from Pimlico-----

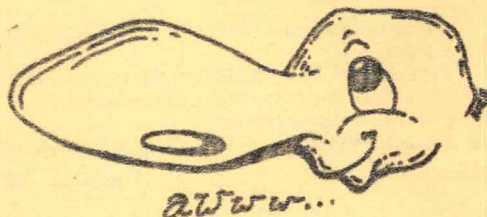
he can talk for the rest of the world? A fanzine should be judged on its own merits, not on its country of origin. If we separate fanzines by their nationalities, world fandom would become a thing of the past.

At the moment The Space Wastrel improves with each issue. I am beginning to piece together some of the Australian fannish events and can follow most of the themes in the LoCcol. You are getting some enjoyable articles 'though I would like to see some with a bit more meat on them.

INNOCENCE

---Jeanne Mealy---

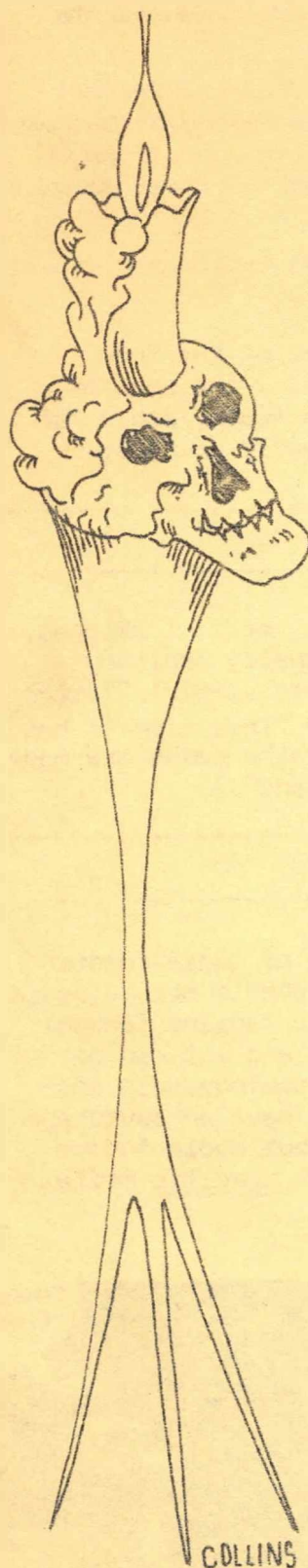
I enjoyed Dave's "Paradise Lost by the Dashboard Light". I hope that he went on to discover, perhaps even inspire, more romance than he experienced in that initial encounter. I understand the dilemma of one's face not reflecting what's going on behind it in the upstairs part. I frown terribly when thinking, and am trying to break myself of the habit. But danger may lie nearby in this endeavour: I've read that the faces we human beings make in thinking, getting up courage, etc., actually assist us to access the information, guts, etc., necessary for the situation. It's as though the brain says, "Aha -- a lifted eyebrow, slight frown and a gaze into left field means to check the 'Early Childhood' bin." To tamper with this method of physical cues may be to cause more problems than being misunderstood due to facial expressions. I suppose it depends on how much you want people to come near enough to see the expression on your face, though, too. If they're thrown off by the look you're wearing, they won't find out that it's actually a ~~dead~~ red herring. I personally also sometimes react to what I'm reading, which has led to people observing me across the room with amusement, and been embarrassing when I'd look up and see them.



---Mae Strelkov---

Space Wastrels, are you? But let me take you one by one -- the only way I can visualise members of a group. {Never "as a whole".} So, Julian Warner. {Do you really want the Ms. and Mr. before your names?} Mister Warner! Very good writing: ANOTHER LOSS OF INNOCENCE. It could have been the start of a novel, I'd have gone on reading the whole book with that sort of a catchy first chapter. I really would have liked to read a novel about those characters versus your own family, in that cafe, even if you have to make the rest of the story up. Suppose, say, you'd glimpsed by mistake there a killing, and as witnesses they felt you all ought to be rubbed out too. Perhaps not there and then... you and family got safely back to your car. But then? Glancing backwards, there's that amazing car of Papa Luigi himself, following you! Your dad gulps and makes a swift turn down the first sidestreet, hoping to find his way to the police station nearby, safely. {Was there a nearby police-station?} Well, it gives you an idea of how exciting your cast of characters could be. Now please, Julian, WRITE THE NOVEL? If science fiction must be introduced, the prostitutes might not be as innocent as apparent. Space-gals? Ah, well, that's "too much", I guess. Pretend instead that the one killed was the space-visitor, and upon dying the body turns back into the typical B.E.M.? How'd that do?

Okay, Okay, I won't write the novel for you. I never write novels. Gave up trying years and years ago, for the more I studied archaic Chinese with its echoes everywhere, the more my attempts at fiction ended up sermons on what proro-root terms meant long ago! {I'd work it in somehow!}



---Larry Dunning---

My copy of the LITTLE OXFORD
ENGLISH DICTIONARY defines

innocent as: *Innocent, a. sinless; not guilty;
guileless, harmless, n. simple person; idiot.
Innocence n.*

Ian has certainly demonstrated losing his, by the fact that he gained guilt through no fault of his own via the slow death of his mother. I can relate to this. My Auntie Glennis' husband Jack died in a similar manner earlier this year. He had a degenerative disease that could not be cured nor endured. Month after month his condition deteriorated in a graphic manner. I never saw Jack while he was in this condition. I made a point not to, although in practise it didn't make any difference.

Every day {or near enough} my Mother would take or see Glennis and then tell me about the details of that day's problems. In this way I had a full and clear picture of his decline. I also knew that there was nothing I could do. Jack died a week after someone else that I had known had died. I went to two funerals on two Tuesdays. Each was as emotional as the other. I have become immune to funerals, almost. It is not the loss of the dead that gets to me, but the grief of the living.

Some years ago my paternal grandmother came to visit, as she always did, to watch that year's Edinburgh Tattoo. At the time I was too engrossed in my computer to pay her much attention. Something that bugged me afterwards because I was {and am} very fond of Grandma Dunning. I resolved to go to Northam with my parents the next time they visited her. But by then it was too late as she died in her sleep before this happened. I was upset to say the least. When we were driving to the funeral, we had an opportunity to see her in the coffin at the undertakers, before she was finally put to rest. My father did but there was was no way that I could. I knew that whatever remained was no longer my grandmother, but the shell of her personality.

So, whether death comes slow or death comes quick, it can hurt those about the victim much worse, especially where guilt {whether justified or not} is concerned.

ML: My father died the day after his forty-ninth birthday. I was working in the country at the time and had forgotten to send him a card or even ring him on the day. I think that all deaths are accompanied by these small regrets... When I was a child growing up in Kalamunda, our Easters were regularly spent visiting the Stricklands out in Wongan Hills. They were an old couple who had looked after my mother when she first came to Australia from India in 1947 as a result of the partition. The year my parents decided to break with tradition and go to Geraldton instead for Easter, saw the death of Mrs Strickland. Although I was too young to understand, I can still remember how upset my parents were about it all.

Speaking from experience, I can whole-heartedly recommend against peering into open coffins. When I looked at my father's corpse, I didn't, initially, recognise him. The absence of life is also

---Loft in Space/Innocence---

the absence of the characteristic ways in which people animate their features, move, stand and, in a myriad of other ways, let us know who they are. Sleep relaxes the face and, maybe, lets us see personality behind it free of the stresses of everyday life. Death is the destruction of personality and, as such, collapses a once familiar face. I think it's better to remember the life that was rather than looking at the ravages of death.

Reading back over the preceding page or so has left me with the suspicion that societies that celebrate death as the final affirmation of life, rather than the final loss we view it as, have the much better idea. Everyone who ever lives will die, that is one of the constants of our universe. Wouldn't it be better to say "That person has died, but I am glad that I knew him while he had life", than "He is dead and gone"?

Please take the opportunity to read the female pronouns into the above sentences while I put away the pulpit and return to the normal business of fanzine editing. Thank you.

---Susan Margaret---

Ian Nichols on the Fruit of the Tree rather than of the vine... the sort of stuff you see too seldom in fanzines. Far preferable to fan feuds, and a far better answer to the Chopin letter than what Ian wrote directly in reply.

FRUIT OF THE VINE

---Mae Strelko---

The discussion of wines, etc., I skipped, for we just buy occasionally ordinary wine, taken with meals, no "bouquet" about it. The verdict is simply: "Tastes more chemical than grape", and so "we shouldn't buy it", or "This time it has a grape-like taste. And I like the quebracho in it." {Quebracho casks are made out of a wood so hard it got called Quebra Hacha, "Breaks Axes".}

AMELIA

---David Palter---

Amelia Underwood's allegorical tale of media fandom sheds little light on issues of why people become media fans, what media fandom has to offer, and how it compares to fanzine fandom. It is my personal experience that intelligence, creativity, and wit can be found in media fandom as in fanzine fandom, and so can narrowmindedness and stupidity be found in both. Fanzine fandom does inherently have an advantage in dealing with a much wider range of topics and material, but media fandom has its successes too. It does not merit our sneers. {Some specific media fan may so merit.}

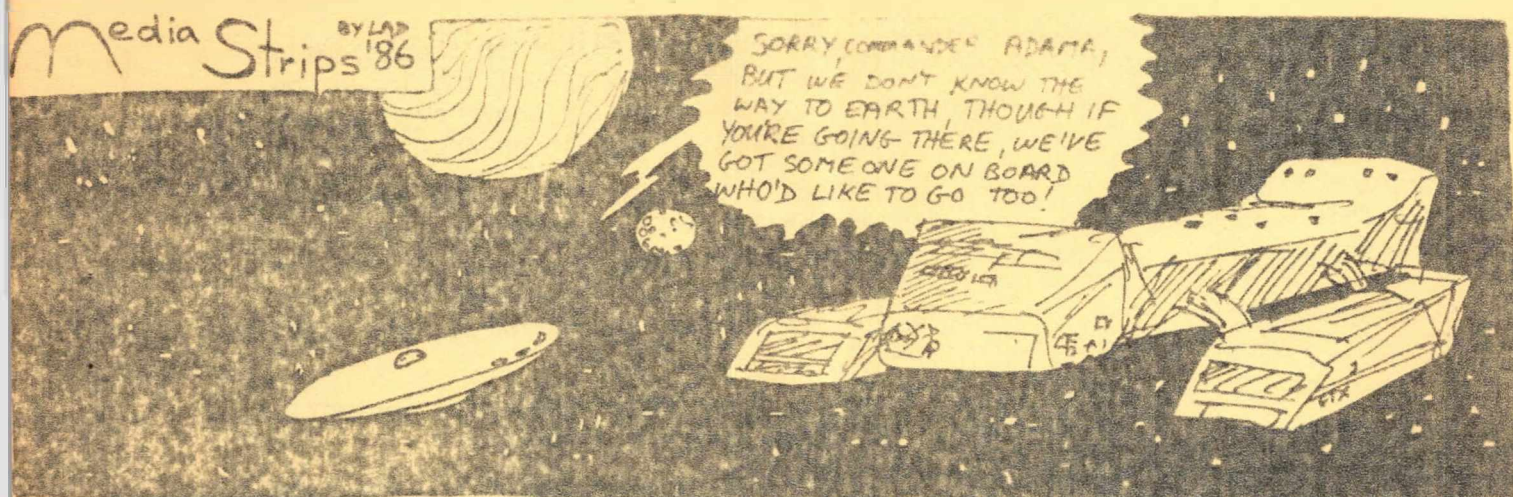


---LoCt in Space/Amelia---

---Walt Willis---

Thanks for TSW 4 & 5, a marvellous publishing feat and full of interest. Two things stood out for me. One was Amelia Underwood's story I WAS A TEENAGE MEDIA FREAK. I don't think I've ever met a Star Trek fan but Amelia so cleverly engaged my sympathy for them that I was quite relieved when her account of sfan hostility turned out to be fiction. It was very well done. Actually I don't think I've ever met a Star Trek fan, and have still some difficulty in crediting their very existence, but James and Peggy White told me that experience as their guests has shown them to be very nice people (and much better convention organisers than sf fans).

AU: Well I'm glad that somebody fannish understood (though as an aside I'd note that the few media fen who have seen the article weren't offended by it and comprehended that the sfans really came out of it the worst). I've been to two or 3 Star Trek meetings and have generally found them to be a likeable and enthusiastic bunch of people. More power to them.



FILM & TELEVISION

---John Newman---

Mark's A-Team article. For the most part I agree. While it may not be everyone's cup of tea, and is gratuitous in more than just violence, the show is essentially supportive of reasonable values, in a way that manages to provide escapist entertainment. Nevertheless, I do see a few problems.

First, of course, is that the show is completely oriented towards males. Violent escapism (even mock violence) appeals much less to women, and women are only present in the stories as plot devices, typically in need of help (or the daughter of someone who needs help). They also, of course, are attractive.

This trend goes further, by re-inforcing the idea that physically aggressive, young or middle aged men are the most desirable role model. Not Rambo, sure, but still all 'action' based, with the only exercise of intelligence limited to Hannibal's plans (which, like a circus act, must have a weak spot to allow for more action and never run to much more than battle tactics), and parking the van in the right place for a getaway.

As a 'family', the A-Team has a strange structure. If we make Hannibal the father figure, 'Face' the randy adolescent and Mad Murdoch as the 'problem child', we are only left with B.A. to play mother!

Yes, it may well be that the A-Team is essentially supportive of the current ideals of middle America (or even suburban Australia). But is this good enough?

---Loct in Space/Film & Television-----

---Frank Macskasy--- I can't believe that Mark actually likes the A-TEAM!
I mean, let's face it folks, the series is basically meant for either ten year old juveniles who aren't quite yet 'au fait' with Reality - or - simple minded adults with the minds of ten year olds, who never will know the Real World. {And don't ask me to define 'Real World' - or I'll snap my fingers and make it disappear from beneath your feet!}

The fact that no one gets seriously hurt or killed in the violence in the A-TEAM is actually one of the prime reasons that many view it as a serious threat to younger viewers. What the A-TEAM is showing is that it's OK to get into a fight; to use dangerous weapons; to solve problems with force - no one really gets hurt anyway... ha ha ha.

But this is just what people are afraid of. Immature minds may come to believe that solving problems with force is socially acceptable. Immature minds may think that using dangerous weapons is OK, and don't worry; no one gets hurt.

A few years ago, a car load of young people ended up either in the Intensive Care Ward of a hospital - or dead. The car they were travelling in was being driven at break-neck speed through Auckland streets. It drove over a rise and - just like in DUKES OF HAZZARD - rose up into the air in an arc.

Unfortunately, what these young fools didn't know was that dangerous stunts like this were carefully controlled in the TV series {which was enjoying immense popularity in Godzone at the time - and earning criticism from the Ministry of Transport} and not left to "pure luck". Also, that once a car leaves the ground, flying into the air, it becomes an uncontrollable missile. It isn't steerable like an aircraft.

It came to rest literally wrapped around a lamp-post. Some died instantly; some later; and I think one or two survived with bad injuries.

When I was younger, there was a popular TV series called KUNG FU, starring David Carradine as "Little Grasshopper", the Oriental exiled from his pseudo-Buddhist monastery to wander the American Wild West. He used kung-fu martial arts to solve his problems...

The next day, kids at school would be beating the living shit out of each other in a similar manner... I wonder how many grew up to be the "young thugs" who beat citizens to a pulp; rape women; and cause real misery.

The A-TEAM may not directly promote thuggery - but it does show that violence should be used to solve one's problems, and that using weapons is acceptable. Is it any wonder then, that immature or unstable minds embrace such philosophy?

In case anyone still doubts that things on TV do affect viewers: remember that corporations spend hundreds of millions of dollars on advertising. TV advertising is considered the most effective of any of the media.

If people didn't take notice of things on TV, would corporations spend bulk dollars on such a wasted activity? I doubt it. And if advertising affects people {a 30 or 60 second advert} - imagine what TV programmes {30 or 60 minutes} do.

ML: The question is not whether people take notice of things on TV, but rather whether their behaviour is modified by the programmes (including commercials) that they do watch. As that subject has generated several tonnes of books and studies without coming to any sort of definite conclusion, I'll just say that I think that the effects of tv violence are far more complex and a lot less harmful than you indicate above (There was no schoolyard violence before KUNG FU? Youths didn't crash cars by driving stupidly before THE DUKES OF HAZARD?).

As for reality - treating it in a socially realistic fashion is the province of the Brits (and to a lesser extent, Australia). American tv drama is characterised by the fantasy world it creates. If you can enter that fantasy world, if it can convince you to accept its premises (and doesn't

---LoCt in Space/Film & Television-----

that sound familiar!) then you can enjoy it on its own terms. There is a lot of American tv drama that doesn't convince me, recent years has also seen a tendency towards social realism with programmes like HILL STREET BLUES, ST ELSEWHERE and so on. But MIAMI VICE can only be approached as a fantasy about vice and crime in Florida - trying to take it seriously, refusing to suspend your disbelief, makes it about as entertaining as ROCK 'N ROLL WRESTLING would be if you thought of it as a serious contest of strength and skill.

While we're on the subject of MIAMI VICE, I think I should share with you an important conclusion that I have come to after watching the first few episodes of the new season on Melbourne tv: Sonny Crockett is fatal to his friends. The first couple of series occasionally brought on old school/Vietnam/police friends of Sonny, only to have them riddled with bullets and die in Sonny's arms at an appropriately angst-ridden moment. This series has, so far, done nothing else but bring on Sonny's old comrades and riddle them with bullets and so on. Either one of two things can happen; Sonny's old comrades can continue to appear only to be riddled with bullets at the appropriate moment and so on, in which case Sonny will quickly run out of old comrades and Tubbs would be well advised to start wearing bullet-proof underwear, or the producers can do the sensible thing and get a new script-editor. The longevity of the series would probably be best served by the second course. Hollywood, however, has always worked in mysterious ways and I don't think that the tropical heat and all that bright sunshine in Miami would be much more conducive to sensible decision-making...

---David Palter--- I agree with Mark Loney about the A-Team, for the most part. My only reservation is that this, like all TV series, falls prey to a certain inevitable repetitiousness. Still, the popular conception that Mr T and the gang epitomise the mindless violence of television, is clearly wrong. The show is in fact positively virtuous, as you say.

ML: And so we leave the controversial world of small screen entertainment for the real thing, the movies. I finally got around to reading DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP earlier this year and was quite impressed. It ranks up there with my other favourite Philip Dick fictions. And although I didn't think there was any textual evidence in the film for Deckard being a replicant, the book certainly made him confront the possibility...

---Marilyn Pride--- On Tim Reddan's letter about BLADE RUNNER: the 'media fans' aren't 'wierd' in believing that Deckard is really a replicant. This was the case in an earlier (and, I thought, much superior) version of the script, and several references to it were left in the final film, with confusing results. Similarly, although both versions of the script had largely dropped Dick's idea that the replicants were incapable of emotion or empathy, the Voight-Kampff text quotations were left in the film without explanation, and caused even more confusion. The result was something of an ideas mishmash, though it looked very nice. I wish they had stuck with the earlier script - it was much more intelligent and coherent, very poetic, but also much harsher than the final version: and since the soppy ending, tacked onto the film (not in the script at all) indicates that even the rewritten version was too severe for American filmmakers, I doubt that the earlier script ever had much chance.

I agreed with Tim, though, in his comment about Ian Nichols' "spitting his dummy" over Kate Chopin's comments. It's all very childish and taken much too seriously by both those involved, and commentators. People making scurrilous comments from behind the shield of pseudonyms, stirring up feuds or controversies and keeping them going, endless discussion of the rights and wrongs through issue after issue of fanzines - I used to find it interesting, but now it quickly becomes tedious. Am I becoming jaded to take less malicious interest in feud and gossip than I used to? (Even Terry Frost's inclusion of a crude joke had a tired, laboured air about it, as though he feels obliged to try and be offensive whether he's in the mood or not - he may believe that fandom needs a Barry Humphries to inject gross terminology; but it demands a certain amount of wit and style, to avoid becoming boring and predictable and adding to the image of fandom as childish.)

THE TITANIC

---Anthony Peacey--- It seems I got the colour of the Titanic's funnels wrong. Mea culpa! One or two other assumptions, as they were at the time, have proven incorrect. However, the tone of Nick Sathopoulos's first paragraph is offensive. He makes it plain later in his letter that I had trespassed into visionary territory {after all, he appears to like my phraseology "She /the Titanic/ is the stuff of tragedy, of fantasy, of obsession"} where he has since childhood regarded himself as some sort of panjandrum. Hence, I suppose, the childish intensity of his response.

If Nick had been in less of a hurry to rush to the defense of his borders, he might have noticed the date appended to the article - October 1985. The piece was written shortly after the location of the Titanic was discovered. At that time the state of the wreck was not known, nor its separation into two halves. Given the expected paucity of life and energy in the benthic environment a fair degree of preservation was predicted by marine biologists. Ballard's spectacular dives occurred in July 1986, supplying Nick {and the rest of the world} with more accurate information. Nick, whose knowledge apparently is definitive, is surely aware of this chronology.

It seemed to me, however, that the spirit of the article was not compromised, and that it might still amuse some readers particularly in a forum where rigorous scholarship is not the primary requirement - a view which our editors apparently shared. And as I have indicated, I do not think it is lapses of scholarship that have upset Nick.

I do not wish to leave the impression that I gained no pleasure at all from Nick's comments. On the contrary: I was quite delighted by his suggestion that the wreck should become a tourist attraction. The idea has my unqualified support. Not so the reasons Nick espouses. A "memorial to those who perished" - well, maybe; but a "memorial to man's foolish pride" - pious drivell! I feel it only fair to point out to Nick that the tour operators will make a profit and the tourists will spiritually plunder the site. They can by no means be relied upon to conduct themselves with suitable humility and devoutness at this sepulchre (from which the human remains have long since departed - quite happily I should think - into the natural cycles of the sea via the bellies of deplorably opportunistic fish). Tourists are a notoriously irreverent lot, far less sensitive than Nick himself. Most of them will make the trip for the same sort of ghoulish reasons that attract us to motor accidents, and that prompt annual parties "celebrating the ship, not the tragedy {although you can't really separate the two}". Necrophilia rules indeed!

PS: I should also claim mea culpa. I had meant to make the point about the dating of "Necrophilia Rules - Ok?" along with the comments I made on Nick's letter. My apologies.

THE DITMARS

---Alan Stewart--- I agree that a NatCon is the place to award the Awards, but not to vote for or nominate them. Many fans attend a Convention to see the Guest(s) of Honour, enter the Masquerade, role play, watch film/videos and wouldn't have seen or know of any or few of the nominations for the Awards. See the number of votes cast for Ditmars in the past.

One idea I am thinking of concerns the development of a Fan Registry which would contain names and addresses of current fans, clubs, zines - current indicated by the fact that they have contacted the Registry. Perhaps issued quarterly, cost to cover printing and postage, everyone listed would receive a copy. {Traded with zines.}

---LoCt in Space/The Ditmars---

As a corollary, anyone listed could nominate and vote for an annual set of Awards, to be presented at the NatCon. Nomination forms would be included with each issue mailing, with nominations running Jan 1 to Dec 31 each year. A final ballot would be issued with the first issue each year (say March).

The categories of the Awards would have to be fixed each year, but could be changed by ballot. A set number of Awards, but each year the final ballot would allow voters to also nominate their preferred categories for the next year. Unpopular categories getting dropped.

These are preliminary ideas; details and further outlining will hopefully be completed in time for discussion at EasterCon and CapCon.

FFANZ

---Tom Candy---

I have a little to say concerning the debate about FFANZ. I agree with Frank Macskasy that it's difficult to really discover who is to blame in these situations. Apathy or poor publicity? But it may interest everyone that both the Australian races had problems with getting participants. I printed up posters, progress reports and voting forms in 1984 for an Aussie to get to NorCon '84. ONLY ONE PERSON WAS INTERESTED. No matter what we did, no other Australian fan was prepared to go! (In a sense, I can understand why. People get put off by having to organize it for two years, and getting the time off can be a headache.) The same thing almost happened for last year's race (the one Leigh Edmonds was sour over). Both the candidates, through various means, were persuaded to run well after the original nomination deadline. In fact, Nigel Rowe, Frank Macskasy and I (all FFANZ administrators) had seriously considered ending the fund altogether in January of last year. Thanks go to Roger and George for saving it!

I felt pissed off with Edmond's comments because of these experiences. The bloody Aussies PINALLY get their act together and decide {ye gods!} to {swoon!} actually GO TO NEW ZEALAND - and then another one of them complains about not getting enough information. Argh!

CAN SILLINESS SURVIVE?

---Mae Stralkov---

"Can Silliness Survive?" asks the cartoon, and then the text proceeds to be viddy, veddy serious. Now: I do like jokes more than anything serious personally. Jokes have to be real and natural to be telling, and there aren't many that good. But when one runs into such a joke, it's a wonderful event, and funny novels like Grahame Greene's TRAVELS WITH MY AUNT I do adore.

I did chance to read 100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE, and so did Sylvia and Tony (our youngest two), and we agree that, "It's like real life out here in Latin America!" True, we never saw anybody ascending to heaven while helping fold some sheets; and the gypsies you come across are driving around in modern new pick-ups, they're that successful in their horse-trading (car-trading, now) and fortune telling, since local folk do take the supernatural so seriously.

---Ray Capella---

"Genre - Science Fiction" was erudite and most interesting but a bit dry. Seems that the text might be enlivened by using examples from the genre itself to actually illustrate some of the points made; you're topheavy in academic. True, taking that tack would perhaps make the essay monumental and needful of

---LoCt in Space/Can Silliness Survivor---

several 'zines. But hell, your thesis deserves it. By the way - the "magic realism" of 100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE doesn't necessarily pay less attention on psychological insight through the use of the fantastic, achieving more than the actually "realistic" novel. There's inherent logic in Marques' work that calls for putting conventional learning aside to truly appreciate it.

BITS 'N PIECES

---Linnette Horne--- I notice from reading the contributions and correspondence address list that all New Zealand addresses are listed as Aotearoa - the problem is that it is not a recognised address and anyone not in the know and using the list will find their letter returned...

---David Palter--- The Anatorial is well done. I don't suppose you've ever heard the song "I Wanna Kiss Her, But" by Jim Cavanaugh? "She was the kind of girl who stole men's hearts, then wrecked 'em..."

---Frank Macskasy--- Great ghu, Michelle, but I loved your fanzine rating system. I can hardly wait to see what my zines will receive. **Gasp** If it's a limp-result, what will Ms Chopin say about my manhood? Perhaps that it should be sharpened in a pencil sharpener...? Perhaps that it should be marked with red ink to differentiate it from my pubic hairs? Oh, shame, oh woe...

---David Palter--- As for the SKUM method of preventing excess book accumulation, it wouldn't work for me. I remember all the thousands of books I have read, even the bad ones. Sometimes I hear them whispering to me...

---Larry Dunning--- You may find it interesting to note that the Penguin Dictionary of CURIOUS and INTERESTING Words contains entries for Wampeters, Karass, Granfallons and Duprass. The big question is: Is Fandom a Granfalloon or a Karass?

NEWS 'N GOSSIP

---Walt Willis--- The other thing was your advice to loc writers on p.13 of #4, I'm not sure exactly who wrote this, but I don't think I've ever seen anything so sensible and so likely to be of practical value. {Especially to anyone who has to confine himself to pocs.}

ML: It was Michelle who penned those words of advice, but we're all pleased at the response they seem to have engendered. Many thanks to Larry, Mae, Sue and Lucy for writing to us... Any other takers?

---Larry Dunning--- Recently I successfully applied for the position of Hardware Controller down at Albany Regional Office. This means that I will be moving in mid-May to that town. The importance {to me} of this event cannot be overemphasised. After 29 years of living at home with my parents, I'm moving out! Ah, the joys of learning how to ruin clothes at laundromats, of reheating frozen dinners and ironing clothes. I can't wait!

---LoCt in Space/News 'n Gossip---

Strangely enough, over 50% of the people I've let know of this all claim to at some future date, visit me down there. It seems that when not in Perth, I'll have more visitors than when I was in Perth! How odd. One suggestion has been to coordinate the visits for one weekend and call the lot a LarryCon.

---Mae Strelkov---

Ronnie Raygun is my pet dislike increasingly, and I do delight in the occasional Alistair Cook broadcasts from the States via the BBC London, about Ronnie's doings of late. Indeed, I treasure each snide remark and keep repeating it gleefully at home, every time something new gets me even madder over him and his oldster gang. (Me? I'm an oldster too, but that's no excuse to turn so conservative and stuffy.)

New fanzines have started coming my way again. For a year or so I'd failed to do much loccking, (was getting very ill, then nearly died, but now am cured and fine again). But lately, I've felt too guilty to remain in gafia, so am trying anew to keep up with the tide.

Re your editorial, Michelle... that's charming about your maternal feeling over the mailing list. Yes, how could I let you down, and see? I've answered. Irresistable, you were! Nonetheless, to compose a loc for your zine struck me as a formidable task. So much that is discussed has to do with topics that are quite out of my milieu. We are out in the wilds here now!

---Sue Thomason---

It is 11:00pm on Sunday evening, I have a cold, and I have to get up for work tomorrow morning. So I will not loc the fascinating RAT issue of TSW. However, as a token gesture towards providing you with suitable entertainment I enclose a clipping from the latest handout for local group Press Offices from CND...

Co-ordinating Basic Case Publicity in a Local Group

It is vital that all those dealing with publicity - and that includes the mass media - in a local group get together to plan how they will promote the first Extended Public Information Campaign.

I only regret that talent doesn't permit a suitable illustration... It's almost as good as my favourite headline from the CAMBRIAN NEWS (Welsh local newspaper): - MORE WORRIED SHEEP IN BLAENAU FFESTINIOG

ML: Thanks for the clipping. I have come to conclusion that the misspelling of public as pubic is far too common to be accounted for by honest typesetting errors. Like the "Potsage Paid" error that marks the presence of the secret Tristero, the presence of public instead of public may mark a mysterious cadre of initiates who occupy powerful positions in the influential world of printing...

I went out to do an hour's leafletting this afternoon, and saw a beautiful skein of migrating birds. The sun was low, and a great rack of slate-coloured rainclouds had piled up in the east, and the birds were brilliant white against the clouds, flying in a ragged V. I'm enjoying life in York, though feeling very involved with my job. I've started going to Quaker meetings again, and I'm supposed to be giving a talk on Tai Chi Chuan to my local group next month. The local SF group is going quite well. I went out to a local Lesbian Line disco on Friday (despite feeling the cold come on) and had a very pleasant and relaxing evening in distinctly un-tacky surroundings. I'm currently enjoying reading Fritjof Capra's book THE TURNING POINT, and the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture BRINGING THE INVISIBLE INTO LIGHT (books respectively about holistic culture and Quaker feminism).

This probably makes me sound appallingly stereotyped. I don't like the idea of being a stereotype, but right now, I am rather enjoying being me. My emotional baseline has gone up several points over the last few months...

---Lucy, Sussex---

I was thinking the other day of the party at Rogers Street where Asmus and Karen were inveigled into relieving me of one kitten. We have another one. Either somebody drops them over the fence, or there is a little sign in moggy on the gate: "Suckers within". The latest, a very pretty young tortoiseshell (working title Trifle, after Truffle) arrived just as the bathroom was being renovated. Her timing was exquisite. Thanks to everything being disconnected in the bathroom, Marj Hall and I were reduced to using the dunny at the bottom of the garden. The trips down there were made hazardous by Trifle bobbing up underfoot, with cries of: "I'm adorable! Adopt me!" She nearly broke our necks. In a former life the feline was doubtless a footy player, such is her skill in tackling, on a door to door salesman - such is her persistence.

At this point in the seige the builders knocked a huge hole in the wall, to put in the new window. Now, not only were we subjected to the arctic gusts of Melbourne's darling weather, but Trifle could get in. The other cats suddenly began doing imitations of stuffy old gentlemen whose club had been invaded by Shirley Temple. Trifle merely batted her eyelashes at them.

She was such an outrageous flint we decided her kitten days must be ending - Shirley Temple was metamorphosing into Madonna. I bundled her up in a pillow-case, tied it with a satin ribbon, and carted her off to be de-motherhooded. The vet blithely announced we were just in time: Trifle was within two days of going on heat. My blood ran cold - all the Kensington toms, laden with chockies and flowers, leaping through the hole in the wall, to be met by our two old bachelor cats in rusty armour, intent on defending, not Trifle's honour, but their territory.

I write this letter in the vain hope some TSW reader wants an adorable, flirtatious, spayed little tortoiseshell cat. Yea verily, most of the above has been an advert in disguise.

TL: For those who haven't had the pleasure of meeting her, Truffle is the problem child of the Muijsert/Loney relationship. She is, according to a book on cat pedigrees, a rare long-haired tortoiseshell, but we took her home from the Cat Home under the impression she was just a cute moggy with long hair that was coloured like a rum truffle. We were wrong. Not only is she rare in the world of expensive cat breeds (though no chance of cashing in, Truffle was de-motherhooded before we brought her home) but cute isn't exactly a complete description of her personality. To be sure, Truffle has a marvelous purr and should have her photo taken every time she protrudes her tongue between her lips and half closes her eyes, but mention must also be made of her ferocious growl and her idea, when we first brought her home, that full-on scraps with teeth and claws were the only proper response to the hands that fed her. Now, when not skulking about in the night looking for other cats to have full-on scraps with, Truffle deigns to spend the occasional night at home with Mum and Dad keeping the neighbours awake with her purr. But, like Dave, we wouldn't have it any other way.

And so we come to the last few words to be typed for this edition of TSW. The lots that follow were typed up for TSWB but were held over to save us from the dreaded MONSTER FANZINE syndrome. As the page count for this issue grew ever larger, I could be heard suggesting to Michelle that perhaps we should hold the Heinlein material over for another issue - but she just threatened to dismember me and mail the pieces out instead. Lucky I hadn't got around to writing my piece about life in the big smoke of Melbourne (provisional title "Sniffing Petrol") - that is being held over until TSWB. Until then - au revoir.

MR LONEY

HEINLEIN

ML: Here it is at last, the second (and rather awesome) installment of the response that one little article from the pen of Ian Nichols has managed to garner. It was held over from TSW6 because we wanted to keep the mailing weight under 100gms and removing ten pages (the rough length of the Heinlein locs) would achieve that aim for us. Another consideration was that we weren't sure if we had stumbled into a topic that would, if left unchecked, develop into a morass that would swallow TSW whole. I mean, we like getting lengthy responses to the articles we publish but the quantity of Heinlein material that was turning up seemed somewhat excessive. But the flood seems to have just as quickly turned into a drought and we publish the following secure in the knowledge that we're not in any danger of becoming a single topic fanzine. Thank Ghu.

---Ed Rom---

It is not surprising that Marxists should be drawn to Heinlein's work in general, and to STARSHIP TROOPERS in particular, for the purposes of analysis and criticism; Heinlein is one of the more ideological American sf writers and STARSHIP TROOPERS is probably the most ideological of his works. A large part of the attraction is no doubt due to Heinlein's strong devotion to liberty and individualism, which causes the collectivists to want to want to discredit his work.

ML: In the defence of the literary establishment here, perhaps I should point out that adopting a specific theoretical approach in analysing a text doesn't necessarily haven't anything to do with being a card-carrying party member...

I disagree with Mr Nichols on a number of points within his essay. He obviously has not read the novel in question as closely as he might have; I have caught him in a number of errors.

He makes a small {but fundamental} one at the top of page 15. I quote:

In the same episode it is stated that "revolution is impossible - because revolution - armed uprising - requires not only dissatisfaction, but aggressiveness. A revolutionist has to be willing to fight and die - or he's just a parlor pink. If you separate out the aggressive ones and make them the sheep dogs, the sheep will never give you trouble."

Hmmm... A quote of a quote...

At any rate, this quote is taken quite out of context. Mr Nichols goes on to imply that this is the official doctrine of the society projected in the novel. The speaker in the passage is actually one of Juan Rico's classmates in the officer school H & MP course. In the passage immediately following, the instructor tells the student to see if he can prove it.

As for Mr Nichols' assertion that this passage shows that the military of the Terran Federation separates the leaders "from their class" and assimilates them "into the existing political structure" - well, that is only partly true. All military organizations need effective leaders, as can be seen by anyone who has done much reading at all in the field of military history. Regarding the business about indoctrination "into the ruling class", may I point out that, in Heinlein's projected political system, military men are not allowed to vote until they leave the service. As officers in almost every real-life military that I have ever heard of tend to be career men, this would mean that this "ruling class" would be made up of old military retirees and almost no one else. It just doesn't compute. Also, keep in mind that everyone in this society who successfully completes a term of service gets the right to vote, and that this future military has the lowest percentage of officers to enlisted men that it can get by with, so you can see that this "ruling class indoctrination" business is really Mr Nichols' own conjuration out of thin air. Especially when you consider the fact that the enlisted men do not get this "indoctrination" (other than as a course in high school, of course, which

---LoCt in Space/Heinlein-----

everyone who attends must take}, and that enlisted veterans would have to outnumber officer veterans by a very large amount.

Actually, Mr Nichols exaggerates the power of indoctrination. If it had great power, then the East Bloc nations would not have had to build such a fence across Europe to keep their people in.

The point that Heinlein was trying to make was that this hypothetical society of his would work because only those who believed strongly in the survival of that society as a whole would be allowed to have a voice in the political affairs of that society. The theory is that this would minimize the deleterious effects of special interests who would vote for their own short-term gain and bankrupt the body politic {we have seen a lot of this in America with the growth of federal power since the time of Roosevelt}. Heinlein's idea is that this interest in the survival of society as a whole on the part of individual voters would be determined by the willingness of the individual to undergo military service, and possibly get killed in a war. I will not make a statement as to whether this would work or not; it has never been tried.

Mr Nichols, in his second point, fails to mention that Heinlein's narrative rather presents Juan Rico's father's point of view in a bad light. As for the capitalistic nature of this future society, I think it rather obvious, given the record, that capitalism is the most advanced form of economic organization that we know of at this time. The so-called 'progressive' doctrines of socialism are window dressing which disguise its basically repressive and inferior nature. A fine example of socialism would be, for instance, Ptolemaic Egypt in the third and second centuries BCE. I would suggest that anyone interested in the topic of the single-centered society as compared with the many-centered society read ORIENTAL DESPOTISM by Karl A Wittfogel. Wittfogel is an ex-Marxist who arrived at that Position {of ex-Marxism} by the methodology of teutonic scholarship; that is, sheer ratiocination.

MM: Nonsense. It is merely YOUR OPINION that capitalism is superior to socialism. There is no empirical evidence to support this and indeed it would be very difficult to collect any as it largely depends on what sort of lifestyle each individual favours. I have had experience of living in both left- and right-wing oriented places (which I would suggest that you have not) and have come to the exact opposite conclusion. In my opinion there is no way you can say that capitalism as a socio-economic system works. Any system where few gain at the expense of many doesn't work AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED. Please don't pass off your own ideas as fact.

Whether the legal system projected within the novel would work is, to me, problematical. I actually don't know whether corporal punishment as such is an effective means of crime control. I feel that here Heinlein may be clutching at straws; I myself feel that the methods of punishment for crimes employed by a society probably have little bearing on the level of crime within that society. Heinlein is right about one thing, though; there is no such thing as a higher moral sense, only cultural mores, and young people will quite often form criminal gangs if that seems like a fun and profitable thing to do, in the absence of psychological constraints against such behaviour. Not all of the criminal violence in America today is caused by the underprivileged. Maybe not even most of it.

Mr Nichols, from the comments in his fourth point has evidently never seen military service. I personally don't think that women really have a place in the combat arms, except maybe as fighter pilots or as crew on warships; the pack-bonding essential for successful military small units seems to be mainly a male phenomenon. Having been in this situation myself {an army field unit with women in it}, my own considered opinion is that it will not work.

At this point it becomes glaringly obvious that Mr Nichols did not read the book as closely as he should have. While it is true that the Mobile Infantry are projected as being highly mechanized, it is also true that Heinlein spends a great deal of space within the book explaining why they are trained in

---LoCt in Space/Heinlein-----

using a great variety of weapons, both issued as well as improvised. They know hand-to-hand combat, mountain climbing, marksmanship with archaic firearms etc.; they are not {hopefully} helpless without their powered armour.

As for Juan Rico's starry-eyed mental state after going on pass and getting a date with Carmen Ibañez - well, anyone who has ever spent any time in the military at all knows that soldiers basically think of one thing practically all the time, and that is sex. The rather naive tone of that part of the book can be attributed to the fact that, in 1959, it was almost unheard of in science fiction to have realistic sex of any sort in a story. One must also realise that Heinlein intended STARSHIP TROOPERS to be a juvenile novel, not an adult novel. This novel, of course, marks the end of Heinlein's Scribner juvenile phase; Scribners refused to publish STARSHIP TROOPERS because of its controversial nature {afraid of liberal hysteria, no doubt}, so Heinlein wound up getting it published by Doubleday.

As for the way things are settled among the M.I. {fistfights in the washroom, etc.} - well, that's the way things are in the infantry. This is nothing more than realism. You can't expect men whose business is war to behave like university intellectuals.

More gross errors - the Skinnies, who are the antagonists described in the first chapter, do not have red skin. They show up strongly on infra-red goggles because they have a higher body temperature than humans. I really cannot believe that Mr Nichols can have read this book closely at all.

As for "Plato's ant-like communism" that phrase is used to describe THE REPUBLIC, Plato's hypothetical Utopia, not the civilization of the Pseudo-Arachnids {or Bugs, for short}. The Pseudo-Arachnids are a race, though, who are biologically evolved to be completely collectivist. Heinlein just does not compare them directly with anything proposed by Plato.

I personally would not think of the system of government proposed in STARSHIP TROOPERS as being in the direction of monarchism. Monarchy is actually closer to communism or socialism because of its tendency toward having a single center of political power in society {the State}, with its power to bestow favours to one group or another. Capitalist democracy is very different; many groups compete for power, and hopefully none become too strong in relation to the others.

So what sort of conclusions about Heinlein's work do we get from this essay? That STARSHIP TROOPERS is a racist, sexist, and imperialist work, and that American sf is a propaganda force serving the cause of the Reaganites. This is scathingly brilliant - as brilliant as a poster exhorting 'the workers' to 'kick the asses of the capitalist bosses' and 'smash the Bicentennial!' {progressive Labor Party slogans, middle to late 1970s}. In other words, Mr Nichols' essay is a fine example of Marxist non-thought - if you don't like it, it is either racist, sexist, imperialist, or fascist, or some combination thereof.

---Alexis Gilliland---

...Any system of analysis, Marxist or otherwise, that can take Heinlein's

STARSHIP TROOPERS and inform us that the economic system in the book is very similar to that of the contemporary United States needs a little work. The conclusion is true, but stunningly banal.

It might help if one considered what points Heinlein was trying to incorporate in ST. The overt didacticism is in the nature of tying authority to responsibility. At the lowest level, one has to pay one's dues to the state before being permitted to vote. Advancement to higher levels is dependent on demonstrating {a} competence, {b} responsibility at one's present level, and {c} passing the course on 'History and Moral Philosophy'. A concept not unheard of in Marxist countries, which make the substitution of 'Marxist' for

'Moral'. {A cheap shot, that. Sorry, Ian.} Below the lowest level, Rico's father refused to make any payment of dues to the political process, and has chosen to make himself rich, instead. {A Marxist analyst might be expected to note that political power and economic power flow into each other, and that therefore someone who chose to exclude himself from the system ought not to be able to become rich.}

The spine of the story consists of following a boy as he grows into a man. The first step, Rico's rebellion against his father, consisting of rejecting his father's expressly capitalist values by joining the army, and as Rico matures in wisdom and understanding he elects to make the army his career. This, I submit, is not a wholehearted endorsement of capitalism. Furthermore, to quote Rico's father to demonstrate that Heinlein thinks "...that those who are inferior are those without property" is a gross misreading of the text.

To the extent that Rico ends up defending capitalism against bugs and socialism, it can be argued that he is at least "objectively" pro-capitalist, but in fact, he is pro-responsibility. All other considerations eluded from the text are basically the result of the author using material he was familiar with as the contextual framework for his story. Heinlein's biases are well known, and when he didn't have a specific reason to do otherwise, he followed them. So the text of ST is sexist? Perhaps, but the sexism, insofar as it exists, is incidental to both story and didactic purposes. Compare ST with Heinlein's FRIDAY to see how much more sexism was possible. We may also note that a slam or two against communism creeps in. Our Marxistanalyst might, with luck, discover that Heinlein was writing for his market, mid-20th Century America.

---Bruno Ogorelec---

It is an understatement to say that "in much of Heinlein's work there is a theme of transition". The theme of transition is his work; he writes of nothing else but. That's what keeps his work more or less readable and alive (though sometimes just barely) despite even the worst of narrative deadweight.

To say that "the language... is deformed... in order to allow the author to construct an imaginary milieu" is to give us, less informed readers, a puzzled pause. In the quoted passage from ST the language - to all of my admittedly limited knowledge of English - is definitely not deformed. What Heinlein does here (and does brilliantly) is estrangement. Now, this might sound like quibbling but isn't, not really. Calling estrangement a deformation of language may formally be correct, but it gives your statement misleading connotations. The same goes for calling the narrative structure deformed when you are merely talking of flashbacks. Why not stick to common or garden variety phrasing as long as it accurately conveys the meaning?

One could object to calling the term "estrangement" common, I suppose, but at least it is not misleading. It is just another big and vaguely foreign word. One bumps into it and then looks it up in a dictionary or whatever. The phrase "deformed language", however, looks familiar. One is led to believe one understands it even when one doesn't.

This reminds me of a taut little piece of fan writing that LynnAnne Morse did for a recent issue of SHARDS OF BABEL, Roelof Goudriaan's Continental European newszine. She apparently considers Darko Suvin's view of science fiction (as a branch of literature marked by the use and interaction of estrangement and cognition) to be further along the right track than the mainstream of American critical thinking. The only trouble here, she says, is that the Americans do not understand the term "estrangement" and the Europeans do not understand the term "cognition".

How do Aussies fit into this picture, I wonder.

Ah, here's another morsel to chew on: "It is force, essentially, which maintains both the government in office and the legal system". Come on, Ian, what

else, essentially, does maintain law and existing order in our own real world? A "Marxist" reading should be clear on that point. Well, Heinlein's public flogging is a bit extreme, but as a literary device it is a neat little trick which effectively underlinesthat truth about force. In our respective societies the force is indirect and disguised, but no less hard and painful should you push against it carelessly.

Next time you pass by your local police HQ ask them to show you what a riot stick looks like. You won't like it. Keep in mind that it is there somewhere, ready for use, even though your friendly local cop does not lug it around on his neighborhood beat.

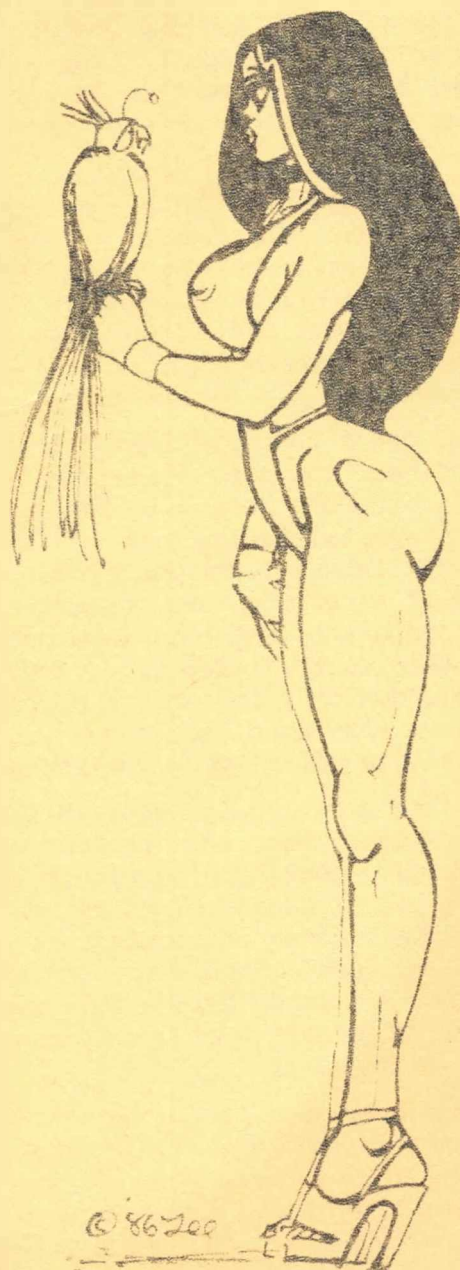
The next regular item on any Heinlein debate agenda is sexism. Oh, well. Let's roll up the sleeves.

Are you quite sure that "women are seen as weaker than men" in Heinlein's writing? I tend to disagree. In ST his attitude towards women is a bit simplified as they do not play an important role. As you point out yourself they do not fight in combat infantry and in the novel appear as hardly more than the occasional background feature. None of the female characters are developed. But even such simplified female characters, mere sketches, do not look weaker to men than me. The operative word here is not weaker, I think, but different. Heinlein does point out quite forcefully in all of his writing that women are different.

And, you know, they really are different; in many delightful little ways and some major ones. Unfortunately our society is structured in a way that turns such differences into disadvantages, but that's certainly no fault of Heinlein's.

It would be folly for any army to try to treat women and men as absolutely equal, that is as people who function in an identical fashion. Because they don't. An army has to make rather rough divisions of personnel and - if we accept Heinlein's premise that the majority of women have faster reflexes than the majority of men ((this is statistically true, not just conjecture on Heinlein's part - MM)) - it is perfectly in order for it to assume operationally that all women have faster reflexes than all men.

Every army, for instance, recognizes that a significant part of its personnel is a bit dumb. With that in mind, every army assumes operationally that all of its personnel (at least below the commissioned officer level) is dumb and organises things in such an obvious and straight-forward manner that dumb people generally have no problem functioning. Of course, such an environment is rather stultifying



for the more intellectual part of the armed forces {as a veritable mountain of antimilitaristic prose will testify} but so what? A convoy must maintain the speed of its slowest ship or break apart. For an army it is far more important to keep functioning than to keep its few intellectuals happy.

Even though Heinlein's starship infantry is fully mechanized and little physical strength is needed for the actual fighting, it still does not necessarily follow that women should take part in combat just because they could. There's a difference between ability and desirability. An athletics coach would almost certainly be wrong to recommend long distance running to a 2-meter tall boy. The boy could conceivably turn out to be a fair runner but chances are that his real forte would be basketball. By turning him towards basketball the coach would not imply that the boy was incapable of long distance running, but merely that at basketball he would be better.

MM: So what if he would be better at basketball? Surely he has the right to choose himself. Why Not both?

As for fighting for the protection of women - look, Ian, if we forget ideology and politics, wouldn't it be a tad more satisfying {if we had to fight} to fight for the protection of women, rather than, to say, "national interests", "free world", "fatherland" or some such?

MM: It would be nice if men stopped being so Goddam condescending about fighting to protect the women. Even when they win they don't protect women from the ravages of war. They are the ones holding the situation together at home on short rations and sleepless nights after all. Studies have shown that women suffer more long term psychological scarring from war than men do. In this situation, as every other, women are the 'buffer', the ones society falls back on to take up the stress, the extra workload and the lack of materials and skills and still maintain some semblance of societal 'normality'. In war, men and women fight together, in whatever roles they are given, to protect that helpless segment of society that is our future, their children.

Also, don't you sometimes "almost drool... simply because you are on a planet where half the population are female"? Mmmmmmm, I do, sometimes. Come late April, there's Spring in the air, the sun is getting warmer by the hour, the birds are twittering, the girls are shedding their heavy winter wear and parading the latest lightweight fashions down the city boulevards... Thankfully the days of structured and gusseted underwear that I remember with awe from my childhood are long past {and good riddance!} and the girls' bodies move under the thin cloth. They sway, they dance! The shirts and skirts are either diaphanous or clinging, or display some unexpected cuts and slits and openings... Dear Lord God, thank you for blessing me with a strong heart and a well-oiled set of neck vertebrae!

Now, the question is, does this make me a sexist and girls the sex objects? I don't know. Does this prevent me from respecting a woman's mind? I don't think so. Looking at girls in the street, with no real chance of communication, yes, I suppose I do regard them as sex objects. What else should I do when their other attributes are unavailable for casual inspection? Should I close my eyes? Should I drool only over the girls I know for sure are intelligent? Please do define this subtle relationship between the {very pleasant} reflex of drooling at pretty girls, and sexist {or non-sexist} approach to them as persons.

MM: I'm sorry, Bruno, but as far as I'm concerned the last two paragraphs are absolutely rampant with sexism. Surely the whole wondrous point about these persons in too little clothing is that they are fully developed adults who show all the outward signs of being able to procreate? If they really were girls, there'd be very little point in looking at them would there? Unless of course one wished to be assumed to be paedophilic. I am particularly disturbed that when you speak of competence, work, the mind you refer to adult females as what they are, women, but when you start to speak of them in a sexual manner you drop back to calling them 'girls'. Speaking as a woman who has to put up with a lot of this, it is REALLY INSULTING to be referred to as a 'girl'. Please do stop. Also please examine your motives in referring to females as women at some times and girls at others.

---LoCt in Space/Heinlein-----

As to staring at people in the streets and regarding them in a (interrogative) sexual manner, I do it to guys. Lots of women I know do it to men. We're not going to put you down for enjoying the scenery. As long as you don't put us down when we occasionally make it obvious that we're only interested in the outer attributes!

Well, much as I hate to leave the subject of pretty girls ((I'm reading attractive women here)), there are other topics to touch. Lemmesee... oh, yes. One should now wrap his critical effort with a few well-chosen words of wisdom to serve as signposts for future efforts in this direction. OK, here goes:

For a number of years now it has been a constant source of amazement for me that nobody mentions an indisputable fact about Heinlein as a writer, a fact which puts his work in a different pigeonhole than the one traditionally reserved for the old man.

Namely, Robert Anson Heinlein always offers the reasoning behind his ideas. When he constructs an imaginary society - and he always constructs societies, people and relationships, not planets nor wonders of superscience and pyrotechnics - he does it as a thought experiment, not as a titillation. He explains why he put the most prominent and glaring features in. You may not like his explanation but at least it's an honest debate, his reasons against yours.

In contrast, the hacks do not even think of reasons, they just pour out the streams of spectacular images. In the absence of Heinleinesque explanations and spelled-out reasoning the readers take their puny constructs at face value, being too intellectually lazy to work out the underlying logic (or the lack of it) for themselves.

Frank Herbert, for instance, invents absolutely pointless Girl Scout societies of evil old hags who shake entire empires. ((Much as hierarchies of ritualistic priests - male of course - have torn our society apart in war from time to time? - MM)) He twists societal and technological structures merely in order to feature sabres and swordplay in his fiction. The audience laps it up. It is a pitiful sight. Jerry Pournelle puts eighteenth century noblemen officers aboard starships in orbit around alien planets; gives me intestinal queasiness. Neither offers (nor can offer) a single intelligent argument on behalf of their travesties. And they are only two of the most prominent of that ilk.

MM: There are intelligent arguments on behalf of THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST, TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL? It isn't pitiful to watch an old man writing out his fantasies wherein little girls want to have his children? Now, that gives me intestinal queasiness. And it probably wouldn't do much for the mothers of some of the teenagers who read this trash, if they knew what the children they nurtured so carefully were ingesting.

Heinlein practically goads critics into attacking him, he forces people to think about his writing. While empty pap glides easily into stomachs and soothes the insides, Heinlein's work causes indigestion and thus commands your attention. There are, however, two problems about him. One is that the part worth thinking about is sometimes (often) buried within a mountain of deadweight and bathos. But it is there, even when not more than a needle in a haystack. Remember that what the hacks offer you is just the haystack. The other problem is that most criticism of his writing tends to be superficial and stops at the level of ideological label-slapping; the critics are unequal to the task and are often reduced to a lot of arm waving and pointless noise. One must be careful not to fall into this trap. His positions are invariably solidly thought out and for every critic's argument I will find you a counterargument. Many times he is wrong, or at least off the right track, of course, but it is devilishly hard to catch him at it and, - as Jim Blish once suggested - all the time he may be looking over your shoulder and chuckling at you because he put that trap there on purpose. Very few people have dissected his writing without bias and with adequate analytical tools, and the results have been extremely interesting. Let me recommend Alexei and Cory Panshin and Darko Suvin in that respect.

---LoCt in Space/Heinlein-----

Heinlein's kind of SF - thought experiments with solidly thought-out reasoning, outrageous enough to stir passions and intelligent enough to be thorny to refute - is science fiction. The rest is either noise or pornography. No matter how distasteful his corny style of writing may be, or how weird his politics, RAH is head and shoulders above the SF norm.

I'll give you a solid example that I have never heard anybody mention, but which shows how damn well the old man understands how things work and knows what he is talking about:

In his *THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS* he postulates a grain growing Lunar penal colony which rebels against the Earth authority, seizes control and proclaims independence. They use their monopoly on grain production as a negotiating chip against the overpopulated and almost starving Earth. Earth does not want to yield to their demands and a heated debate develops. Now, the interesting point is this: the debate between the rebels and the representatives of the Earth authorities could have been a transcript of the debate between OPEC ministers and the governments of the developed Western countries during the emotional days of the First Oil Crisis of 1973. Substitute grain for oil and Lunar rebels for the OPEC and the scenario and the dialogue become identical. The arguments are repeated almost verbatim.

The oil embargo happened in 1973. Heinlein wrote *THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS* in 1963 and 1964. Ten years later he must have burst a gut laughing.

I do not think that the role of SF is to predict the future, far from it, but this kind of a reproducible result of a thought experiment is certainly exciting. It says something about its author.

---Brian Earl Brown---

Ian Nichols' stomp - I mean romp through ST reminds me of a lot of the reasons why

I didn't like the book. Still, as I read through Ian's article I found myself playing Devil's advocate for Heinlein (God knows why). A number of things that Ian cites as examples of ST's fascistic underpinnings also answer to less conspiratorist interpretations. For example: In ST only veterans can stand for political office. The realities of 50s and 60s American politics was that most office holders were veterans, of either WWII or Korea. And there was a lot of resentment at 4F (unfit for service) and draft dodgers during and after the war. Senator Robert Dole's presidential chances are considered good because he has - among several other traits - a good military record. Evangelist Pat Robertson's presidential chances dropped greatly when it was charged that he dodged combat service. What Heinlein makes law in ST was and still remains something of an unwritten law. The same's true in Australian politics.

ML: Actually, the same is not true in Australian politics. I would cite one of the major differences between our two political systems (apart from the fact they have quite different structures) as being the fact that senior members of the US military dabble in politics as a matter of course. Generals becoming President (Eisenhower) or Generals becoming Secretary of State (Haig) simply has no parallel here. Haig, of course, is now a candidate for the Republican nomination for President in 1988. Equally incredible when compared to the Australian experience. Which is not to say that Australian politicians are completely bereft of military service, simply that they have always been bereft of senior military experience. Australian politicians have a tendency to start their careers earlier than in the US (there are no age restrictions on holding office apart from being old enough to vote [eighteen]) and are exempt from military service while holding office. So the realities of 50s and 60s politics was that a lot of Australian politicians had spent WWII running the country, not fighting for it. And on the other side of the coin, career soldiers in Australia have inherited the tendency that the British still maintain - retirement might see the old soldier go to any number of government sinecures, but becoming a politician is simply out of the question. The simplistic explanation of all this is that the USA was born because of the success of its revolutionary army, the commander of which it promptly rewarded with the Presidency - and thus the tradition of giving political office to (successful) military men was begun. Australia, with a beginning marked by

---Loft in Space/Heinlein---

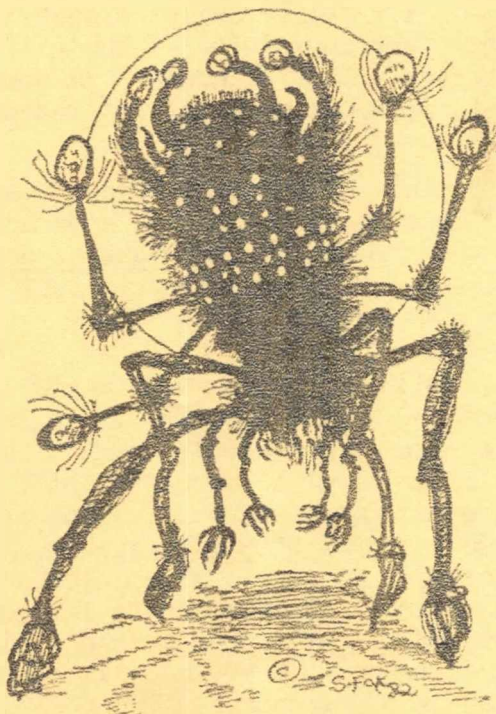
tendentious debate rather than battlefield struggles, has never equated military successes with the ability to lead (or even be a senior member of) a civilian government.

Another area in the officer's training school Rico goes through and passes only if he convinces the instructors he's worthy of a commission. The impression I got from typing up John Berry's "Army Daze Part 2" (the closest I've ever come to military service) is that that's how officers training schools are run now - and that it doesn't squeeze out individuality or dissidence as much as one might think.

While collectively ST sounds like the worst case of thought control since Orwell, the individual instances do not themselves yield up as dismal a picture. Now the real question is what happens when the military share political power? The answer can be seen in most any Central & South American country where coup follows coup like spring follows winter. The chief flaw of ST is that it assumes a constant war-time footing. Peace would be disastrous as the 'sheep' tire of their sacrifices and start demanding some of the good times.

Probably the greatest weakness of ST is the same as that of every other utopia work of literature - there's no room for dissent. Perhaps these visionaries from Plato on down believe their utopia is so perfect that no one would want to complain, but complaint and disagreement seems part of the human condition.

You can't please all the people all of the time. In ST dissent seems to be very "un-American". While Rico is slaughtering bug-like aliens because of their communal thinking, Rico's society seems to be drifting towards that same "group-mind" mentality.



---Marc Ontlieb---

Re the Heinlein argument, I guess I'm more in line with Jack than with Frank Macskasy.

I rather enjoyed reading STARSHIP TROOPERS. Science fiction is, after all, a medium through which one can examine alternate futures. That one disagrees with Heinlein's philosophy shouldn't interfere with reading the novels. I'm certainly not the sort of person who would survive under the regimes that Heinlein postulates, but I can still enjoy the stories he unfolds.

HEINLEIN: FREE ASSOCIATION

MM: One of the interesting things about the responses we received to the ST article was what happened when people didn't talk about the book but just started with Heinlein and free associated. Four examples are below. I am particularly impressed by how far away Sheryl Birkhead managed to get from the original topic in just one paragraph. There should be prizes for this sort of thing.

---Ray Capella---

STARSHIP TROOPERS is one of the books that added to my growth and enjoyment because I did not read politics into it when I first ran across it. What occurs in ST within the context of a given milieu is to me more interesting from a psychological and philosophical standpoint. I could belabor some points with Nichols, but will limit this to say the essay is intelligent and does make me want to read ST again. I would suggest that Ian read Aldiss' THE BILLION YEAR SPREE for someone who agrees with him (as I do) as to the real origins of SF.

---Gerth Spencer---

"Analyzing the Trooper in Heinlein"...

I'm merely bemused. There have been any number of claims, I gather, to the effect that Heinlein's work is militarist or fascist. I think this is merely a result of a) his generation - very 'Reader's Digest' mentality, facile output and input assimilation; very many of the writers and readers went through the military as a rite of passage, compared to, say, my generation - and b) given that, it's surprising how original, or to what extent is the writing given to turning over tacit assumptions.

I think the strongest case could be built by saying that Heinlein is merely being American, throughout his work. Given as he is to altering or reversing some tacit assumptions, he still falls easily, almost inevitably into certain thought patterns, and others are invisible. I don't find militarism figures all that much in the direction of his blinders. An obsession with independence may be a larger part; personal or political independence, achieved through violence.

"A Marxist Reading"? Heinlein's cultural background may be a cage for the mind, but isn't Marxism? Next you'll be taking a deconstructionist reading of someone or other, and the results will be just as predictable. (What do you get when you cross a mafioso with a deconstructionist? Yet get an offer you can't understand. -- Arthur Hlavaty)

I am really engaged by the notion of looking at how SF publications operate in a society, in a political economy. It's tempting to think SF is a crucial factor, that makes a difference to how people think... until I recognize how conservative are the vast majority of SF readers; until I recognize that SF is a mass-market publishing category, and publication is under the control of people who cater to a readership, as they perceive it, at least as much as they create that readership; that SF, in short, is an alembic. (Oh dear. I've revealed myself; I take an alchemical approach to literature.) Like language, SF writing both influences and is influenced by the society that gives rise to it. What goes around, comes around. Everything is connected to everything else. Chicken and egg. As below, so above. Where can you find a first cause?

We might do best to ask how SF operates, comparatively, in Britain, France, Germany, Australia and the U.S.

(I note in this connection that SF, like most sorts of publishing, operates in Canada as part of the same vast feedback circuit as operates in the States. There are minor, but only minor inputs from France and Britain. We'll see if the recently-imposed book tariff becomes a semipermanent feature, and whether Canada sets up its own feedback loop/alembic.)

---LoCt in Space/Heinlein---

---Walt Willis---

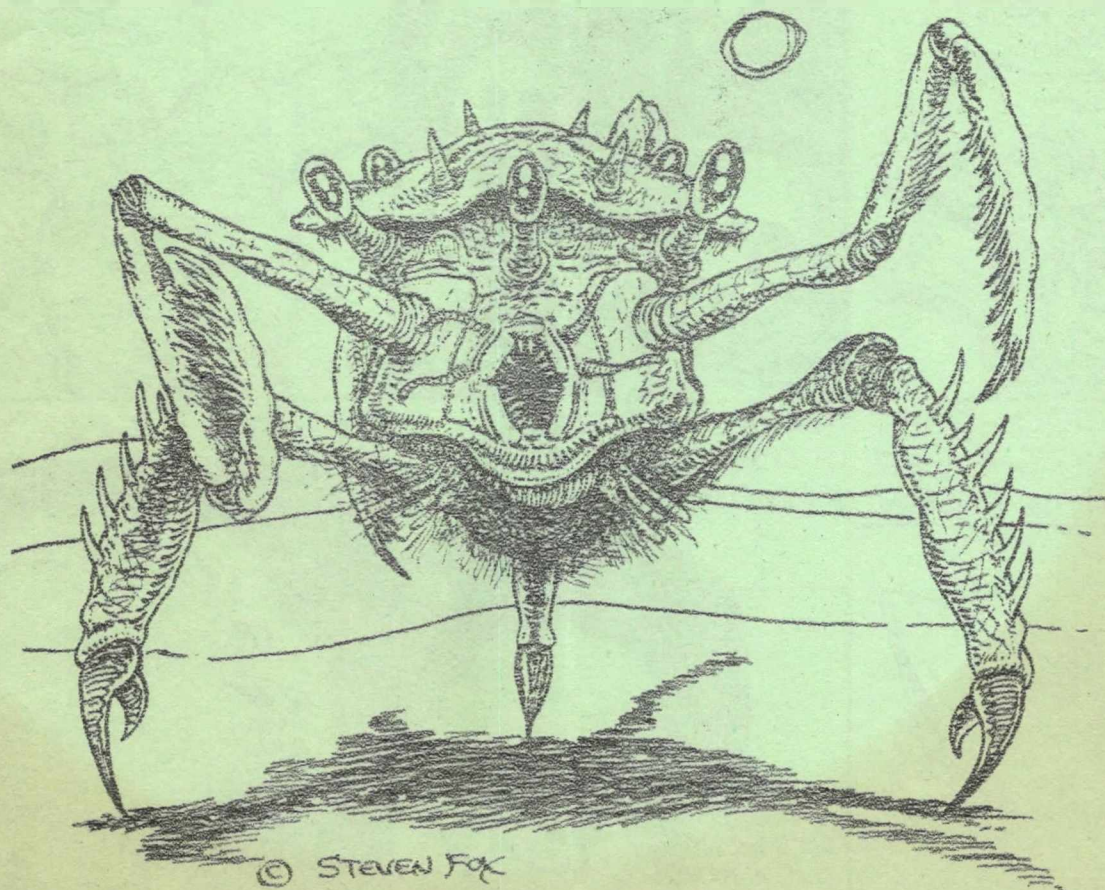
To see people defining sf and analysing STARSHIP TROOPERS reminded me of 'The Rhodomagnetic Digest', organ of the Elves, Gnomes and Little Men Chowder, Science Fiction and Marching Society, which was one of the few fmz which have ever succeeded in being serious without pomposity. I remember contributing an enraged article on Heinlein myself, only about Gulf. He paid no attention to me, strangely enough. However after a mere 35 years I had my revenge, a piece from Hyphen about Heinlein's relationship with fandom being reprinted in Vol 3 of the Chelsea House Library of Literary Criticism. One is reminded of the Chinese proverb: wait long enough by the river bank and the body of your enemy will come floating past.

So no doubt Katherine Chopin's speculation on the size of Nichols' dick will appear in some future anthology of female chauvinist literary criticism.

MM: If we are agreed that Katherine Chopin is a fakefan (are we?) why do we go on insisting that they are necessarily female? Speculating on penis size has in my experience always been rather more interesting to males than females...

---Sheryl Birkhead---

The Heinlein analysis is interesting - to me - when I got to the roles of him'n'hers. This little aside has {almost} nothing to do with the subject - my one 'normal' cat is called Putt - that's short for Lilliputt - when I found him, I didn't know if it was a him or a her, so I figured Putt if it was a male and Lilli if female... I just heard of a cat called Hesh - for the same reason... I never did ask the owner which one it turned out to be...



LIFE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

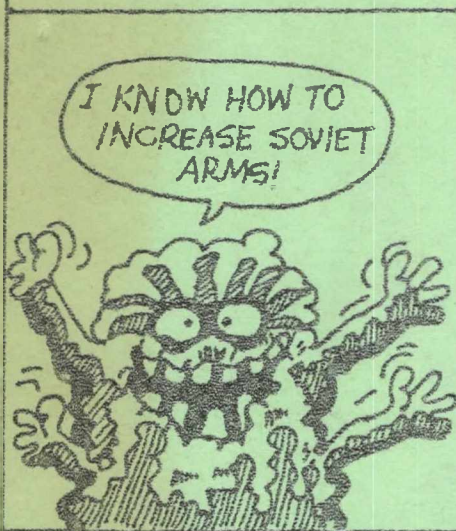
FRIDAY THE 13TH, PART 72,
WINS THE OSCAR AS
BEST PICTURE...



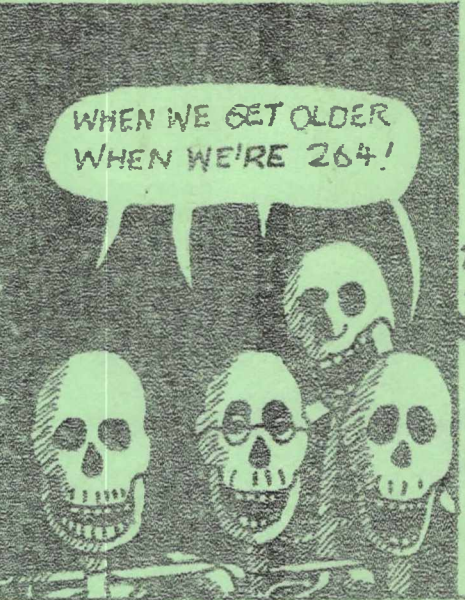
SYLVESTER STALLONE
BECOMES PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES...



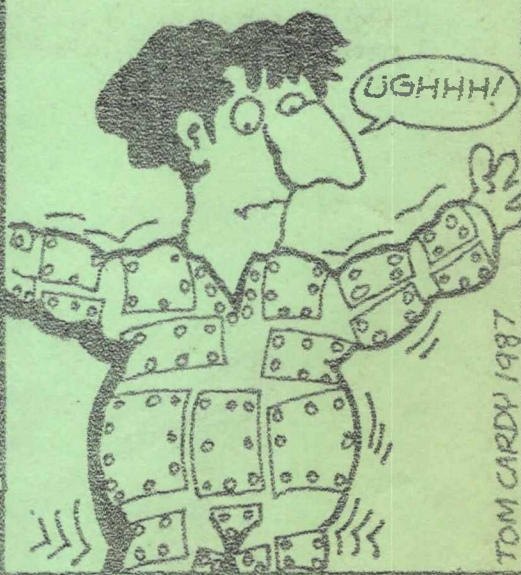
IVAN VLADIVOSTOK, SON OF
NASTASSIA CHERNOVTSY,
A CHERNOBYL TECHNICIAN,
BECOMES PREMIER OF
THE SOVIET UNION



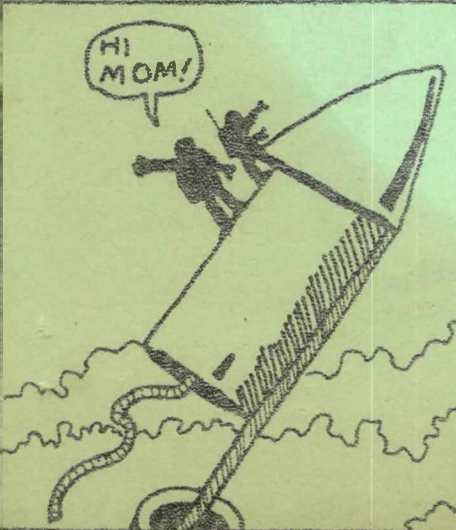
AFTER YEARS OF DEATH,
THE BEATLES FINALLY
GET BACK TOGETHER...



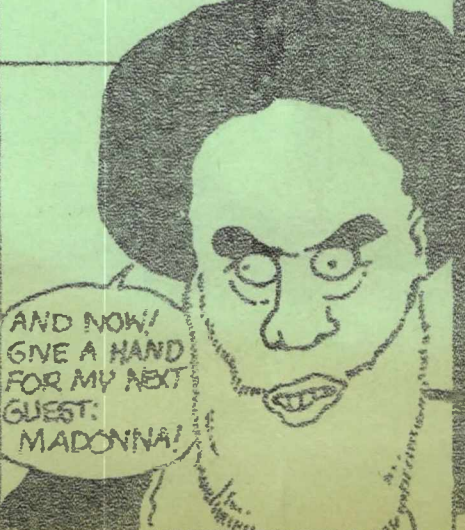
A CURE FOR AIDS IS
DISCOVERED...



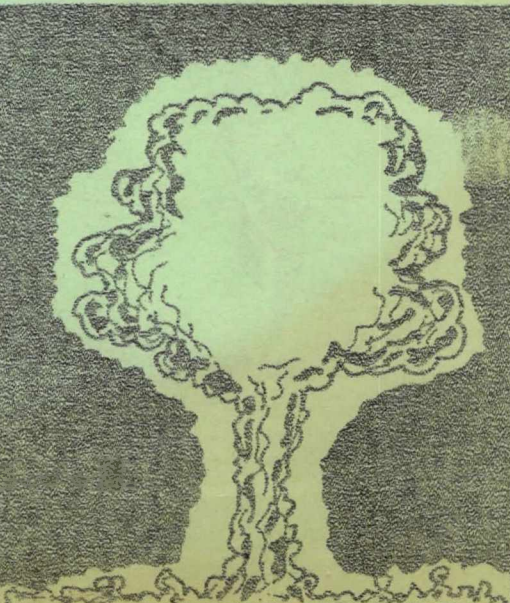
NASA DECIDES TO ADOPT
A SAFER AND CHEAPER
SPACE SHUTTLE DESIGN...



AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI
QUITS POLITICS AND
FRONTS A TALK SHOW



THE ARMS RACE ENDS...



TOM CARDY 1987