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# the Space Wastrel

VOLUME TWO NUMBER NINE PART A

JANUARY/MARCH 1988

REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIA POST: PUBLICATION NO. VBG 7972





THE SPACE WASTREL: ISSN 0817-0100

This is Part A of The Space Wastrel for January/March 1988 and is Volume Two Number 9A, Whole Number 14. TSW is edited by Mr Loney and Michelle and published by Mr Warner, Mr Loney and Michelle.

1988 Publishing Schedule was: January March May July September November

In the best of fannish spirit, Part A is still being edited after Part B has been printed and collated. We are still on schedule for release at Kinkon and will, along with the rest of Australian fanzine fandom, make our offering to the deity presiding over the Fanzine Sacrifice. Perhaps it will take mercy on us and make TSW2:10 (still scheduled for May) much smaller...

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O U NORMAN INTERNATIONAL: THE STAFFING CENTRE

# SINK THE SYDNEY

IN '91 WORLDCON BID

by

MARK LONEY

## What Is It With Some Fans?

So I went to V-Con, see, and before coming home went to breakfast with Deloris Booker, and she told me this story...

Last year V-Con's freebie table featured some flyers from a Star Trek anniversary convention, being held in Spokane. As I heard the story this year (only by word of mouth), the Star Trek fans in Spokane conceived and carried out their convention without reference to other fans in the area -- without any reference, except to the huge Star Trek cons held in places like the Midwest and Mississippi Valley -- without incorporating their committee, and without proper communication with their guests, or their hotel.

They lost control of the convention, the hotel shut them down, the committee is in bankruptcy (severally and individually), and all because the committee ignored the other Northwest fans who could have averted their troubles.

Sound familiar? This was, almost item by item, a replay of the Constellation Con '83 fiasco in Victoria -- except that the Spokane crew got as far as holding an event with several hundred people. By comparison, I guess Victoria got off lightly... even if my friends, without any involvement, had their credibility destroyed by the Constellationoids. We'll just have to see whether the Spokane trufans can continue to hold Spokons, or whether the mundanes lump them in with the Trekkies.

I enjoyed hearing Deloris' story. It redeems and justifies my sense that many fans need to be told how fan activities work.

## Garth Spencer in The Maple Leaf Rag

The Sydney in '91 WorldCon Bid, should it be successful at New Orleans later this year, has the potential to make a failed Star Trek convention in Spokane look like an exercise in sound financial management. It is being run by a group whose relationship to fandom (fanzine, media or convention) can best be described as tenuous, whose experience in running conventions of any type is minimal and whose attitudes and expectations are unrealistic.

Like most other Australian fans, I have been aware of a Sydney bid for 1991 for some time. Like most other Australian fans, I have never met any of the senior members of the bid committee or seen a presentation on their behalf at any Australian convention. Like most other Australian fans, whenever I asked someone from Sydney who was behind the '91 bid they didn't know or knew very little. Until recently, like most other Australia fans, I didn't care one way or the other.

The publication of Down Under Press Number 1, a progress report for the Sydney in '91 bidding committee, has changed my mind. Other fans are still of the opinion that the Sydney bid needs no assistance; that it is already on a direct course to the bottom of the harbour. I think that Australian fandom should, as loudly as possible, make the WorldCon electorate aware of the nature of the Sydney in '91 bid and the consequent lack of support for that bid in Australia. I believe that not to do so, should this result in the Sydney bid being successful, would be disastrous for Australian fandom in general and soundly based Australian WorldCon bids in particular.

The Down Under Press is characterized by a surfeit of quite interesting typoses and a quite disturbing lack of information about the Bidding Committee. The contents may be subject to copywrite (sic) but, unfortunately for anyone interested in making a judgement about the capacity of the committee to run a world class WorldCon, the contents include no direct information about the members of that committee. Reading the bylines lets us discern that Gary Makin is the Editor, or perhaps Publisher, of Down Under Press, that Alan Grieve is the Bid President, that Graeme Batho probably has something to do convention facilities and that Edwina Harvey knows a couple who live in an "abode, skillfully crafted by Gary Armstrong to replicate the prop used in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy TV series".

I am aware that the Sydney Bid distributed more information at Conspiracy than that deemed fit for Australian consumption. This included a document detailing the background of committee members. I find it curious that a Bid Committee can embark on a publicity campaign, as distribution of the Down Under Press seems to indicate, yet fail to include in their local campaign the most important information of all; their credentials. And having seen a copy of the above document, one brought back from Conspiracy, I can attest that the information that was provided is best described as polysemic; capable of many interpretations.

The Bid Treasurer (from memory) is described as having a background as a "Financial Advisor" in Canada, a background that is now complemented by Australian qualifications. I quibble not the accreditations of the woman in question, rather I seek clarification of the meaning of "Financial Advisor". It could mean anything from Bank Clerk to Accountant to... what? Similarly, the Bid President is a, "former manager of the largest catering/convention service in the State of Queensland". I am indebted to Peter Burns for the interstate telephone call that revealed, from the mouth of one of Mr Grieve's colleagues, that this meant involvement at the political end of the University of Queensland student guild catering service. Having been involved at the business end of a personnel agency, I found the carefully ambiguous terms and descriptions used to describe committee members reminiscent of resumes from applicants who rarely, if ever, got the jobs they applied for.

This ambiguity can also be found, without too much trouble, in Down Under Press Number 1. Alan Grieve lets us know in 'Sydney in '91 - Where We're Going' that the Bid Committee is "in contact with upwards of 1200 people". Nowhere is there any information on the number of pre-supporting members (or subscribers to DUP). We are, however, told that, "Subscriptions cost the same as a Sydney in '91 pre-supporting membership and, as a special bonus, includes this membership" (sic). I read that twice too. Given that DUP fails to include information specifically promised by Alan Grieve, "the names and contact addresses of... ..overseas agents", then perhaps the best interpretation of the available evidence is the relatively charitable one of incompetence. This could also explain why my pre-opposing membership of the Sydney bid has yet to result in the arrival of a copy of Down Under Press Number 2...

Perth fandom has been bidding for the 1994 WorldCon since Aussiecon II in 1985. Their approach has been open and they have deliberately adopted a high profile. Finding out the current status of the Perth bid has never been harder than going to an Australian convention (or even a WorldCon) and having a chat to any of the committee members present. The people involved have a history of involvement with successful local and national conventions. As a result, they have as good an understanding as is possible of the requirements and demands of running a WorldCon.

This is in obvious contrast to the tactics of the Sydney in '91 Bid who, less than a year before the deciding vote at New Orleans, have published a newsletter that raises more questions than it answers. The claim that, "Until recently the skills we needed were limited," in no way mitigates or justifies the preceding dearth of information or the current shortfall. Alan Grieve may well exhort fans to, "Contact us in Sydney or through our agents. Bring the Worldcon to Sydney in '91!". I trust that they will find the lack of contact addresses for agents, and all the other matters raised above, a sign that they shouldn't bother.

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ON TRAVELLING WITH A BABY

and other hazards of WorldCon

DAVE LUCKETT

1.

Perth Airport has recently had an upgrade, so that it is now possible to have a partially civilised meal there before being packed, like protoplasmic toothpaste, into the Great White Tube. Eight hours to Hong Kong with Evan. Oh whacko! Oh joy!

So we waited for the flight to be called, and it was on time. We found our seats (they were the ones under the four layers of cushions and blankets) and discovered that, like all economy-class airline seats, they resembled slightly padded fruit crates, with armrests like razor-blades. We installed ourselves. It wasn't necessary to bend at more than a seventy-degree angle, after all. But don't forget, Evan goes in the middle of the angle.

I wonder why they call it hand baggage, when most of the time you have your feet on it? Anyway, we took off, and an interminable time later, got to Hong Kong. Cathay Pacific did a fair job of alleviating the more extreme discomforts, and Evan actually slept most of the way, thank Christ.

Hong Kong's one of those crystal farms you used to get. You know, a super-saturated solution of some salt or other which precipitates its crystals onto some suitable surface. All kinds and shapes of crystals - tall ones, squat ones, tetrahedrons, prisms and cubes, and more exotic shapes I don't know the names of, all glowing with their own light, around a dark nucleus of harbour. Over all, an aloof Chinese-lantern moon.

But the arrival hall is sort of like being wrapped in warm wet towels, or being transported to a Universe made entirely out of steamed treacle pudding. We got to the hotel, just opposite the airport; very elegant, very efficient. Very air-conditioned. Crashed.

Next morning, we took a short walk - gasp - swim through an immense Chinese steambath called Central. Tried to shop for children's clothes, but there was nothing in his size, obviously he was progeny of behemoths. Had dim sum in a teahouse where the waiters wore white coats, very hygienic, while spitting copiously into the spittoons provided, not so much so. Took the tram up to the Peak, a brief and spectacular ride, and had proper lunch there, westernised Chinese. Finally went back into the steambath and I stood with Evan while Sally went into a Chinese arts store and turned over every bit of cloisonné in the place.

Finally, in the evening, off to the airport, registering our multiplying baggage with a gentleman operating the only war-surplus X-ray machine I've ever seen. Great War, that is. Poured ourselves into the pit, took up the necessary fetal positions, and made ready to endure.

I do not sleep in planes. That fact, and that it was eleven p.m. by me, sixteen hours to London, and that we would arrive there bright and early in the morning, local time, combined to depress me entirely. In addition to the normal problems of having nowhere to put my feet, my knees being hard up against the bulkhead, and my elbows having three millimetres of play each side, I had Evan in a crib on a sort of shelf in front of me. It was therefore not possible to get out without actually walking over the knees between me and the aisle - Sally and a Chinese gentleman who, unlike me, had no hips at all, and was instantly asleep.

Naturally, the plane was full. Naturally, Evan, enchanted by these new and different surroundings, wanted to explore. Naturally, the things he wished to explore were forbidden to him. Naturally, he resented this fact. Loudly. Later, though, he was charmed by the movie being screened on the bulkhead beside and above his crib. At one stage he appeared to be in a deep and meaningful conversation with Katherine Turner, which was no doubt interesting for him, but puzzling to the audience.

I have known people who sleep in these conditions. John (Dormouse) McDouall, to my certain knowledge, spent nineteen hours out of twenty-two asleep between Perth and London when we went in 1979, a feat which showed extraordinary control his pineal gland and his bladder alike. Even my beloved wife, in whose vein morphia flows more strongly than haemoglobin, managed between six and seven hours passing slumber. I fretted and fidgetted, breaking off now and then in order to shove Evan back into his crib as he was on the point of climbing out of it, to his intense displeasure. The night wore endlessly on, but we got to London at last.

We were met by Sally's parents and we spent a few weeks with them and other relatives of hers at various family estates. We both got the obligatory 'flu, were laid up, and came to Brighton and the Con on the tail of it.



We had a hotel - actually a boarding-house - about a mile and a half from the main facilities. It was quite reasonably comfortable and didn't cost much more than an arm and a leg; as Brighton standards go, it was quite inexpensive. And so we registered and the first thing I see in the Brighton Centre is the aforementioned McDouall, who is entwined with a beautiful woman. As I am to learn, Cappy is also intelligent, good-humoured and articulate; and I pause for a moment to be lost in wonder at how McDouall manages it. It's not, God knows, that he stands out in a crowd, in any sense. Does he brew pheromones in his cellar and bathe in them? Does he appeal to the maternal? Does he hold his breath until he turns blue?

It's beyond me. And he doesn't even wear white nylon shirts and bowties.

Registration went smoothly. The opening was a flop, for mine. The laser show consisted of one laser and a lot of dry-ice smoke. The guests trooped on, looked bewilderedly about them, and trooped off again. The good lady from the Brighton City Council was fairly obviously boggled by the whole thing. After it was over, I cleared off to find the fan room, the hucksters and the filking, in that order. It is at this point that things begin to get a little vague.

I remember the Bob Shaw Serious Science talk and Dave Langford reading from ANSIBLE. I remember the fireworks exhibition, and the hotel's reaction to the numbers of people trying to get back in again when it was over. I remember the filksinging and the filk concert (ah, egoboo!). I remember sitting at the Perth in '94 bid desk, trying desperately to recall all the excellent reasons why I'm not going to have anything to do with that lunacy. I remember being introduced to Tanith Lee, whom I greatly admire, and sitting there like a great pile of rancid wombat do's while cudgelling my brain for witty remarks, only to find that it had unaccountably turned into three-and-a-half pounds of mouldy porridge. I remember the Beach Cricket Ashes - the pitch was, to say the least, two-paced.

The filking was very good indeed. I am fascinated by the cultural differences that turned up even there, though. The Americans mostly sang to a guitar, solo. People could join the choruses, but they tended to get offended if you sang the verse as well with them. On the other hand, the British sing all together, often a capella, with as much harmony as can be contrived; and are helped in this by the fact that many British filks are set to gutsy old folk-tunes and even Welsh hymns. I haven't sung "Cwm Rhondda" like that since I last went to the Welsh Church, decades ago. Funny how old parts come back to you, even if the words are different. And British filks are often about drinking, or sex, or both. Excellent subjects.

The gripes that I heard were mainly regarding the communications difficulties the ConCom had with the site selection ballot. Holland (Den Haag in '90) won it, but there was some transatlantic feeling that more American votes would have tipped it the other way, and that they would have been forthcoming if the ballot papers had been sent in time. There is no way question that the question will ever be resolved.

Then there was the stoush over the Hugos, where Bridge Publications (L. Ron's minions) were alleged to have received free and undeserved publicity, and there were complaints about the food and the visibility of costumes at the Masquerade. About Masquerades I will discourse, maybe, later. About the Hugos I neither know nor care.

The biggest free-for-all was, of course, with the major hotel, the Metropole, and here I'll weigh in, because I don't think that all the problems were created by the hotel. They arise from the different world-views held by SF fans and by the management of 5-star hotels.

5-star hotels are set up for people who want luxury class accommodation, meals and service, and who can pay for it. Those same people expect, and generally exhibit, formal behaviour and limited gregariousness. Fans at Conventions most emphatically do not fit this model, and a culture shock results.

5-star hotels have enormous overheads, causing them to charge high prices for what you can get much cheaper in the supermarket bottle section or the fast foodery. Fans won't pay those prices, and thus won't use the hotel's services, causing the hotel to lose money. The hotel resents this, and will prevent it if it can. Most especially, the hotel resents supplying service - like cleaning - to people who aren't paying for it at all.

Hotel liaison should take care of these problems, 'tis said. Hah! Who is going to tell hotel management truthful things like these about SF Cons:

"There will be 6000 people coming, but most will not be spending money in the hotel. Most of them will just want to sit around and talk, and will do so anywhere they happen to be - the traffic in the halls and lifts will be incredible, and will continue all day and all night. Many will be strangely and very informally dressed, and though generally harmless, will behave somewhat eccentrically. Those that want to stay will want to have large, noisy late-night parties in their rooms, into which they will smuggle cheap booze, because they won't want to pay the hotel's prices. Many will try to do the same thing in corridors, stairwells and even lifts; usually, these will not



be guests at all. Quite often, the nominal guests will informally subrent crash space to other people - couches, floor, even baths will be filled in this way. Generally, they are honest and there is almost never any problem with vandalism, but it is true to say that they're out for a good time, they won't pay high prices, they don't behave in a conventional manner, and they are rarely sympathetic to the hotel's point-of-view or its need to make a profit."

No 5-star hotel is going to put up with that, but it's the real behaviour of fans at Cons. That's the real reason behind the problems I've seen with the main hotels in the two WorldCons I've attended. It is, I suspect, the reason behind Boskone's problems, not the question of who set off the fire alarms. It's not that fans are deliberately rude or, still less, criminal in intent. It's that they are bad for the hotel's image and what they spend does not compensate for the trouble they make.

Having said that, I think that it's fair to say that the Metropole was overpriced and generally did not deliver the standard it was charging for. The lighting in the Huckster's Rooms was appalling; the range of drinks available at the bars was very small and highly priced; the seating accomodation outside the Con facilities was inadequate; worst of all, the hotel breached its repeated assurance to the ConCom that the renovations it was having done would be completed.

On the other hand, I was not offended by the hotel manager restricting access to the hotel when there were three thousand people trying to get in at once, through one door. That seemed to me to be a natural safety measure. There was a good cheap buffet restaurant. The staff were courteous and the fan room was excellent.

All up, however, I am now of the opinion that 5-star hotels are not suitable venues for science-fiction conventions. I will remain of that opinion until I see a convention with the facilities partly or wholly in such a hotel where there are no problems with room parties, non-guests in the rooms, boggled managers and prices.

If, as is said to be the case, only 5-star hotels have the facilities and the standard of accomodation expected by those attending a major Con, then fans are going to have to change their ways; I think it is more likely that as big SF conventions become more known in the industry, hotel managements will become increasingly reluctant to book them, for the reasons given above.

Personally, I'm going to make a practice of eschewing really big Cons in future. They aren't worth the hassle.

And that's really, for me, the bottom line on Conspiracy. Parts of it were great. But it cost an awful lot of money and a great deal of money to get there, much more than it was worth. And this was a small Con, as WorldCons go. I never want to see a bigger.

So then we bummed around Britain for a few weeks, got ripped off in London (the hotel there was indescribably vile and encredibly expensive: Ned Kelly had a gun), and then got on the plane and came back. It was my third trip to Britain, and the worst, despite the best weather yet.

For the flight back, see the description of the flight over and multiply it by a dose of 'flu. Jesus, I hope now that Bondie's behind MOTOL it gets to be a going concern. Or I'd settle for three or four days in a dirigible, if it had comparable prices and a sleeping compartment.

FLAME  
MOTOL



# THE JULES ... EDITORIAL?

## FRUIT-SHOP OWNERS OF THE WORLD EXCITE!

Lately I've been saying, when people hit me with the inevitable "What have you been up to?", "I've been listening to Bulgarian folk music." Most people choose to ignore this statement entirely and change the subject of the conversation. One might as well say, "I've been rubbing salicylic acid into the huge wart on my left buttock." The effect would be the same. It was Rob McGough who noticed the eerie piece of music on the tail end of the soundtrack to "Cosmos" - yes, the programme hosted by Carl "Oomans and Ooranus" Sagan. The piece in question was a shepherdess' song from an album entitled "Village Music of Bulgaria." As yet I've been unable to get hold of that particular album but three other specimens of the art of Bulgar bohemians have eased their way into the Mr Warner record racks. The best of the trio has to be "Les Voix Mysteres de Bulgare" - uh yeah, the mysterious voice of Bulgaria for you non-francolinguans. We're told by the sleeve notes that totally untrained village girls from the backwoods of outer Bulgaria are taken into the singing Academy in Sofia (absolutely nothing to do with The Singing Citadel) and taught how to perform vocal gymnastics that boggle one's comprehension.

Imagine, if you will, a vast cathedral in which is resident a heavenly choir of beefy Bulgarian belledames. Then said ladies let rip with spine-chilling paeans that weave in and out of harmony patterns that defy description. Although Bulgars have struggled for centuries under the yoke of Turkish rule they have absorbed many other cultural influences that colour their music. Outstanding is their control and mastery of the quavery effect that most people would only associate with the ministrations of the ululating muezzin, calling all good muslims to worship. What utterly amazed me was the ability to superimpose a fast vibrato upon an already extant slow vibrato. As my friend and singing-teacher Jenny says, those women manage to keep slotting in more harmonies in places where you didn't think they could. This music has the majesty of ancient traditions, the ecstasy of the enchanter and the exactitude of the artisan.

The other two Bulgarian albums I have are also worthy of attention but I'll report on them later when I've worn them in.

## VIGNERONS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

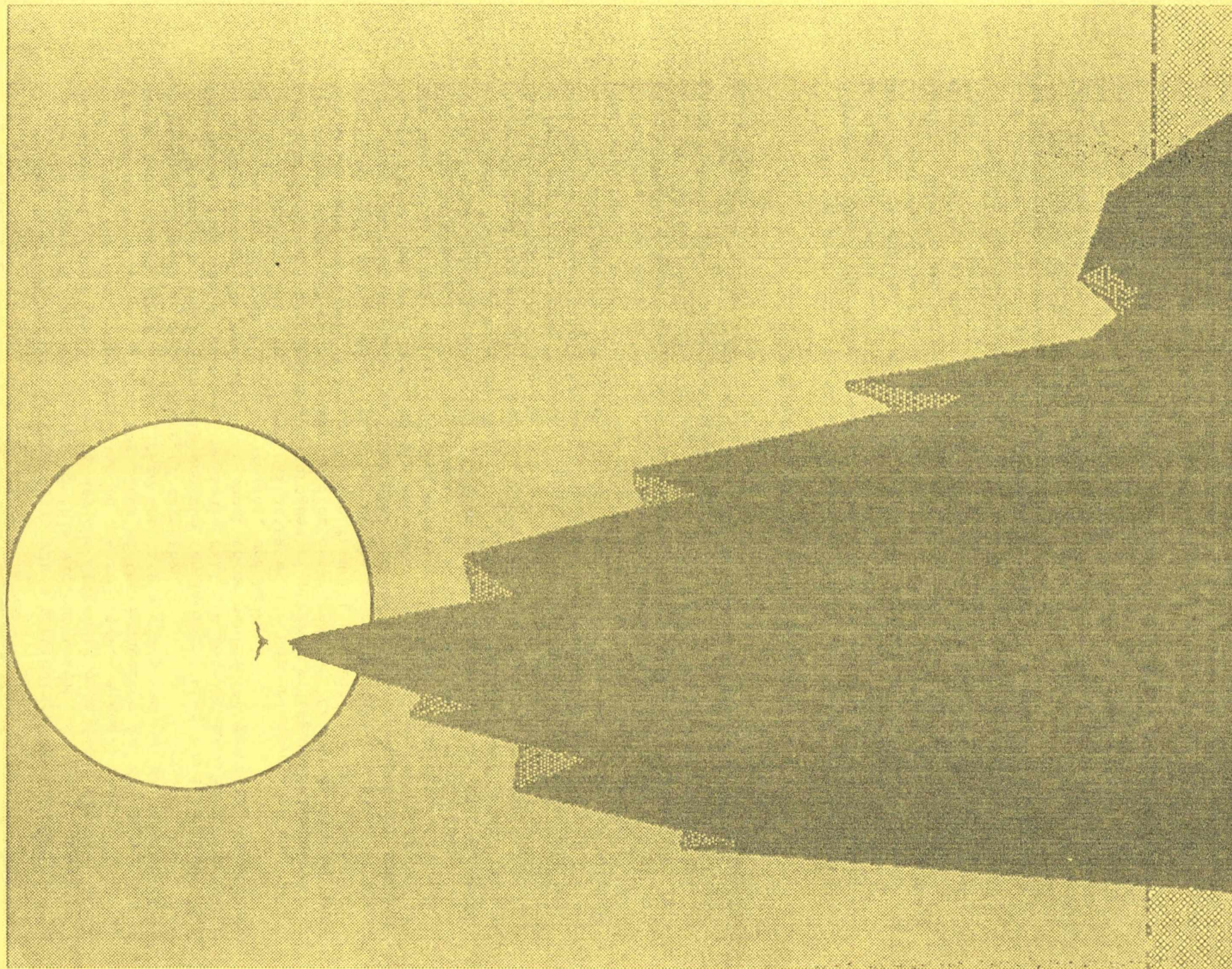
Okay so if mother weren't born this century she might have been a Seljuk Turk, but being born when she was and where she was, it was still surprising that she had become an honorary Voudun Queen of Guadeloupe. Such are the times, baby, that Ma's a snake-goddess who can weave adders like lies around my Pa.

And if anybody comes around to visit these days they don't run fingers along mantelpieces to test for dust; no, they indulge in the rudeness of inspecting the bookshelf for any giveaway titles that might reveal secrets of an unstable or uncertain character. I can get away with the fact that the Voudun books were written by Ma; the very theses upon which she earned her titles, but I've still got a few red herring novels and shock/horror big picture books to keep the guests guessing. Of course, the porno's never on display (try the bottom drawer of the wardrobe - Ma can show you where) and there are two particular books that never see the light of day.

I read them both only once. Enough to frighten the shit out of me. There's a bank in the city that has a vault that's rarely opened. In that vault are two books; never to be opened until I die and my inheritor has to make a decision about their future.

Both books have been bound in a plain brown leather cover - with a little gold leaf purfling - I was always a sucker for those fine touches - even for tomes of unalloyed evil. Couldn't see the point of a health warning on the covers or anything. People'd read 'em anyway.







"The Diary of Antoine Spikenard" is not a particularly prepossessing title. Within the tattered covers of this vicious volume is a hell-raised shitstorm of frozen terror. Day by day the Spikenard dude draws out your nerves like a wire and then snaps them like an ice splinter. After I read it I stayed bunched up in a foetal curl on the floor of the loungeroom for two days. The phone rang, doors banged, time ticked out like a clicktrack to an unrecorded deathmarch; I wasn't in to anyone or anything.

Ma woke me. She's the only one who can touch me when I'm like that. It's the voodoo that she do that make me tango till I'm sore or something like that. Brown days passed for everafter for about three months for about an eternity for about a period of time I'd rather forget, and have.

I'd picked "The Love of Pan" as being a Dion Fortune reject or one Aleister Crowley's pseudonymous catalogues of profanity-disguised-as-poetry. The author hides behind the rather ridiculous facade of "Celine de Chatte" and the whole book is a very bad translation from the original french. There is something oddly arabic about the style of the book that makes me think it might have been Algerian or Moroccan in origin. Inside is a cornucopaeia of the sort of stuff that the worst porno novels are made of, but the central character of the book accepts and "enjoys" the degradations that she is subjected to in the plot with an alacrity that would make the stomach of the most ignorant chauvinist do multiple backflips. Celine de Chette had achieved what no other author had; "she" had made me physically sick after reading "her" book. To save the world from the experience of being induced into vomiting violently I hid that one away too. If I had the resources to search out every copy of "The Love of Pan" and destroy them I would. There are still some sexual situations that make me feel queasy simply because I've read that damned book.

The only person I've known not to flinch after reading these two volumes (and admittedly, I've let very few people even know about their existence) was my dear Ma. She does weird things in her ceremonies that I learned not to ask about. There's some incredibly funky dancers in her congregation but they're all like the girl with the faraway eyes - they've got auras that scream bad karma - don't fool around with this mother.

So I don't fool around with Ma. And neither should you, so don't get any smart ideas.

#### RECEPTIONISTS OF THE WORLD DELIGHT!

Delving deep into his vocabulary, Lord Pigpen of the Manor sought and eventually found the noise he wanted - his grunt of resignation to discomfort. He wiped his sweaty and grimy brow with an even grimmer paw and then bent awkwardly, attempting to adjust the straps and buckles of the vast leathern truss that supported his preponderous gut, his bulging hernia and his well-worn wanger. When he had himself hoisted into position such that he might walk without limping, he heaved back his broad, heavily-padded shoulders, squared his sights upon the muddy track ahead and strode forward.

The sky was frownsome, darkling and promising great Poseidon's piss-streams of rain. Large flotsam-bedecked puddles already bore testimony to the fulsomeness of previous pluvial micturitions.

Glaring hatefully upward, Lord Pigpen extruded a noxiously long and greasy fart from the confines of his breeches and offered it up as an appropriate gift for whichever of the accursed gods that had visited such foul weather upon his path. The fart was but a tiny voice of protest that was lost in the slurping and sucking of the mud that attempted to steal Lord Pigpen's battered boots at every step.

The Beast of the Road was dressed for wet weather riding, which was rather unfortunate as his horse was lying dead in the middle of the track many miles behind him. Crumpet, such as the horse was named, had been suffering from pneumonia for several days but was now only useful for the meat which Pigpen carried with the rest of his belongings in the heavy and by now sodden horse-pack. The town of Grazhribad was still some thirty miles hence and although Pigpen's scowl would presently wither crops from a league away, he would force himself to smile at the possessor of any form of transport that

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could expedite his journey. Grunts of exasperation greeted every new step. His steaming, huffing, puffing exhalations were littered with such curses as he could muster. Lord Pigpen of the Manor was not a very happy Beast of the Road.

It was the agonized squeaking of beleaguered wagon wheels that caused him to pause and listen intently for the direction in which the wagon might be travelling. The country here was not thickly wooded but there was enough scrubby vegetation to obscure his view in any direction he cared to look. The noise of a bellowing bullock and the crack of whip definitely came from behind him. Quickly Pigpen made efforts to tidy himself up to confront his potential saviour. Normally the Beast would commandeer that which he required under force of sword. However so dissipated was he that he preened uselessly and awaited his fate.

Very slowly did the bullock, the rough two-wheeled cart and its rough driver approach. Only by vigorous application of the whip did the driver prevent the cart from becoming stuck indefinitely in the mud. The cart was empty but the overpowering smell of animal dung informed Pigpen that his royal coach was to be a tumbril.

It was with a minimum of whining and wheedling that the driver accepted the Beast as a passenger, on the proviso that having to get out and push was going to be a frequent probability.

Only after he had scrambled up beside his mentor did the Beast realise that this soft-voiced yokel was in fact a woman. Not an attractive or comely woman indeed, although she was obviously young and relatively unravaged by time. There was something about her, not quite definable, that was decidedly ugly. Whereas one woman may have one feature that was not quite right, this one had no features which were quite right. The Beast was, I fear to say, not a young Lothario given to the niceties of seemly courtship. Nay, a beast by honorific and a beast by nature, and yet, here was one he would not assail. The weather, the woman and the mephitic odour of the cart had conspired together to suffocate the Beast's baser passions. Glum did he look as the wheels complained their way along the quaggy track; seldom did either driver or passenger bother to speak as the leagues slowly passed. It was as if some bored, morbid Hellion had spread its wings over this place and was dripping the foul sweat of its unspeakable labours upon those unfortunate enough to be below.

The pointer-cairn that marked the proximity of Grazhnibad was made even more unremarkable than it already had been by the leaf-litter and mud that now surrounded it. In their mutual disconsolacy, both occupants of the cart almost missed the harbinger of reputed civilisation.

No sighs of relief greeted its presence; both grunted as if to acknowledge it but neither woman nor Beast betrayed any kind of feeling of happiness. When at last the track curved over the portal hill to Grazhnibad, Lord Pigpen's spirits sank even deeper, like gold in a sewer. There before them, milling around a rude barricade, were d'Appelchor's palace guards, obviously awaiting for his arrival.

Seeing no easy escape, Pigpen slouched and rolled upon the cart like its earlier contents and set his face like an ill-graced stoic.

As the barricade hove in front of them one of the Guards called out asking if he or his daughter had seen a particularly dastardly barbarian upon the road who styled himself Lord Pigpen of the Manor. Using his most inarticulate grunt, Pigpen replied in the negative. His "daughter" said nothing and attempted to instil some enthusiasm into the bullock with the whip.

Looking almost as bored as the travellers, the guards let them pass without hindrance and continued their search of the horizons for this Duke of villains.

Immediately they were beyond the cover of the first shambling dwellings of the town, Pigpen alighted from the cart mumbling perfunctory thanks and then, in a moment of rare generosity, sought something from his horse-pack as payment for the ride. Proffering a bloodstained packet to his driver, he offered her a bit of Crumpet but the woman merely looked disdainful and whipped bullock, tumbril and accompanying fetor forward.

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## FIREMEN OF THE WORLD IGNITE!

I've collected vignettes from vigneron, receipts from receptionists; I've had my pick of the finest fruits and loved them. Firemen, firebugs, firebeetles and spitfire sparklers no. It was only my eyes that ever really burned. In anticipation of freeform reactions you can at least choose some of the chemicals when you make the Molotovs but when there's a surfeit of emotion tipping the apothecary's balance you can expect une grande son et lumiere. This one's a purely positive big bang to cut through the nacht and nebel of all our unfortunate yesterdays. Astral visions for the psychics and cadastral visions for the physics.

Permanently diffracted by bent glass, I can see red and green repeated images of everything. Most of the time any common or garden object casts a shadow. Right in the here and now of a politician's maybe and a housewife's reality I can see lights, not shadows.

Somewhere there's a red sun and somewhere there's a green sun, both shining on their own private universes which I've impinged upon. Conjunction, conjunctivitis and concupiscence.

"Baby's on fire... All the instruments agree that... Her temperature's rising... But any idiot could see that" (Brian Eno - "Baby's On Fire"). Temptation sings roundly in nodes of compression, faces distorted in the harsh geometries of pain. The Ball of confusion comes full circle and rolls over you, laying you out flat on the carpet in a writhing, sweating heap. Normally brown, black and lank, hanging in hopeless christmas streamers like decorations in a tramp's hideaway. Bob Dylan is a million miles away sunk in the blues of a forgotten generation who have the job of chronicling their own passing. The great haters of money whose failure is measured by success. How did I ever get mixed up with these people. My eyes are burning with a pictured eroticism that is larger than life, larger than greed, longer than bearable and lighter than a feather. Getting blown is a function of the winds of time (corny esseffism and all) and not the vacuum of love. Just walking around is an entropic faculty of a universe that I'm unable to enter. One of the few times that the little balck duck doesn't make the grade. Wheezing in miasma, as if a cough will bring recognition of the subconscious efforts that keep the heart pumping and the jive-circuits jumping.

How many hours is it before the holy strobe-lamp is turned off? How many hours spent worshipping at Pan's peripatetic altar? A portable feast, a one man festival wrought from self-delusion.

Wake up in the shower. Exhausted, shaking, bleeding, lurching into a new day. Tattooed on the inside.

## BALLERINAS OF THE WORLD INCITE! (To Revolution: The Great Pirouette)

To put a fine point on this emotion, it burns on the wire, hot and sweet like incense. Turn the wire several times and it forms a coil, turned in on itself and double-crossed, it becomes a double helix. Such are the complexities of this thing called love.

Some love cutesy dragons, some love media intangibles and some love The Justified Ancients of Mu-Mu. Trivialists would already have picked the fact that the original Justified ones, or the 'JAMS' were written of in Wilson & Shea's "Illuminatus" series and are immortalised in the time-honoured expression - "Kick out the JAMS motherfuckers!".

The second-time-around JAMS of whom I write (although there's nothing to say that they weren't originals) are King Boy Hard and Rock Man Rock, two premier exponents of the complementary arts of 'rapping' and digital sound theft. On their album "1987, what the fuck is going on?" the two gents chop up little bits of other people's records and layer them over their own simple rap'n'rhythm tracks. They achieve some quite hilarious juxtapositions of such artists as Bo Diddley, Samantha Fox, Led Zeppelin, Acker Bilk, the Beatles, the MC5 and ABBA. As you would doubtless realise, if you borrow something without permission from the original owner then the action is generally regarded as

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theft. Several people, acting collectively as the British Phonographic Industry (BPI), have regarded the JAMS' actions as theft and have sued accordingly. Thus the JAMS album has been withdrawn from the market and replaced by a 12" single entitled "1987 - The Edits". The single contains only the original material from the album, which isn't much, and which is correspondingly less funny. If you ever get the chance to hear the JAMS original album, then you should listen to them just once for the experience. Even now they are an endangered species.

Strangely, the JAMS are not unique. My procurer at the Dada Records shop in the city recently made me aware of a US rock group (the JAMS being British) named Culturecide who mangle US icons of rock'n'roll. Their technique is basically to sing along with the original record whilst mixing down their original voices and mixing in some of their own instrumentation. Their version of Pat Benatar's "Love is a Battlefield" is mutated into "Love is a Cattle-Prod" - complete with appropriate zzzap sound effects. Culturecide sound self-consciously nerdy and a lot less professional than the JAMS but they are still worth a laugh.

One should also make mention of Sonic Youth's remake and remodel of Madonna's "Into The Groove". The group renamed themselves Ciccone Youth for the exercise - Ciccone being Madonna's surname - and set about "punking-up" this dance-hall classic. It's not intrinsically funny but it annoys the hell out of Madonna fans.

#### SENTIENTS OF THE WORLD COITE!



Yours with lots of love,

Mr Warner XXX

DIACRITICALS AREN'T THE END OF IT

ML: The TSW collective does not believe that Michael Hailstone, editor of The Matalan Rave and author of a letter published elsewhere in this issue, is accurately described in the following correspondence.

ENGLISH AS SHE IS SED 2  
collecting reformed spell Roja Wadael  
have collected ove P.O. Box 273,  
proposed by Fitzroy 3065  
3/12/86  
-oms, so here follows  
to be fair.

Dí Naicai,  
I thât dhaet sins iur intú speling rifâm, iú mait apryshyeit a leta ritân  
in a stail dhaet shoez wot Ingglisch mait by laic if it wâ complytly aend consistent-  
ly rifâmd, tú dhâ pâint dhaet evrything wâ spelt in a simpal aend yzy-tû-ryd fonetic-  
maenâ. Wai, I asc, oenly dú haf dhâ job, wen wy cud meic Ingglisch complytly lojical.  
Wai indyd....  
rave, but wâ  
systems), but wâ  
for Dolton Edwards's in

Dear Roja Wadael - I saw your letter in Michael Hailstone's Matalan Rave.

12/11/1987

Michael has a tic about diacritical marks because he is not a good typist and does not have a secretary. You seem to be doing alright - I suppose you have some good golfballs. I don't want a typewriter at all - I find I can manage happily in long hand but I think what Michael needs is an electronic typewriter not an IBM golfball. He'll never get enough golfballs. I read in New Scientist once that someone had a touch sensitive five finger typewriter that would do the trick. Five finger typing would relieve RSI too. The world is hooked on QWERTYLOOP though and the touch sensitive typewriters are not coming through. They should be cheap. Have you come across any?

I'll have a go at building one for Michael. I don't know any electronics but plan to take a course at the local TAFE (ML: Technical And Further Education, College of) next year.

Do tell me something about yourself.

All the Best.

There followed a letter of reply, in which Roja...

1. Explained the phonetic system he had been using in his letter to The Matalan Rave, and gave the alphabet from which it had been derived.
2. Enquired as to what might a 'five finger typewriter' be, and how this device might help relieve RSI.
3. Enquired as to how he'd ended up receiving a letter from 'J.P. Kaemmerer' in the first place. "Who is this guy," Roja recalls thinking at the time. "We haven't even been formally introduced but he wants me to tell him something about myself." Eventually, in the best traditions of fannish glasnost, Roja bit the bullet and told JP something about himself - that his name is really Roger Weddall. Read on...

Dear Roger Quertylp - Thanks for your letter. I saw MR13 and locced every

24/11/1987

letter before it went out of my hands. I know Michael's problems. Diacriticals aren't the end of it, they are only the beginning. He knows something, I believe, of 21 modern languages, and wants to be able to type in all of them. He should also (as I do) collect phonetic alphabets. (Thanks greatly for yours.) He should buy a word processor but that still won't get him all the alphabets he wants. I manage happily writing in pencil and sticking to Indo European but Michael would be printing in Chinese if he only could set the print. He is a print freak. I am not.



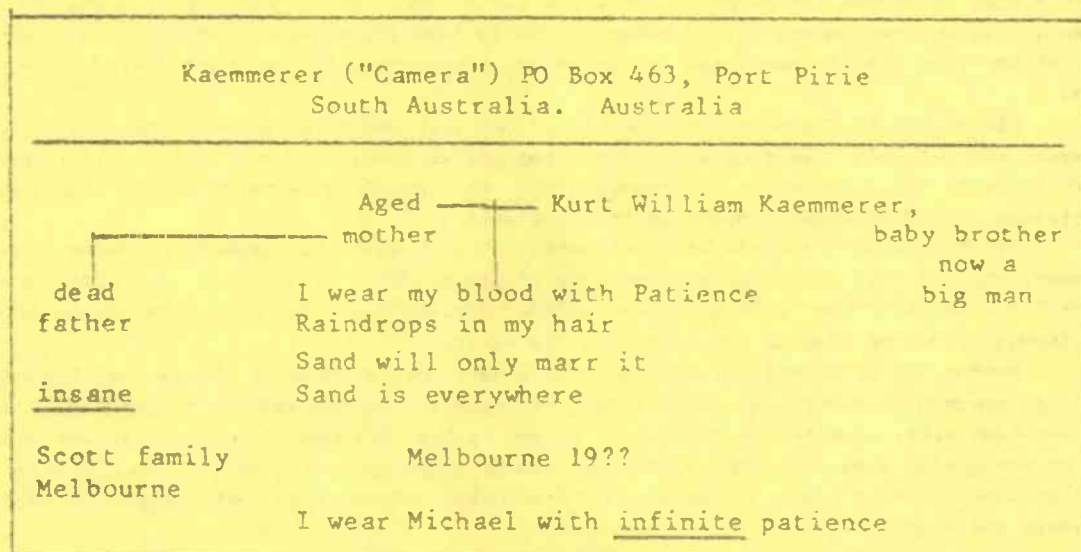
As to the touch sensitive five finger typewriter I think I can build one. I plan to take Industrial Electronics at the Port Pirie TAFE next year and will elect to build one as an exercise. Mainly you need materials and tools. Pirie has Dick Smith (Tandy agent) so we are well supplied. Materials are cheap, one of my friends is an unemployed electronics engineer, I have time on my hands, we'll see.

Otherwise Michael will not get off IBM electronic typewriters with golfballs. He will buy more and more golfballs and will lose them. (Have you come across his singularity list? Michael has the belief that some things get lost or mislaid but that some things cease to exist (as will matter going into a black hole). He believes that things in ordinary life cease to exist. He doesn't know how. Perhaps the space around us has very small black holes floating around in it. Anyway, he keeps a list of things in his life which have ceased to exist. This is not a list of things he has lost or mislaid. Well, whatever Michael does with golfballs he will lose some of them and some will cease to exist. If he wants 21 modern languages he cannot have enough golfballs. So I think touch sensitive with a printed output. I want to have a try at it. Five finger typing which is fast enough for all practical purposes and is better than QWERTYUP will relieve RSI too. The things should be mass produced and IBM busted.

As to Harry Lindgren's SRI, Harry is behind the times. He expects diacriticals to come. I can't see why not use them now. I will write little Os over letters if they are helpful. I don't want to type things. I am interested in how you write pronunciations of English words. I am especially interested in American and Canadian accents which are very complex and varied. I want to be able to write them now. Harry thinks that someday we will be able to write them but that for now we must stick to SRI and not attempt to write or print regional variations. Well I will write or print them now. I'll use phonetic alphabets but I suggest that it can be done without any special typeface. Accept SRI, accept any reasonable reform of consonants, don't worry about spelling accuracy as you a riting phonetik shothand now. Not in sum future. Ah won't now. Ah hev it now. Lik lles. Ah will write twae vowels if a twae vowel combination exists and I will writ thrae vowels if ther aaant twae that will do. It isn't difficult and it is ezy to red. I will use diacriticals if ah want to uz dicriticals.

Ah finish with a Canbra graffiti: This is not the Cisten Chapl.

All the best,



## AND THE SHIP SAILS ON...

Nick Stathopoulos

Most of the replies to my previous letter concerned my claim that the Titanic broke in two before she completely sank. How do I know, and why? Although eyewitness accounts conflict, by examining the testimony given at the two official hearings held soon after the disaster, some interesting, and quite definite, conclusions can be drawn. Of the twenty eyewitness accounts submitted as evidence, sixteen had notable similarity. For instance; according to Quartermaster Bright, who was in the last boat to leave the Titanic, "the ship broke in two, the after part briefly righted itself, then plunged down." Thomas Ranger, a greaser, stated that, "the forward end seemed to break off; the after part came back on an even keel, then turned up and went down steadily." Mrs Arthur Ryerson testified that, "the Titanic suddenly began sinking rapidly, took a plunge toward the bow; then two forward funnels seemed to lean. Then she seemed to break in half as if cut with a knife, and as the bow went under, the lights went out. The stern stood up for several minutes, then that too plunged down."

The other thirteen testimonials are much the same, as are the well known reports by survivors, Jack Thayer and Dick Williams. They did not testify, but maintained the ship broke in two despite contrary reports and caveats placed upon their reports due to their youth.

But why did the Titanic break in half? Apart from the obvious reply that as the Titanic sank, she suffered stresses beyond those she was constructed to withstand, most eyewitnesses who testified to the ship's breakage, also claimed that it happened between the third and fourth funnels. An expansion joint, designed to allow for the expansion and contraction of the hull, was located between the funnels. Certainly a major point of weakness. Further, the reciprocating steam engines and turbines were located in this area. The explosions which occurred as water rushed into the compartments housing the steam engines and turbines must have also contributed to the ship breaking in two.

Although the claims that the Titanic sank intact were subsequently upheld (after all, the image of the upended Titanic, sliding under in one dramatic plunge, makes far better mythology) the discovery of the vessel torn asunder at the expansion joint, seems to corroborate those eyewitnesses who claimed the ship broke in two before she went down.

Now, what of raising the Titanic? It seems the Titanic (or bits of her) may come up sooner than anybody imagined. Only days after I posted off my last letter to ISW, Jack Grimm, a Texas oil millionaire and failed Titanic explorer, announced plans to descend to the wreck and retrieve artifacts for sale to the highest bidder in an attempt to defray the costs of his bids to locate the liner. In fact, his claim of ownership over the wreck derives from the amount of money spent over the years in his vain search.

More interesting still is the latest attempt to raise the vessel by Douglas Woolley. To this end he recently auctioned his rights to the vessel, to collect enough money to raise her. Woolley claims he became the owner of the wreck two decades ago by just claiming it. He placed notices in various newspapers giving other claimants twenty one days to object to his claims. Nobody at the time came forward, so, as far as he is concerned (and certain lawyers) the claim stands.

His rights to the wreck were auctioned off last month for seventy thousand pounds. The new owner, who put only five thousand six hundred pounds down, will get it back with interest if Woolley fails to raise the wreck by October 1988. Woolley plans to raise bits of the Titanic with a preposterous method of drawing hydrogen from sea water.

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Meanwhile, Dr Robert Ballard, who has always been mindful of the immense tragedy that lay behind his successful expedition, desperately implores the United Nations to turn the wreck into a world heritage site. Further, a resolution passed by the US House of Representatives urges that the wreck be designated a maritime memorial protected by international treaty. I had previously suggested that the site could be turned into a memorial/tourist site, with groups being taken down to observe the wreck.

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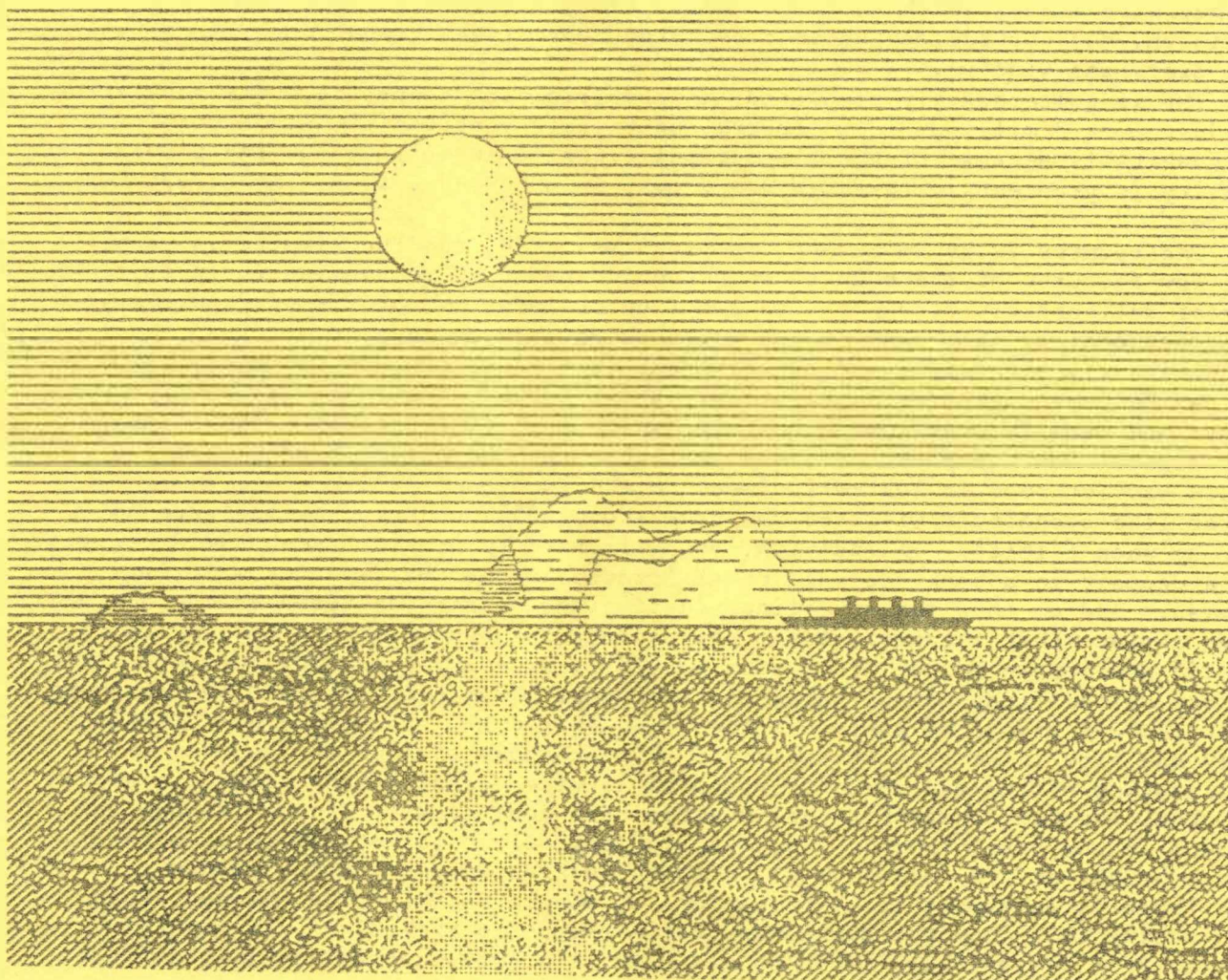


I think Tony is quite correct to say that tour operators, "can by no means be relied upon to conduct themselves with suitable humility and devoutness at this sepulchre." True. However, a precedent exists in the Arizona monument in Pearl Harbour, Oahu. A concrete memorial was built atop the bridge of the USS Arizona, sunk during the attack of December 7, 1941. The monument exists as a tourist site without a hint of bad taste or exploitation. If the same attitude as that maintained by the caretakers of the Arizona Memorial can be extended to a Titanic memorial, then I'm certain the wishes of the survivors, Ballard, and the memory of those who perished on that icy April night in 1912 will be well served.

At present the fate of the Titanic's remains continues to be a source of uncertainty. In 'A Night To Remember', Walter Lord concluded that, "it is a rash man indeed who would set himself up as final arbiter on everything that happened the incredible night the Titanic went down." So it must also stand when discussing her possible raising. Remember, at no time have I disputed the possibility of raising the hulk.

As for the mitigating claim made by Tony that his article was written before the full extent of the Titanic's condition was known, it is unreservedly accepted. But if the mitigating reasons for his article's failings are accepted, he must in turn be prepared to accept criticism or correction. I have only updated and amended the accuracy of his original article - unlike Tony, I didn't write an article before all the facts were known, or allow it to go to print when subsequent discoveries rendered it obsolete...

25/5/1987



MARK: Well, actually, it wasn't Tony who allowed 'Necrophilia Rules - OK?' to go to print... It was, believe it or not, the editors of this august zine. We were aware of the subsequent discoveries by Ballard but felt that Tony's piece stood in its own right as an excellent piece of writing. Given the rapidly changing situation with the Titanic, as Nick himself acknowledges above, anything written about it can date, in some respects, quite rapidly. We felt that publishing the date of composition at the conclusion of 'Necrophilia', as we have done above for Nick, would be sufficient. We still do.



Buai is ever present. It is a nut which the locals almost universally chew, turning the inside of their mouths, and subsequently the pavement, cars, people around them, and the sides of buildings, red. The custom is to let the juices build up inside your mouth, and then spit them out over whatever, or whoever, happens to be closest. The stains are almost impossible to remove - I have given up trying to clean one pair of shorts.

## LIFE BEHIND THE BUAI CURTAIN

DELSON

Papua New Guinea is one of Australia's closest neighbours. In fact, if the PNG government can be believed, there are parts of Torres Strait which sort of belong to both countries, so we overlap a bit.

Life in PNG is unlike life in Australia, however. The crime rate is considerably higher, and the first thing that a visitor will notice is the high barbed wire fences which surround nearly every property in Port Moresby. In addition, most houses and units have large heavy steel grates covering all of the doors and windows.

PNG is quite heavily populated, in comparison to Australia. The population is just over 3 million, in a country where large portions of land are uninhabitable because of their geography (coastal swamps, etc). The population density is greatest in the Highlands, away from Moresby, where the climate is cooler.

The country is by no means a tropical paradise, and the climate is one of the few features of the country which would endear it to tourists. In fact PNG almost deliberately strangles its own tourist industry, by imposing severe visa restrictions, pricing land to the point where staying in a hotel is prohibitively expensive, and building one is even worse. On the cheap, expect to pay K350 per week for a small flat, about A\$500. The other option is the rarer and usually overflowing hostels, which will cost between A\$30 and A\$150 per night. Don't expect to find a youth hostel. Double or treble what you would pay for food in Australia (meat in PNG is around A\$20 per kg, something rarer like stonefruit will set you back about A\$50 per kg, cherries were A\$120 per kg when I left). In addition, you will need to provide about A\$450 per week as a deposit in a bank account, or as 'proven income' before they will give you a visa. Add to this the stumbling, inefficient melanesian bureaucracy, and you have a place that is aggravating, unpleasant, and nearly impossible to visit.

If you happen to be unfortunate enough to have a job in PNG, the bureaucracy is one of the first things which will hit you. I am not a racist, but it seems that certain of the melanesian tribes (though not all of them) are particularly lazy and slow in getting things done. Expect banks to shut at 2pm, the immigration office and some other public service organisations wind down about 12 noon, and don't expect to get any business done at all between 12 noon and 1.30pm in any case (lunch). Papuans, in fact, often do not return from their lunch break, so try to get anything that needs doing done before midday.

There is an almost infinite variety of people in PNG. The Chimbus, short and stocky folk from the Highlands, are a race unto themselves, as are the tall Tolais from New Britain. 'Chimbu' is used as a generic term for anybody that comes from the Highlands, although it really only applies to those from the Central Highlands. In addition to the Chimbu, there are people from the East and West Highlands and the Engans.

Tribal fighting is still common in the highlands, as are many of the old customs throughout PNG. 'Bride Price', for instance, is the system where a young man buys his wife from her father, and the going rates are often set by business people as well as villagers for their daughters well before they are of marriageable age, usually several thousand dollars. A man may buy as many wives

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as the custom of his tribe allows, but adultery is a strict no-no, and can land you in jail for a long time.

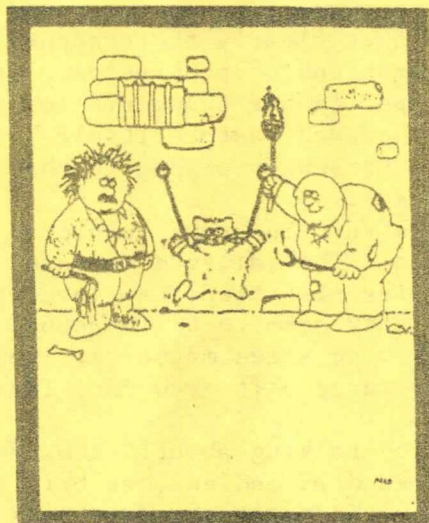
PNG has not really progressed much in the 12 years since independence. Living standards are lower, unemployment is higher, and the government faces many other problems. One of these is the electoral system. There are about thirty political parties, and any party wishing to form government must curry the favour of many smaller ones, usually by handing out ministerial portfolios. Most politicians are corrupt, it would seem (there are stories in the paper each day of how one minister or the other has defrauded the government), and no government has ever run its full term, although there are no early elections (the parties just rearrange themselves on the floor of parliament).

Life in PNG has its lighter side at times. I had this collection of lizards at my unit, including one huge one called 'Godzilla'. They are very inquisitive creatures, unlike the shy skinks you see in Australia, and often sat around watching as I worked outside. There are also geckos by the hundred, which is a good thing as they keep the mosquito population down.

Mosquitoes in PNG carry knives and forks, and eat people. You will have heard all the rest of the stories so I will not expand further on them. It's a bit hard to swat one of the buggers when it has both your arms pinned down.

All in all, it was not a pleasant experience, and not one that I would recommend to others. There are far better and cheaper places to get a holiday, and if you must work in a third world country, I recommend Great Britain.

28th December 1987



Write or we torture the cat

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# IDYLL AT MAST HEAD CAMP

by

Count Fogo Von Slack

Nature had not been 'all over ransacked', but Buffalo Bill and his ilk were soon to do a splendid job. In 1867-8, in seventeen months, Cody slew 4,280 beasts to feed construction crews on the Kansas Pacific Railroad. Others were slaughtered for hides, for sport, or for their tongues alone. An estimated sixty million animals had for millenia lived in balance with Sioux hunters. Only a determined effort in the present century has saved the remainder. But the tide has ebbed for the last time; pools of Bison bison stagnate now in the government reserves.

The passenger pigeon was even less fortunate. Long-winged and elegant, their large flight muscles rendered them attractive as an item of cuisine. Their apparently limitless population was netted and shot by the million. In the 1880's it was realised that the pigeon was declining fast. Fast turned out to be catastrophic. One nesting in 1878 was so large that three million birds passed through the hands of a single dealer; yet 1889 saw the last undisputed wild record; and 1914 the death of the final individual in captivity. Laws were enacted to protect the species, characteristically when there where none left to protect. Why was their disappearance so swift? When their numbers fell, hunting and dealing should have become unprofitable. Why did not a reduced population recover? The nestings and migrations of the passenger pigeon were so vast that clearly the creature gained some evolutionary advantage from immense concentrations of population. It is a well known biological fact that a given species has a numeric lower limit. If a natural population falls below this it cannot restore itself. The most likely supposition in the case of the passenger pigeon is that this limit was much higher than usual, and was passed.

Fed by Cody, the construction crews completed the wiring up of the kitten United States of America. The railroad reached the west coast at San Francisco in 1869. "How the play of kittens can inspire us! They are quick, supple, inquisitive; at times they seem to be in actual pain from a pressure of vitality. In due course it grew to sleek maturity. But alas! it became infected with the virus of insurance - it grew fat, lazy, disinterested; its balls withered."

"What on earth are you talking about?" demanded the Countess. They were walking along a slice of sand as endless, as brilliant, almost as uncluttered as a Devonian beach. Transparent waves silkily crumpled and swished at their feet.

"America! That genius, that mountebank, that prima donna, that scholar, guru, demagogue - that mother-fucker, that power among nations!" (The Count had always admired America.)

"I thought you said it was a tom cat with no balls."

"Well ... I was completing a literary figure. It is that too, in millions of its citizens, like Australia, like Europe. I am letting America speak for western civilisation, I suppose. These citizens, frightened to go to the lavatory without insuring their bums against toilet paper abrasion, have abdicated all responsibility for self, have become fat, boring, intimidated wimps. Insurance salesmen are the AIDS viruses of our society, destroying our self-reliance system..."

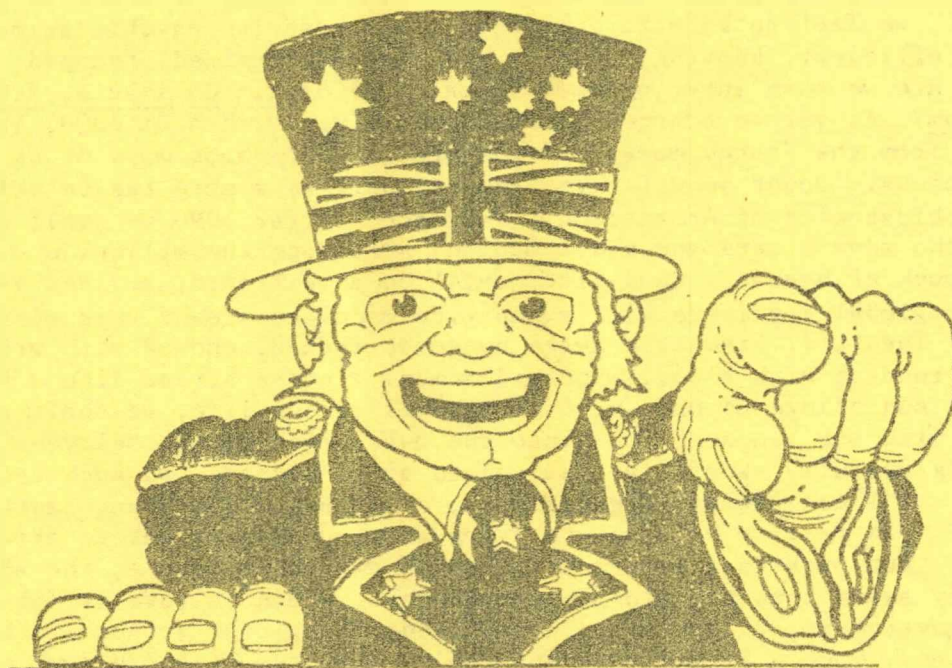
"Yes, yes, darling. You have told me many times. But don't put that in your manuscript. People will be bored. I just thought that your cat image was a little extravagant, a bit overblown."

"Do you think so? No, oh no, not at all." The Count had been rather pleased with it.

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"Yes, and over-simplified. First you say America has become nothing but a gelded cat, then you tell me it is a genius, a mountebank, a guru and Heaven knows what else. You must say what you mean."



"But the purpose of imagery in literature is to invoke a feeling, atmosphere, an emotional response to a subject. It is to give it life. Some licence is permissible. The intelligent reader is capable of making allowances for minor factual inconsistencies that may creep into an otherwise excellent metaphor. I must say, I rather liked the idea of railways growing like nerves."

"And from there you arrive at a cat with no balls, and I don't think America is like a cat with no balls."

"Well, neither do I really. Did I actually say that?"

"You did."

"Oh." The Count was crestfallen.

A silver gull skimmed above the waves, untroubled by considerations of literature.

"Never mind dear. Even geniuses make little mistakes."

"Genii," said the pedantic Count. But he was mollified. Such remarks kept oiled a marriage of extreme duration in these days of planned obsolescence and paper plates.

Moreover the Countess agreed completely with her consort's essential point, that the 1980s bear scant relation in spirit to the mid nineteenth century. Oh, superficially perhaps. But if they were exploratory it was exploration of the world out there, of the Wild West, of the Dark Continent, and a growing aspiration to the poles; but we, since Joy inaugurated the Age of Narcissism, we explore little but our own psychic entrails, like augurs performing hara kiri in the hopes of finding the secret of the universe in the steamy convolutions of our personal plumbing. And if Melville's generation was expectant, it was of a better world, of a more perfect humanity; while we expect nuclear bombs, catastrophes of genetic engineering, the death rattle of religious aspiration gone cracked (since Dr Timothy Leary inaugurated the Age of Aquarius and set the final seal upon the misunderstanding of Buddhism, the only religion that complements science rather than contradicts it).

("Darling, Leary did not inaugurate the Age of Aquarius, he just jumped on the bandwagon.")

"Yes, I know, but literary form ... a nice parallel ..."

"A false parallel. You parallel Leary with Dr Joy, which is ridiculous. Joy was a giant. Leary an idiot."

"You are right of course, my Poppy. The lysergic acid diethylamide experience alters perception not reality. Leary was misled by its naked power. Not so Huxley, and Russell certainly would not have been, though I never heard of him trying the stuff.")

Said Melville: "The world is as young today..." Our world, by contrast, we feel to be mature, perhaps even past its psychic prime: at work potent, efficient, knowing; at play frenzied, determined, trapped; overall - jaded. Are we then entering some racial mode of fin de siècle, fin de millenium? As yet we scarcely concern ourselves with A.D. 2000, it is much too distant from the frothy moment of the present. Perhaps many of us subconsciously doubt we will ever see it, believe a mere twelve years ample time for the blossoming of Armageddon. Patience! After 1990 we shall be obliged to endure the advertisers and media maniacs shredding the millenium over and over, like a pack of hyenas a dead lion, until on an extraordinary New Year's Eve a party of global magnitude will sweep with midnight around this ever-astonishing planet. Then will Fremantle awake hungover indeed, choked with wreckage, its gutters running with blood, wine and semen. In the street like a battlefield, when the sun stings us once more to a semblance of life, we shall pry up our eyelids with our fingers, look into the awful eyes of our beloveds, and shake our heads ruefully, woefully, exalted to stand astride two such centuries.

("I use 'stand' figuratively, of course," the Count hastened to explain. "In reality we shall be lying down, unable as yet to arise.")

But back to the present. Though we, the literate, the educated, are perfectly aware that the global sea-change of human culture is far advanced, global government has yet to be formalised, the global economy to be streamlined, made a little more equitable, the loss of individual nations to be acknowledged as already accomplished - and Earth's manned expedition to Mars has yet to be launched.

We live at a time when knowledge appears to be limitless, all mysteries to have been resolved, all maps completed. I do not of course mean personal knowledge, but available knowledge. We are divided into the few who frequent the libraries of global science and scholarship, and the many who, having never learnt to deal with knowledge and therefore generally professing to despise it, do not. That, of course, is their problem.

"My love, you must not be conceited."

The Count assumed an air of exaggerated mystification. They sat now on a sand shelf in a shallow cave like the apse of a church. Here they were sheltered from the blast of the midday sun. The sea had planed the top of the beach to a depth of several feet, stopping just short of where they sat upon the old elevation. Just above the swill of languid waves an oystercatcher methodically probed the sand for tiny transparent crustaceans, leaving behind an extensive pattern of footprints and holes.

"My Heart, you continually suggest your own - one can only call it - omniscience. People don't want to read such stuff."

"Rubbish! I deliberately acknowledge that my understanding, my scholarship is woefully imperfect."

"Yes, but the tone is all wrong - yours is imperfect, but everyone else's much more so."

"Not at all, not at all!"

"Well they won't let you get away with it. If this discourse or whatever it is is published at all it will attract an absolute flood of criticism."

"Heart of my heart, do you think I don't know that? Do you think I care? Consider what we must understand by 'criticism' in this context. Though those who write LoCs to fanzines commenting upon articles that have appeared fondly imagine that they are indulging in literary criticism, this is in fact rarely the case. Literary criticism, properly, is above all balanced discussion. Criticism as it manifests itself in LoCs is all too often criticism in the purely pejorative sense. The LoC writer will take an article, and - about what is accurate, what is interesting, what is worthy therein, he will maintain a thunderous silence; yet if he can find an oversight or some minor



folly, he will pounce upon it in a whimpering fit of destructive ecstasy; and if he can find an error of fact - well, his Christmas has come - in stentorian tones, not untainted with dispraise and contempt, from his pinnacle of superior knowledge he can allow himself publicly to correct the author and to bask in the resulting public accolade (largely imaginary, I should think) to his own cleverness.

"There is possibly some truth in what you say. But you shouldn't be too hard on them - most of them do not have your years and Lebenserfahrung."

The Count preened a little. "Yes, I know. But woe betide the author who ventures into disquisition upon visionary material - as perhaps this might be considered. Visions of life, of the world and its parts, are our most cherished possessions. Should the author's vision encroach upon the vision of his reader, then indeed do the demons of outrage set bellows to the fires beneath their fuming crucibles of vitriol."

The Countess was struck by a sudden misgiving. "You do not propose to include this aside in your manuscript, I hope?"

"I certainly do. Why should not our ever-eager 'critics' be told to pull their socks up?"

"You'll win no friends ... and probably influence nobody."

"I am indifferent to such restricted minds. Many will read my work with interest and enjoyment."

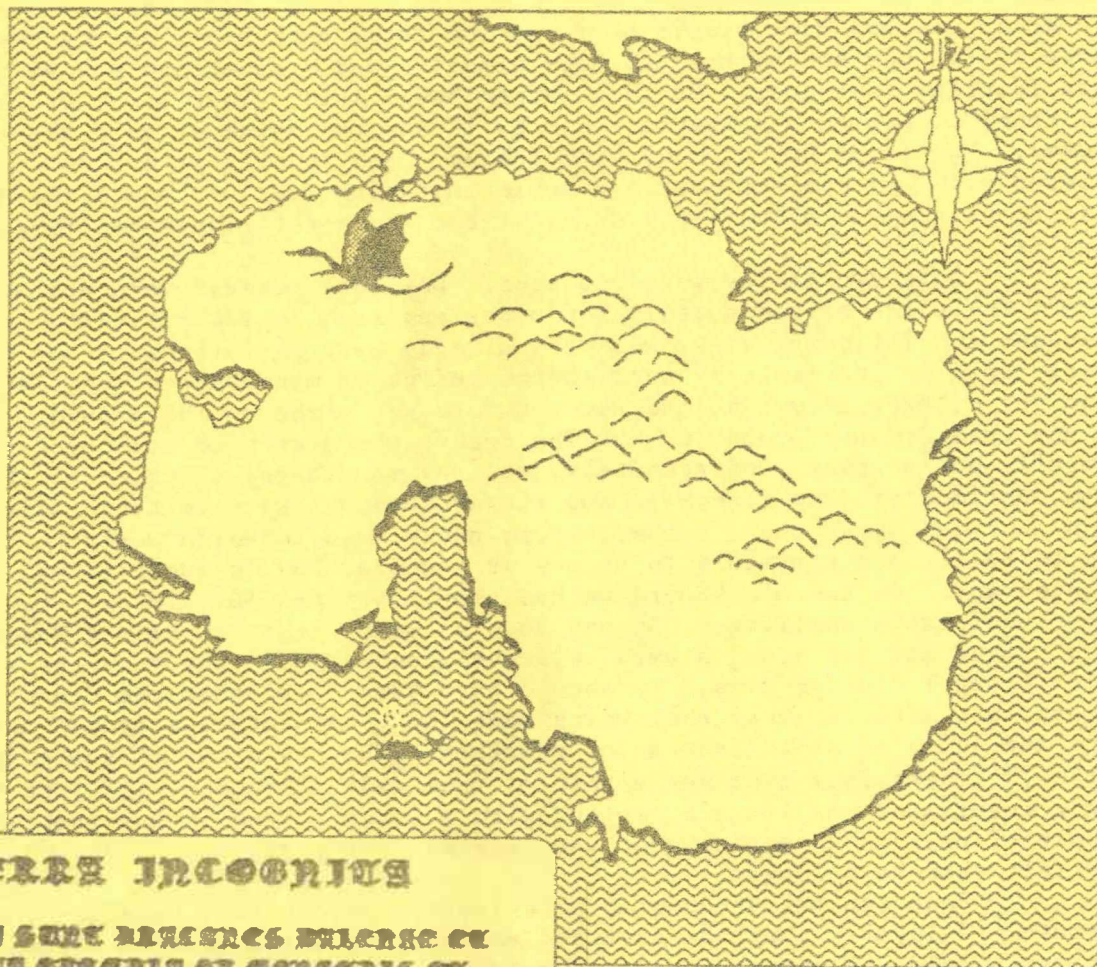
"How can you be sure? Will they LoC, or phone and tell you?"

"I doubt it. They don't usually."

"Then why do you expend such effort? Surely it is like throwing ideas down a well so deep you can hardly hear the splash."

"Arrogance, my Poppy, pure arrogance." A few moments later he said, "Do you want to hear about maps? I have some important things to say about maps next."

"I love maps."



TERRE INCOGNITE

THE GREAT UNKNOWN  
THE GREAT UNKNOWN  
THE GREAT UNKNOWN  
THE GREAT UNKNOWN  
THE GREAT UNKNOWN

So did the Count. In his distant childhood in Schloss Ameisenhaufen he had collected all he could find, and illuminated hundreds of new ones. The features he liked best were copiously reproduced in his own creations; swords at ancient battlegrounds; and most of all vast white areas containing nothing but the legends 'UNEXPLORED' and 'HERE BE DRAGONS', for who could then deny that all wonders, all enchantments might in such unknown fastnesses be encountered?

Years later the Count dined at the White House. No, he had not achieved eminence in a diplomatic career (there are those who would allow little of diplomacy in his nature); this was an hotel of the same name in Leonora, a little gold town which has scratched an existence in the Western Australian interior since the dry-blowers of the 1890's followed the greenstone belts north from Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. It dreams in the sunsets of most years amid silent open cuts and rusting machinery, to spring to life occasionally, as now, when the world gold price lifts. At such times its bars fill with grimy, tattooed drillers; one or two visiting executives of Exploration Company NL, clean and neat; prospectors, in appearance standing somewhere between the two, neither scrubbed nor wholly filthy, their trousers neither torn nor pressed, their eyes, their talk, their flying hands filled with golden dreams. The barmaids scurry through their shifts, meeting the remarks of the unwashed majority with a superior silence, or a superior wit ("Darling, come round and sit on my face." "Why, is your tongue longer than your dick?"). They are aware of their scarcity value. The publican drinks at the end of the bar, happily listening to the till.

The dining room was huge and dark. The decor a unique combination of Gold-Rush tainted with Road-House-Plastic. The ceiling was entirely hidden behind pressed tin imitating decorative plasterwork. Two fans imported from a movie of Singapore before it fell to the Japanese performed their high aristocratic circling, but the real cooling was done by a pair of air-conditioning machines, Japanese invaders even here, stuck half way as they climbed through the windows. Bearing glasses that glinted in the subdued light, two monstrous and dark pieces of furniture faced each other across the arena: a three-tiered whatnot as tall as Fogo himself, and a sideboard not an inch less than fourteen feet long. Of this latter Basil said, "That'll be worth more than the hotel". A patent exaggeration - Basil saw the shine of gold wherever he looked. The floor was crowded with tables, each covered with a red cloth and crowded with white place mats - plastic imitating fabric - and a slender glass vase containing an imitation red rose. But the hotel people had forgotten the candles.

Only two tables were occupied. Drillers perhaps were not welcomed here? The place waited quietly for occasions such as the official opening of Foxqueen the following week, when the already busy facilities of the town would be strained to the limit by an airborne influx of moneybags and cleverclogs from the distant city, who had never before set sight on the ground, and never in any case did any proper work. The Count, who didn't do much proper work himself, but neither, unfortunately, was any moneybags, chuckled at these bar room sentiments. But moneybags and cleverclogs - they were not drillers' words; rich cunt and smart cunt, rather. Fogo never knew to which world he belonged. Not to Basil, and certainly to no one in Leonora, had he admitted his aristocracy. On the blackboard he had simply written 'Basil-Fogo' to register their pool table challenge. It had been a lucky night, or rather Basil was a good player and the Count stayed relatively sober, for they took the table and held it until closing time. It should have been clear that the Count was no expert, but after a lucky shot which sent the ball into its pocket a round, loud and jolly concrete contractor remarked, "There's a bit of shark in the old fellow." Thereafter whenever either of them made a blunder, and both made many, their inebriated challengers replied with a worse. Thus it was that after a couple of days in town the Count was greeted in the street, "G'day pool shark", and felt that he belonged.

Foxqueen was Groundgrab NL's lease, subject to a Federal Court dispute. Illegally they had extended exploratory drilling over an adjacent tenement, told the owner they found nothing, bought the lease from him for a pittance, and announced a couple of million dollar ore body to the Stock



Exchange the next day. All's fair in love, war and gold exploration. The Count had been amused several years before to discover that NL meant 'No Liability'. He had bought shares in a couple of such speculative ventures, and for a while their value had increased most satisfactorily, but then they crashed. Caught napping, like many a new shareholder, Count Fogo decided to let them lie. Now indeed they were worth more than ever. He reminded himself to sell early this time, and buy again after the whole crazy system bottomed out.

Their meal over, Basil spread maps on the table to review their day's activities and plan the morrow. Modern prospecting was vastly different than the Count imagined. They went into no unexplored areas - he had the impression there were none! - they hardly even looked for gold, although Basil occasionally broke a stone with his hammer. They carried no metal detector - "Those blokes aren't for real," said Basil. "They scratch and scratch and sometimes turn up a little one. They'd be better off on the dole - most of them are. Now if I peg a bit of ground here and a bit there, next to these companies leases, and they find their ore body's going my way, well, then I sell it for the big quid but retain a ten-twenty per cent interest. I can't lose. If it's developed, if it becomes a mine - the big house by the river, the swimming pool, the spa, huge parties..." His eyes shone, and though they looked keenly into the Count's, they somehow also looked further, into vast distances, into the 'UNEXPLORED'.

But there was no 'UNEXPLORED' on the maps; rather a network of overlapping rectangles that were prospecting leases, current, lapsed and ancient. Out on the ground itself in the heat, among the mulga and saltbush, they came across low, fat, scoured posts seventy and eighty years old, on some of which incised numbers might with difficulty be read. Or it might be slender modern pegs with rags of flagging tape and adjacent alignment trenches slowly filling with washed earth. Shoulder to shoulder with these they drove in their own to claim the area next door. Even here, reflected the Count, hundreds of miles from the Labyrinth, they pushed and jostled, in enterprise at least, against their fellow men.

No, there is no longer any 'UNEXPLORED'. Basil and Count Fogo used maps that were a maze of lines, names, features - all known, reported, recorded. The large companies used pastiches of aerial colour photographs, magnetic anomaly maps and Gautama knows what else to see into the very bowels of the landscape. Beneath the hot electric eyes of satellites the last pools of 'UNEXPLORED' have evaporated, and with them all the lost cities, mad kings, dragons living on borrowed time in lost worlds, El Dorado, Lassiter's Reef - all gone. Mysteries, after all, need somewhere to lurk.

The Earth is mapped, so is the moon, so is Mars - and on this latter globe the twin cities of Helium, the beautiful, ghastly Valley Dor, Thark, Warhoon, the dread River Iss, have been mapped out of existence. Of course the human mind is tough, subtle, devious and a master of self-deception. We still in dream wander the dead sea bottoms with John Carter and Dejah Thoris. Who, indeed, even before the Viking landers, believed in the physical existence of those silent watchers above the streets of Manator, and those mortal games of jetan? Yet we had not seen the photographs of red rocky ground, so like the gibber plains of central Australia - we had not seen, we did not know that there is no ochre moss.

We have mapped Mars, Venus, the solar system, the universe. There are details to be filled in, but the projection has been calculated and the grid-lines drawn to the theoretical limits of space-time. We have mapped history, human and geological. We know when the Earth was born, we know when a strange new biochemical process began to exhale an oxygen atmosphere.

We have X-rayed and CAT-scanned the physical brain, we have probed the structure of the nexus with nuclear magnetic resonance and auto radiography; and Dr Joy, like a scouting bee, led armies to the nectar of mystery that bedews the dark forests of the mind; now we find ourselves enswarmed, plundered, every friend, every associate a snuffling pop psychologist. ("Oh, Love, you exaggerate grotesquely!" "Do you think so?") The mind itself is a map - of ourselves, our lives, exterior reality. Now we have the curious phenomenon of the map trying to map itself. Small wonder the thunderheads swell and mutter in our psychic sky, to blaze and crash with bolts of confusion.

We feel as if everything is known. I have suggested that at work we are potent, efficient and knowing. Certainly. Many of us work almost with fury, enjoying the exercise of these qualities, burying ourselves in the task of the moment, in an attempt to forget greater troubles. And at play: 'frenzied, determined, trapped'. When the Black Death ravaged Europe in the mid fourteenth century, killing one person in three without regard to wealth or rank, damaging social and economic organisation, robbing the individual of psychic equilibrium and signally disturbing the all-important medieval kinship with God, large sections of the community took refuge in frantic gaiety. In parts of France festivals, games, tournaments and dancing never ceased:

The standards of society were relaxed; debauchery was common; thrift and continency forgotten; the sacred rule of property ignored; the ties of family and friendship denied; let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.<sup>9</sup>

Possibly we have less cause for anxiety than the Black Death, yet how like is our response!

"Oh really! It's an outrageous comparison. What a bird of ill omen you are!"

"I don't think so at all."

"We live in Perth, my Heart, not Berlin. You are an old crow."

"The world has shrunk to the size of an apple, a golf ball, a snail's egg. You in common with most have your head in the sand, don't wish to see the nature of our time and society," responded the Count, unconsciously lifting his skinny legs and walking like a bird, albeit more of an egret than a crow. "But I'm not talking about the nuclear threat, or the possible decline of the global ecosystem into terminal putrescence. Listen..."

"In my characterisation of 1980's man (OK and woman) at play (at work too, for that matter) the key idea is 'trapped'. The universe is our prison cell. Why? Because it has become so crushingly familiar. We feel as if we know every stone, every mark on the wall, every sound that can reach us, every angle and shade of the light that will visit through the high barred window. I love knowledge, I love maps, but being human thank Gautama I can also hate them. Newspapers, TV, the cinema pour, gush and dribble an insane stew of fact and fiction upon the common man until he feels he is drowning like Richard the Raker in a cesspool. The educated press the off button, then go to libraries or the more intelligent magazines for real information, but their plight is hardly less wretched. We are information Midases. For lack of mystery, for the pain of being streetwise (revolting mongrel word!), the muddy-minded embrace the occult and other idiocies. For the truly rational is there any escape?

"Imagine my joy when I discovered Gödel's proof that the completeness of knowledge is a complete illusion! I shrieked with delight; I hurled my hat in the air, it spun like a space station or a bone, its ostrich plume catching the light of dying day; I leapt myself, clicked my heels, flapped my arms like wings; landing, I embraced the nearest fellow creature - an amazed and embarrassed pool player sadly rotund before his 25th birthday, whose stubbled cheek abraded my exuberant lips -"

"Did he hit you with his cue?"

"No, no. He grinned sheepishly at his mates. Then I shouted drinks to the bar."

"No wonder we never have any money!"

The Countess noted that in his enthusiasm Fogo had leapt from beneath the open sky and sunset, and landed in a public bar, presumably that favourite local conventicle known to its staff as the Animal Bar. She noted further that the Count was unaccustomed to read in the street, particularly texts as weighty as Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem. But she held her peace.

Not only is knowledge incomplete now (the Count continued), but it is impossible that it can ever be complete. The mind, which after all is part of the universe, can never encompass that universe in its entirety. Obvious really. The gyrations of twentieth century humanity - like bugs on a pool - whip up so much froth that glimpses into the depths are rare. But mystery, thanks to Gödel's mathematics, is saved!

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(Again, the Countess noted that her consort was playing fast and loose with Gödel's Theorem, waving it like a wand of power far beyond the spheres of mathematics and logic of its strict application. Yet the magic worked, and again she held her peace. The Count, however, seemed to have foundered from the surging wave of his discovery.)

Yet the illusion that we are prisoners remains powerful (he said thoughtfully), and the threat of froth oppressive. Where are the whales of insight that shall rise to the surface of the mind? And if they do, will they meet clear sky, or a suffocating stratum of suds. If they breach, slowly to fly, mightily, improbably, can they any longer breach in flying spray or must they emerge grotesquely as from a desert of shining cloud, jostled and sucked prematurely back by cloying fragments of meringue?

The International Whaling Commission finally decided that commercial whaling should cease in 1985. But diminishing returns probably had a greater effect in sending the factory ships to the scrapyard. To Melville this would have been inconceivable. "Forty men in one ship hunting the Sperm Whale for forty-eight months think they have done extremely well, and thank God, if at last they carry home the oil of forty fish." Men could not at this rate, he believed, do much damage. Moreover:

(Whales) have two firm fortresses, which, in all human probability will for ever remain impregnable ... their Polar citadels ... in a charmed circle of everlasting December (they can) bid defiance to all pursuit from man.<sup>10</sup>

How wrong he was! In his wildest dreams he had never met Svend Foyn, never glimpsed a diesel driven whaler sliding through the fog, nor helicopters rising higher than any masthead to search the pastures of the sea, nor sonar whalefinders and whalescarers. Dreams? They would have been nightmares. Most whalemen must have loved the hunt, and - the paradox of humankind! - loved the whale. And most, confronted with the starkest evidence of threat of extinction, would have risen valiantly to the occasion and denied it to their own satisfaction (so sawmillers believe they conserve the forest; whitemen, their advent in Australia a boon to the Aboriginal). But Melville, a whaleman himself for a couple of years, had more imagination. Perhaps Foyn, the Norwegian sealing captain, firing his grenade harpoons for the first time in 1864 from a bow-mounted cannon, worried him. But a twentieth century whaling fleet he would have viewed with horror. The factory ship, about 16,000 tons, with a complement of over 500, a dozen catchers of up to 900 tons, tankers, refrigeration ships and auxiliaries constituted a fleet of more than 1,000 men. Planes, helicopters and sonar found the whales; the catchers slew, inflated and flagged them. At the end of the day the carcasses were towed to the factory ship, winched up the slipway, dissected by great machines, cooked and canned. A 100 ton blue whale in 45 minutes, half an hour for a finback. Work went on round the clock while there were whales to be processed (ugly word!). Small wonder that the Antarctic grounds, first exploited in 1904, are exhausted. Forty-one factory ships produced 3,500,000 barrels in the 1930-31 season. The 1948 season yielded over 2,000,000 barrels; 1966, 644,263. In 1967 only nine factory ships went out.

Norway and Japan continue to defy the IWC and hunt whales commercially. Iceland, Korea and other nations hunt whales for scientific purposes as permitted by the IWC, yet take far more than appears necessary and produce contemptible scientific results. That this behaviour gives these countries something of the colour of outlaws shows the coming of age of the global community, and their inescapable membership of it. Count Fogo von Slack is among the few who recognise the advanced state of development of globality - how it already governs the lives of us all. Our economy, our culture, the underlying principles of our laws - all are in 1988 global. Politicians find it easy to make themselves look ridiculous, but some tower above the rest - people like Reagan and Joh Bjelke Petersen. What gives them their appearance of egregious asininity? It is their nationalism. The most politically ignorant, the most misguided, the most determinedly self-deceived feel in their bones that today it is an utterly inappropriate and unproductive position. Hitler himself,

for all his fanaticism, recognised the integral nature of humanity's world. In the autumn of 1944 when things looked grim indeed for the Thousand Year Reich, Goebbels and others urged the Führer to utilise a new poison called tabun. Fatal in minute quantities, it could penetrate the gas masks of the time.

Hitler ... had always rejected gas warfare; but now he hinted at a situation conference in headquarters that the use of gas might stop the advance of Soviet troops. He went on with vague speculations that the West would accept gas warfare against the East because at this stage of the war the British and American governments had an interest in stopping the Russian advance. When no one at the situation conference spoke up in agreement, Hitler did not return to the subject.

Undoubtedly the generals feared the unpredictable consequences.<sup>11</sup>

The Count's underline. Hitler's generals' feared the unpredictable consequences', that is, that the gas might blow back on their own troops. Hitler's own considerations were of a far greater scope and importance: what would the rest of the world think? Because the rest of the world - the rest of the organism of which we are a part - has always to be reckoned with. Certainly Hitler was not consistent, certainly he could be as great in self-deception as anyone; but for a decade until Dunkirk he led Europe as a conductor an orchestra. He did not do it by imagining that Germany existed as some sort of unity in glorious isolation. If Joh Bjelke had a grain of Hitler's genius (or a propagandist like Goebbels) Count Fogo would have been terrified for Australia and for himself.

Yes, the International Whaling Commission, the World Gold Council, the United Nations, Union Postale Universelle, International Air Transport Association, International Order of Good Templars, World Health Organisation, International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and hundreds of other agreements, treaties and undertakings are quietly becoming more and more effective. Like all government creatures these, at their birth, represented a long gestation of popular requirement, or indeed were already in informal existence. Lacking such antecedents they could not survive. We want global community, and we are getting it. Nor will it destroy itself in nuclear fire. Those in possession of the great nuclear launch systems have too much to lose.<sup>12</sup>

The price has in part been mentioned: the puissant illusion of the completeness of knowledge. A cousin removed of this woe is the process whereby historically divergent cultures have contaminated each other. A photograph exists of Count Fogo in short velvet pants and long blond curls sitting on a cushion. He must have been four or five years old. Around that time he was given a shiny packet in which nestled strips of plasticine the colours of the rainbow. It was truly a fascinating medium. Fogo discarded the wrapper and formed a carmine railway engine, an azure tender, an emerald driver with a dab of violet cap. The colours were wonderful. Yet somehow after a couple of hours they had disappeared, and he sat puzzled and pained rolling a knobby ball against the floor, neither grey nor brown - his least favourite shades - but something muddy between the two.

The Count and Countess von Slack had risen early, crawling from their little tent in time to watch the sun rise grandly amid a Golden Fleece of cloud remnants. The unseasonal storm of the previous day had returned to disturb their sleep with all the magnification that night could accord its clamour. The sheltering trees had roared, the rain drummed upon their fly. It seemed a miracle that no more than a tiny pool of water had found its way into their tent. As the brilliant rind appeared the world began to glow. Magnificently the ventripotent pasha<sup>13</sup> of the sky heaved himself into view, casting across the landscape such a largesse of light that each tree, each drop-bedecked bush, each high edge of slope and hill dissolved in a deluge of spectral arrows, and the Count found his consciousness foundering in an ocean of universal luminescence.

After breakfast taken by the fire under the now clear sky the Count and Countess set out to walk three or four miles along the beach to the estuary of a river. No Nile, no Ganges, certainly, but one of the more notable that this region had to offer. The waves crashed with post-tempestuous exuberance; a

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stiff onshore wind tugged their hats at their chinstraps and sent intent, isolated gulls speeding by on immobile wings. After an hour or so they came to the mouth of the Ganges. The little streams of the southwest corner of the continent usually flow only in winter, and meet the Southern Ocean at a disproportionately wide estuary that may wind back among low hills for several miles. Across the mouth of this estuary a sand bar generally forms which can remain intact for many years. Such a bar closed the Ganges from the sea. Wedge shaped, eighty yards wide at its greatest, and perhaps a quarter of a mile long, it banked the muddy waters behind it many feet higher than the gnawing tide. The flat expanse of its top was made vague by a fuzz or smoke of blowing sand, which in places concentrated into wavering serpentine rivers.

The Count and Countess clambered to the top of a low limestone cliff and huddled in the shelter of a bush to rest and undress oranges. Here the sun warmed them grandly. In their view lay the dammed Ganges, the great sand bar, and to their right the ocean. The two waters contrasted markedly. The sea was a deep blue, tossed up and crowned with marching armies of white horses. The estuary too was combed by the wind, but much less so as it was more sheltered. The effect was that the opaque, deeply brown water was heavier. It lapped now the very top of the sand bar, a flat, wide lake, but giving the impression of a heavy, swollen reptile, and not a slumbering one.

"I think it's going to break," said the Countess.

"Nonsense, they never break."

"Of course they do, the fisherman at Pallinup said so. You always want to show I am wrong."

"I do not. But they never break while you're watching. Once in ten years - and what are the chances of it breaking in the half hour that we are here?"

"Perhaps not in half an hour, but I'm certain it will break soon."

"Unlikely, they always go in winter. The water will just seep away. In another five years..."

The Countess was putting a boat of orange into her mouth. She let it protrude like a tongue and grimaced at Fogo.

In his continuing ruminations upon the state of the Earth and humanity, which he had piecemeal been discussing with the Countess, he had related the incident of the plasticene as they arrived at their present resting place. Now the Countess voiced the opinion that the cultures of the world had

by no means degenerated into such a muddy sameness. "Look at Bali! The ambience of Kuta Beach is quite alien from the Hay Street Mall in Perth, or High Street in Fremantle."

"True, my Poppy, true," conceded the Count. "But the virus is at large and active. Sioux chiefs wear Levis and drink Coke; Russian commissars wear Levis and drink Coke..."

"There aren't any any longer." She meant commissars.

"Even the Chinese are beginning to wear Levis and drink Coke; the Japanese go to bed in their Levis and fill their spas with Coke..."

"Don't be ridiculous!"

"The grandsons of Pacific cannibals wear Levis and drink Coke and watch nonstop American video tapes. Well, you see what I'm getting at."

The Countess admitted that she did. Bland monoculture, intoned the Count mournfully. The civilisations of the world were blending into a bland monoculture, their restlessness, their spirit of inquiry, their resentment of rules sapped by the malaise of life insurance, death insurance, house insurance, car insurance, fire insurance, water insurance... With an Herculean, or perhaps an Amazonian, effort the Countess managed to divert the discourse from the bugbear of insurance. But were restlessness and inquiry entirely lost in the modern world? No! Not at all, she was surprised to hear. Once again the excited Count seemed to change direction. Intrepid explorers, mad scientists, dreamers, eccentrics, messiahs - such men would always be with us. ("And women."

"Of course, Poppy, and women.") But humanity had reached a point in its history where individuals had less room to move than ever before. We have filled and mapped and photographed the Earth and filed a complete set of reports in steel cabinets. The planet has become our prison. Our greatest spirits swell against the steel walls of a cultural and planetary pressure cooker. They swell as seeds in an overripe pod. Earth approaches its dehiscence.

It would be strange if the Countess had endured the rumbles and fiery spurts of Fogo's volcanic mind for so many years, and yet did not at this point share his delight, his enthusiasm for the vision of escape from bondage; of rushing forth into new and exotic forests, fruitful valleys, wild painted deserts; of the trekking, the discovery, the building that he proceeded to conjure up. Like a pair of blood horses harnessed shoulder to shoulder they galloped the carriage of their hope helter-skelter up the steep sky to the waiting mountains of the moon, to the shrieking deserts of Mars; sounded into the great dark sauna of Venus, like an empty cathedral; and on to the regal minuet of Jupiter's moons, to silent Uranus, Neptune, arctic Pluto; where they paused, waiting with the ghostly legions of humanity's future to catch breath before plunging on to the stars.

For so the Count knew that it would be. We are pushing at the limits of the Earth, her resources, her space, her biological cycles, her mysteries. Under an aberrant regime the space program of the USA appears in disarray, as to a degree does its economy. Yet never before have so many countries been active in space; and never before have so many people the world over been so wealthy. The initial effort of clambering out of the gravity well and establishing ourselves at the top side is great; but once established with a base of permanent stations and plant an almost unimaginable abundance of energy is ours. Even more important: a totally unimaginable abundance of space, and of mysteries. The colonisation of the solar system will resemble an explosion. A diversity of camps, settlements, cities will spring up and swing through space, a blossoming of communities that will beggar the creations of Sam Delany, so brilliant in their time. Then a period of consolidation, and perhaps a further pressure-cooker stage, and then - the stars.

Count Fogo and the Countess gazed into each other's shining eyes. Between that moment and the next the still astonishing Earth drove a resounding fracture. Their heads turned, their gaze flew out across the estuary. It was as if the air itself had torn like cloth, or a giant subterranean frog of myth given voice. At first they saw nothing. But yes, the patterns of blowing sand right here below them were disturbed. The bar itself, at its narrowest point, was on the move, collapsing at the seaward slope as the water penetrated its foundations and made the structure fluid. An uncanny crescendo filled their



ears, like nothing they had heard, a roar, a rush, an antique geological squeak. Rarely does the Earth speak, and strange are the registers of her voice.

The Count and Countess stood, half in panic, half in fascination. But they immediately realised that the little cliff that was their grandstand was perfectly safe. The greater bulk of the sand bar was as solid as ever. A channel appeared to be developing immediately beneath them that would curve at the foot of the cliff and so out to sea. The sand here must be sinking, for a spreading tongue of water licked across the top, reached the nether lip and began to flow with determination. As they had stood, the wind had caught the Countess' hat, a wide-brimmed, felt bushman's affair. While talking she had been playing with the thong that ran under her chin. The wind snatched her hat, the thong caught on her nose, in trying to seize it she dislodged it and the hat cartwheeled away, to land on the brown water fifty yards up the estuary. Now the noise of the beach gathered to an immense torrent as at one and the same time tons of sand were carved bodily from the bottom of the channel and the great roll of the cascade cut back up the flow from the sea. In moments the surface of the sluice dropped several feet. The thunder died away. The water raced out between vertical banks that were constantly undermined to fall crashing and melt.

"Your hat!"

The Countess followed Fogo's indication. The hat was circling towards the throat of the new channel, blown back by the wind, sucked in again by the water, until water triumphed. It shot into the mouth, sped down the chute, passed not a dozen feet below them, and so was carried far beyond the breakers, for the new river had breached their line. Bare headed the Countess watched, her hair dancing in the wind.

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#### NOTES & REFERENCES

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1. Herman Melville, Moby-Dick; or, The Whale, ed. Harold Beaver, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 252-3
  2. H.G. Wells, 'The Time Machine', in Selected Short Stories, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1958, p. 77
  3. Melville, pp. 380-1
  4. Thank you, Diane
  5. This quotation is from a review by Melville, Hawthorne and His Mosses; Count Fogo found it cited in Beaver's introduction to Moby-Dick (above), p. 23
  6. Anthony Burgess, 1985, Hutchinson, London, 1978, pp. 69-70
  7. 'Brook Farm', in Encyclopedia Britannica, William Benton, London, 1964, vol. IV, p. 277
  8. Freud - thanks to Lawrence Durrell for the translation.
  9. Philip Ziegler, The Black Death, Penguin, Harmondsworth, p. 84
  10. Melville, pp. 572-3
  11. Albert Speer, Inside The Third Reich, Sphere Books, London, 1971, pp. 553-4
  12. To those still struggling for a Fogo-like lucidity and apprehension of the world this may seem less than self-evident. This is not the place for a compete emposition of how the nuclear threat has dwindled and disappeared, leaving aged statesmen twitching like marionettes in a puppet play that is in fact over. Suffice it to say that the real nuclear powers now exist in a state of brotherhood nor, unfortunately, has the Christian god survived to set Cain against Abel. Moreover, any serious threat, or even accomplishment, of nuclear mischief by lunatic minor states would see their sovereignty revoked, their leaders executed, and their countries occupied by the forces of a now formalised alliance of those great powers which the myopic, even among their own peoples, persist in seeing as enemies.
  13. Fogo confesses: he stole 'ventripotent pasha' from Durrell.
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MOVIE VIOLENCE REVISITED:

# ROBOCOP

RUSSELL BLACKFORD

Reviews of Robocop seem to praise and misdescribe it, which forces me to wonder whether my responses are idiosyncratic. So this is not another review: it aspires to provide a basis for comparison of responses - feedback and discussion - rather than consumer advice; and it shamelessly gives away plot outcomes. You're warned.

Robocop is set in near-future Detroit, and its impact depends on the ambience of the created city. Here is a violent realm where the privatized cops find themselves ill-equipped to confront brutal crime; they are outgunned and understaffed. The construction of ambience owes something to Judge Dredd, something to more splatter-oriented comics, something to Bladerunner, something to the first Mad Max movie, to cyberpunk (ouch! that word...) fiction. It's a self-conscious movie with many elements of cinematic homage: to the Star Wars films, to The Terminator, to Fort Apache The Bronx and so on and on. It is tightly edited, slick as the reviewers say, looks good in its harsh and sombre colours, artistically insists upon the bleak, speeded-up, predatory near-future which is its basis. The gangs are taking over the streets and factories, mate, and the movie looks like it.

The story then: young Detroit cop, Murphy, taken out by maniac cop-killer gang; Murphy's brain scavenged for man-machine cyborg amalgamation, experimental armoured "Robocop"; Robocop becomes nemesis of Detroit thugs; remnants of cop's pre-cyborg memories activated, leading to violent revenge quest against cop-killers. Some of the technology - the creation of the cyborg, its dreaming, its memory fluctuations - is mysterious, but that hardly matters in a film which is more metaphor than science, despite its surface hyperrealism.

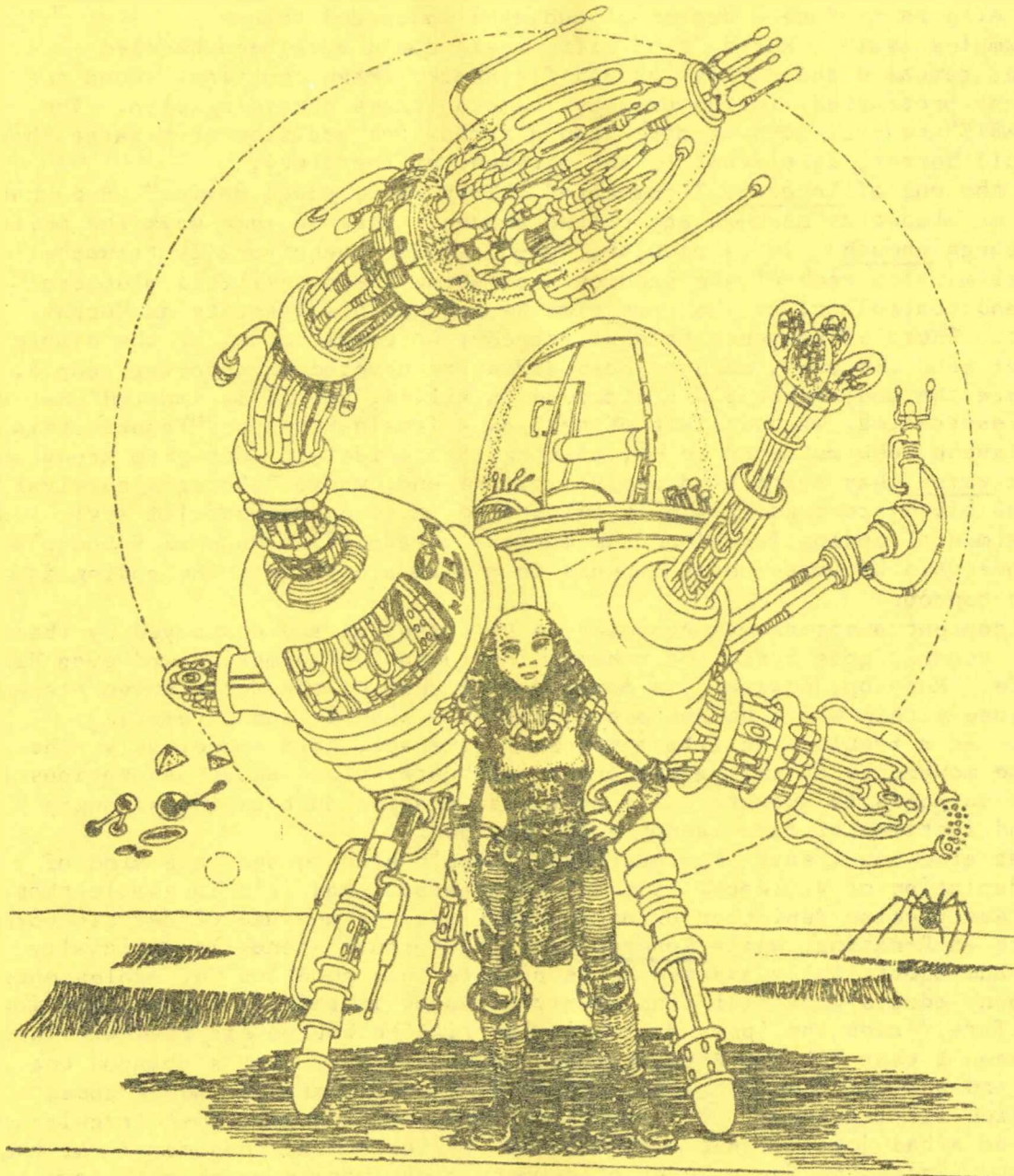
Some strange tonal ambiguities develop, inevitably, given the nature of the central figure: for Robocop is simultaneously a caricature chisel-jawed superhero, a pathetic technology-monster à la Frankenstein's, and a disturbing malcontent avenger. The ambiguity is pretty much controlled to combine audience laughter and uneasiness - what the hell are we laughing at? The comedy is sporadic and always flecked with blood and darkness. And the movie is clearly satirical; it is savagely denunciatory of American violence, of urban bloodshed, lax gun laws, arms race mentality, media glamorization of violent solutions. Crooks are shown toting elaborate anti-personnel weaponry which appears to be freely available; there is invective comedy at the expense of the Star Wars project (a malfunction leads to the orbital "peace station" lasering tracts of rural America, killing over 100 civilians including two retired Presidents); a children's video cop show that glamorizes quick-draw gun violence is placed in horrendously grim perspective by juxtaposition against analogous elements in the larger story; a family game is called "Nuke 'Em"; the advertisement for a sports sedan compares it with a rampaging carnosaur (which is also compared, by skilled montage, with Robocop himself).

Having said all that, I have concerns about this movie. Before I come to them, note: I'm opposed to censorship, including R-restrictions (but not necessarily to compulsory product labelling); I don't object to violence in movies such as Alien/s or The Terminator, and I would not endorse any attack on Robocop by way of government regulation; I am not convinced that movie violence causes real-life violence; moreover, my own (thankfully?) rare excursions into fiction contain some bloodthirsty sequences that have been criticised in print. But I'm surprised by Robocop; and I'm surprised no one seems to be mentioning its scenes of violence, on a scale of extensiveness, cruelty and repetition, going miles beyond anything in Alien/s, say, or any other action skiffy movie that I recall. It contains violence which I consider excessive.

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Instance one. Murphy is killed in a protracted exhibition of mockery and sadism. He is tortured physically and psychologically, then shot repeatedly at point-blank range with high powered firearms. The first shots slam him about but apparently do not penetrate his regulation body armour. Every time he is hit, he is shown physically jerked and crushed by the impact; he screams in agony each time (the screaming peaks, peaks, never seems to have stopped) - and the cameras linger as blast after blast cumulatively rip away body armour and flesh under it. It's an horrifically detailed and vivid scene of a man being tortured to destruction, unable to die, his all-too-tangible pain protesting every second of it.



Instance two. A bad guy tries to run down Robocop, misses, ploughs car into a huge drum of "TOXIC WASTE", with pyrotechnic effect. The camera soon cuts to him as he crawls out of the wreckage, covered with unidentifiable acidic slime, flailing and screaming, protesting and appealing for help. Again, the camera lingers and lingers as his flesh steams, bubbles, melts and runs like plastic over flame, and stills he staggers out, agonized and deformed, unable to die - voice strangling away, but vital systems not yet destroyed: "Help me!" And his accomplice runs from ... this contaminated thing, runs in terror and revulsion, does not stop for a mercy killing. Does not think of it.

There are other scenes only slightly less extreme, and the general level of violence inflicted by both sides in this Manichean nightmare is brutal, deliberated, unrelenting. Consciously sadistic.

All of this might be defended by saying that this is what we are coming to - unconscionable moral breakdown - and the movie rightly confronts the trauma, the pain, the mindless, mind-numbing repetitiveness of violence. It might be claimed, even, that this mode of fictionalised violence is more moral, more compassionate, than depictions in which violence is divorced from its consequences, from pain, from ugliness, from the elements of fear and revulsion. I can see that argument. I still persist that Robocop is excessive - excessive in terms of what is necessary to make its points, to achieve realism, even to produce a degree of audience shock and trauma.

Examples again. Murphy's horrific death could have been handled off-stage, revealed shockingly through flashback: image, cutting, sound - without any protracted, loving cruelty, camera lenses caressing pain. The "TOXIC WASTE" scene is nothing more than a gratuitous addition of bizarre (hardly realistic!) horror, irrelevant to the movement of the story.

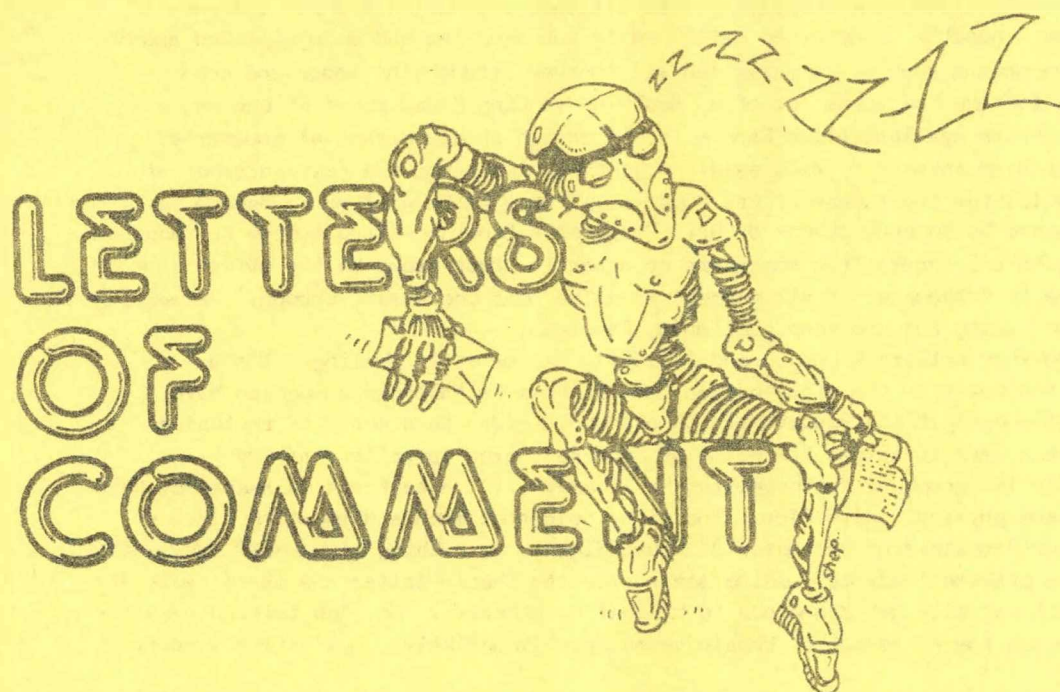
At the end of Robocop, I commented, "That was a tough movie." But what disturbs me almost as much as any of the above is that in some ways the movie was not tough enough. In particular, "good" almost unequivocally triumphs: Robocop eliminates each of the baddies, including the cop-killers plutocrat abettor and controller; at the same time he regains his identity as Murphy. That's it. There is no sense here of tragedy, no complicating of the simple codings of good and evil, much as both sides are devoted to shooting people. Just before the end, Robocop's girlfriend is killed, but it is implied that she will be resurrected, what is left of her, as a female Robocop ("Frankenstein's bride," Janeen Webb muttered to me, putting it precisely). Any grim irony about this fate worse than death is dissolved by the end, where Robocop's survival and successful bloody revenge is wholly celebrated in corny we-beat-'em style (was this sentimental ending forced on the movie's creators?). Much as Robocop's victory over his ultimate enemy depends on a neat plot trick, the ending is (ahem!) a cop-out.

Malcontent avengers are supposed to be corrupted and destroyed by their obsessive quests; gods curse their human instruments of nemesis, and even Hamlet has to die. Robocop, however, is morally untouched by the destructive element, the violence within which he has been immersed - such is the cinematic rhetoric. As a result, the film appears to re-enact, half consciously, the values and movements of the malevolent crime-buster video whose assumptions it otherwise purports to subvert. The satirical meaning just explodes: angry satire and sentimental form cannot hold together.

What else can I say? For starters, I don't need to see this kind of extreme depiction of violence. I'm not interested. And it's laughable that any more-or-less precise depiction of non-violent sex, or any use of certain words will court an R-rating, while Robocop with its torture scenes is officially M-rated, and unofficially assumed to be no more than good fun for adolescents - "...but many adults will find plenty to enjoy in this inventive twisting of standard fare," adds the (presumably) influential Melbourne Age review. This doesn't mean I want Robocop R-restricted, much less cut. Let's abandon the R-rating and the whole meaningless panoply of classifications, adopt coded labels which are meaningful (if that's too hard, abandon government regulation entirely as a bad joke!). But what about us reviewers and consumers? At the very least, I'm asking for a level of comment about movies which gets down to describing texture, ambience, the qualities of movies as experience; I'm sick of second-rate story telling woven with pretentious evaluative noises.

Or, after all, am I idiosyncratic? Maybe my readers see no difference between what I've described and Alien/s; maybe the elements of texture and ambience I've tried to insist on as important are matters about which the moviegoers at large don't even care. Care aesthetically or morally. That would disturb me more than any violent film.





I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T CONFESS THIS...

BRIAN EARL BROWN - I probably shouldn't confess this, but yours is one of the few fanzines I read as soon as I get it. Whimsey, which I know will be precious and witty and wise when

I read it, gathers dust in my briefcase but it's The Space Westrel that I read first. There's so much to comment on that I don't really know where to start. Herpes hardly seems like the appropriate place - but there it is. I often wondered what would happen if Herpes hit Midwestern fandom, the sexual roadmap there being every bit as impenetrably complex as a Paris road map. Not that I had to worry as Denise and I were already being monogamous at the time. I suppose AIDS will leave a scorched swathe through fandom but not, I think, through heterosexual fans. Intravenous drug users seem to be more infectious than sexual partners and there seem to be few IV drug users in fandom.

It's hardly right to slip past Skel's long thoughtful essay with a short comment. The trouble is that I don't argue with his points on reviewing fanzines or his little digs at Joseph Nicholas. (I thought Taral did an even better job in his reply to JN in Taral's NEW TOY 2). I do feel strongly about SDI, which I think is a bad idea when pushed, as Reagan wants to, like the Apollo moon mission. Most of these research projects were ongoing projects at the time Reagan announced SDI, but they were just reasonably funded feasibility studies, NOT instant major weapons projects. This abrupt escalation in priority is certainly threatening to the Soviets. But I think I'm wandering into old news here. Skel certainly makes a good point that a fanzine review has to decide whether its audience has read the fanzine already. When I was doing WOFAN I always assumed that my audience had not seen the zines on the grounds WOFAN I always assumed that my audience had not seen the zines on the grounds that there probably were some who hadn't, however popular the zine was. But then I saw WOFAN as a source book for outsiders. Others may feel they're writing for a more knowledgeable audience and should start their reviews accordingly.

Saying that I turn to Michelle's zine reviews, which impress me for their conciseness, clarity and perception - except when it comes to my fanzine where she seems inordinately concerned with SQL6's printing and not its contents. Heck, it took several wonderings before I - the publisher - understood Michelle's comment, "Is (Taral) allergic to laughter?" This was in response to Taral's insistence that Gene Wolfe answer the questions in the interview seriously. That was because Gene has a tendency to joke around, even when asked serious questions. Taral was simply asking for straight answers during a serious and constructive interview from a man who generally doesn't care to give straight answers. Sheesh! Of course Taral has a funny bone - though it's not located where most people's is!

God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers - Jewish Proverb

RICHARD BERGERON - I especially liked the No Holds Barred attitude and Muijsert's pronouncements.

6/7/1987

TSW has a healthy tendency to call Them As You Sees 'em and an unexpected amount of high octane energy. I marvelled all the way through the issue and even

marvelled at your ability to take the words out of my mouth by quoting Brian Brown at the end of your letter column: "...nice to see Australian Fandom lively enough to get pissed at another's zine. At least you're not dead anymore." Well said. I just hope that the COA rearrangement of living space doesn't bode ill for the future of the time you'll have or be willing to devote to publishing -- as has happened to so many others of us. Muijsert's fanzine rating system is inspired madness. The disquieting note I recall from somewhere or other in these pages to the effect that MM is having a wonderful time in Melbourne (of all places) makes me fear the worst, though. Remember MM you're supposed to stop having fun and keep publishing fanzines.

The exchange between K Chopin and I Nichols has me still reeling. I'm a suspicious type, though, and toy with the giddy notion that Nichols is talented enough to have invented Chopin just to give himself the opportunity to play both sides in a match of rhetorical overkill. Much as Joe Orton used to assume the guise of Edna Walthorpe to write scathing denunciations for The Daily Telegraph of "Entertaining Mr Sloane." ("I myself was nauseated by this endless parade of mental and physical perversion. And to be told that such a disgusting piece of filth now passes for humour!" scolded Ms Walthorpe.) Would Nichols do a thing like that? Why not? Except that accepting this premise leads to reading again over the Chopin letter and Ian's reply and then wondering when IN will actually get dangerous to himself or others... No, too twisted even for our little microcosm. Though the existence of Chopin seems equally unlikely. Let's flip a coin.

RICHARD BRANDT - The introductory notes to "Mail Review" in TSW5 indicate that Michelle has given a lot of thought to her critical position and is aware of her own biases. (I also

like the rating system cribbed for this issue--"Does your 'zine have what it takes to deliver full satisfaction?" I may have to have a T-shirt made up...)

Having said that, it would be really nice if I could now display my total objectivity by responding to your favourable review of Light in the Bushel by really slamming TSW5. Unfortunately, my first impression was that this was one of the meatiest and most thoroughly entertaining genzines that I've seen in months. The "Rat" section is obviously one of the most inspired theme sections of all time, as several writers have responded with absolutely marvellous contribs. Craig Hilton's piece in particular is one of the most godawful things I've ever read. I laughed my fool head off. (Kids are like that, aren't they?) You've obviously hit on a subject that touches a deep chord... Lyn McConchie gives the impression that rats are preferable as pets to cats, and who knows... There are a couple of rats (literally) in the SCA-ish group I run with on weekends; they're often the liveliest members of the set at the group's house parties, now that I think on it. If they'd just keep out of my beer...

Anthony Peacey's tribute is quite evocative... but is the Titanic perhaps better off where she is--"wonderfully preserved," we are told--than brought to the surface to suffer the depredations of rust and rot, the careless attentions of scrambling, prodding tourists, the desecration of tomb-robbers, the futile efforts of preservationists, giving way eventually I'm sure to centuries of heedless neglect? Anthony seems to imply this latter is not merely inevitable but A Good Thing. I share his fascination with relics of the past, but no other tomb I can think of has had this opportunity to survive in a pristine state...

Apocryphal or not, Amelia's article offers nicely-worded insights into the psychology of mediafen, from the inside. What's her point, though? That mediafen are in some larval stage from which one eventually metamorphosizes into the "adult" stage, trufan? Are persistent mediafen those who never grew up? Is devoting your adult life to something as peripheral as fanac any less silly than whiling away your adolescence caught up in Trekmania? Just asking...

I haven't caught RE-ANIMATOR yet, but Greg Egan's review reminds me of another case... BASKET CASE, actually, a low budget movie that was shot in 16mm and blown up for theatrical release. The gore in BASKET CASE is actually pretty low-key by today's standards... at least, no one is eviscerated... but it gets its effects by building up to a climactic scene in which the violence is so ludicrously overblown that it's hilarious; the only possible reaction is to laugh. I was amazed by the deftness of the filmmaker's technique: building up an atmosphere of gut-wrenching tension, letting loose with a quick burst of violence, then depicting a hilariously exaggerated aftermath: a sequence they repeated several times throughout the film. You're left watching a panning shot and gradually realising that the character's shock-stricken face and his pants legs are protruding from different parts of the screen; or seeing the villain's face pushed into a drawer in her doctor's office, then coming back from a cutaway to see her face with scalpels protruding from all angles like a pincushion. To quote from FILM COMMENT's notes on GLEN OR GLENDA: "It was to die." For all this, the film also takes a quite sophisticated approach to its plotline, which



involves the telepathic link between a young man and his separated Siamese-twin brother; and effectively reveals one little piece of the puzzle and the background at a time.

I've only caught THE A-TEAM a few times, back when I was still watching television, and thought they made the most mileage out of Dwight Schultz, who I've seen as a subtle and capable actor, with his "Howling Mad" Murdoch schtick. Mark's thoughts on the subjects are worth considering. While the show is pretty much Fantasyland, it still annoys me that so many bullets are expended harmlessly; and even more that television continues to display so many antiseptic slugfests. I can tell you that even minor fisticuffs can result in a prodigious amount of bloodletting.

MIKE GLICKSOHN - I think Mark's comments on TV violence and its influence on the young are closer to 21/7/1987 the mark than Frank Macskasy's but every now and then there is evidence that a particular program has had a very powerful (usually tragic) effect on an unstable person (usually a youngster) so I don't think we can completely discount such concerns. Such incidents are isolated enough, though, and usually involve the lunatic fringe of society so that I don't advocate sweeping changes be made to avoid their reoccurrence. No matter what we do there's always the chance that someone, somewhere will get pushed 'round the bend by it so we have to keep on and hope such incidents are rare. (Personally I think people who watch THE A-TEAM or MIAMI VICE or THE DUKES OF HAZZARD deserve anything that happens to them but perhaps we ought not get into that...)

Along the lines of what Mark was saying about MIAMI VICE: would you ever invite Jessica Fletcher to a party or accept an invitation where she was going to be in attendance? I sure as hell wouldn't! Don't those people realise that everywhere she goes at least one person gets killed? With friends like that who needs Mike Ashley?

BRIAN EARL BROWN - The A-Team is a classic example of male-bonding (Butch Cassidy & The Sundance 23/6/1987 Kid, etc) which is why the female sidekick foisted on the show was just as quickly booted off. But serious analysis of this show is pretty silly because it is an overblown, silly, dumb show which does substitute action, firepower and exploding cars for any real plot. It is a live action cartoon - a Road Runner cartoon in fact - well, maybe a Bugs Bunny cartoon. Same amount of violence but directed at someone by Bugs. In the Road Runner series the Coyote is the cause of his own discomfort.

HARRY WARNER JR - Isn't the quest for knowledge involved in this question of digging up Pompeii 2/7/1987 versus raising the Titanic? Archeology exists to increase our knowledge of how people lived and behaved and built before there was adequate written and drawn documentation of daily life. If there was any reluctance to disturb the resting place of the volcano victims, it was outweighed by the vast increase in knowledge that resulted from work at Pompeii. But raising the Titanic or bringing up large chunks of whatever survives in the wreckage would have virtually no effect on mankind's store of knowledge. We know so much about the Titanic and about other luxury liners of the period that a salvage operation would serve no useful purpose other than appealing to those who like sensationalism. It's like what happens when a growing child begins to ask about a deceased grandparent or other member of a previous generation. You show the child photographs of the person, perhaps you can show mementoes from among that person's possessions or letters that he wrote, but you don't take the child to the cemetery, open the grave, and the show the child the skeleton or whatever else remains in the coffin.

SUSAN MARGARET - Clowns & Ducks...Well, yes, but let me quote Robert Hodge on Dr Who's Tardis: 1987 Its outside is rectangular, blue, a symbol of patriarchal authority. Its inside is larger than its outside, round, and there's a pink thing in the middle that goes up and down. Or the football match, which he discussed in the context of the traditional wedding ceremony:

You should consider the significance of UP and DOWN, and ask yourself why the umpire always wears white.

Furthermore, I would maintain that anything which permits a respected academic giving a high level literature course to discuss Footrot Flats (ML: A comic strip of New Zealand origin) and Milton in the same lecture can, at least, claim to add to the enjoyment of life.

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The sweetest pleasures are those which do not exhaust hope.

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LLOYD PENNEY - The Sitting Duck illustration alluded to by Dave in his article shouldn't be taken too seriously. Right now, duck shirts are very popular in Toronto. I even know the fellow who produces them. For example... On one shirt, the body of a duck with one leg. The caption... "Not Playing With a Full Duck". On another shirt, several ducks in a hot tub. Caption... "Duckuzzi". On my own shirt, a duck dressed as a Mountie. Caption... "Royal Canadian Mounted Duck ... RCMP". They're silly and fun - just like the Sitting Duck poster.

Canadian beers are always popular with American fans, especially when it comes to room parties that we sometimes throw at American conventions that are close to the border. It's good to hear that Robert Lichtmann likes Canadian beers, but he should come to Canada to find out where the really good beers are. They are produced by, as he mentions in his letter, microbreweries, and we are blessed with a good many of them. They produce brands like Connors, Upper Canada, Brick, Steeler, Sleeman and other brands that seem to be taking a larger and larger slice of the market here. These brands are distributed in small geographic areas, so if you want them, you'll have to come here to try them. For the record, I do not like beer. (Gasp!) Give me a bottle of British Columbia hard cider any day.

Sljivovica, or slivovicz, is available in liquor stores in Ontario. I could order it from the Liquor Control Board of Ontario if it wasn't already in stock and on the shelves.

DAVID PALTER - Bruno Ogorolec's letter is so appetising that he may bring upon himself a horde of Australian visitors (who are, as I understand, as a nationality much given to world travel anyway).

JACK HERMAN - Onto the TSW Eastercon edition which I had the pleasure of launching. Ian is back with the piss which is good to see although he doesn't really say all that much.

Personally, champagne could be piss as far as I am concerned. The idea of aerating good wine doesn't appeal to me at all. It may be all those youthful follies attributed to Sparkling Burgundy but I have always preferred dry white and very dry red to any sparkling wine. Lately, I have been drinking more and more dessert wine, though. I wish Nico would leave this foreign muck alone and direct his attention to the sort of wine that Australia does better than anyone in the world and which may be the most sublime drinking experience available: our Liqueur Muscats, particularly Bailey's and Morris'.

BEV CLARK - I still appreciate Ian Nichols' discussions of various spirits. I don't suppose he knows anything about sake? I have a lovely new sake set, a taste for the stuff as it's served in Japanese restaurants, and a need to learn more about sake so I don't feel like a complete idiot when I confront a range of bottles and boxes in the liquor store.

Boy do I empathise with Mark Loney's comments about daydreaming in the February TSW. Not only did I spend my school days doing a lot of it -- my report cards of the time generally contained some reference to the amount of time I spent looking out the windows (though the references weren't as negative as they could have been, as I generally also got top grades) -- I spend far more of my time at it now than I should. Oddly enough, I don't do a whole lot of reminiscing about the past; my daydreams are either about the future (winning a large amount of \$\$\$ in the lottery is nice to think about, for instance) or are completely fictional. Hmm. Maybe the reason I don't particularly want to write fiction, let alone ever get around to doing it, is that once I work the fictions out in my head, there's no reason left to write them down because I already know how they come out.

Should Julian Warner actually write a fan's guide to gospel music, I'd be interested in reading it. I've always liked real gospel music, at least since I was introduced to it in high school choir. Our choir director knew from somewhere a man named Jester Hairston, who has done several albums of gospel music. Once a year, Hairston came to our school and taught us spirituals and other gospel songs for a week; at the end of the week, we did a concert. The most remarkable thing about this was that both our choir director and the choir were almost entirely white and middle class. What I discovered was that gospel music is an awful lot of fun to sing, even if you don't actually believe in its message. I enjoy listening to it as well and watching choirs singing it, but it's singing the spirituals myself that I most like.





GREG EGAN - I was glad to see Mr Warner give a plug for THE THE's Infected in the hallowed pages of 19/4/1987 TSW6, but devastated that he could discuss the album without even mentioning the best track, "Sweet Bird of Truth". Not only brilliant but controversial, the twelve inch single of "Sweet Bird of Truth" was temporarily banned by CBS, who thought that the subject matter - an American bomber going down over Libya - might be a little touchy.

Another track on the album subject to censorship was the title track "Infected". The esteemed Beeb refused to play the song because it contained the line 'From my scrotum to your womb' which they deemed obscene. Matt Johnson then recorded a version which did not contain that line, especially for the blushing BBC. They refused to play that version either, because they said that doing so would be encouraging people to go and buy the record in the shops, which did include the naughty words.

How do I know these fascinating fragments of Matt Johnson trivia? ZJJJ's interview with him, of course! So, if you don't live in Sydney, write now to (a) your local ABC office, and (b) your Federal MP, demanding that JJJ be broadcast nationally, twenty four hours a day! (At present, people with satellite dishes can pick it up via AUSSAT at odd hours in the middle of the night. THIS IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH. Everyone needs JJJ. Besides, I'm returning to to Parth myself next year and if I have to go without it I'll die of withdrawal pains.)

BRIAN EARL BROWN - Nice comment from Mark Linneman on "post-funny" comedians like Steve Martin and 23/6/1987 Andy Kaufmann. No wonder I never laughed at Kaufmann's routines. I wasn't superior enough to appreciate them.

"Why is SF so frowned upon," asks Mr Loney. Two answers come to mind. First, it came up from a "pulp" origin, this is seen as vulgar; a cheap read for people who move their lips. (Real people read books!) Secondly, and this is sort of the first point restated, SF is seen as a branch of children's literature. Norman Spinrad first presented this argument and I find it convincing. SF's preoccupations are defined as "juvenile" hence beneath notice, just as romance novels deal with "juvenile" situations and responses and ditto for mystery novels.

JEANNE MEALY - Craig Hilton writes well about childhood. I remember believing in myths, as he did 18/5/1987 with the berry bullet and gun, and figuring that some small detail was off -- maybe something I didn't know about -- but I'd figure it out later. Maybe. I rather regret reading the entire story about his friend and the mice. I can't imagine doing such a thing myself, even at the age of four... but I DO remember being mad at my youngest sister one day -- she was still in diapers, toddling around. So I sat her down on a thorn to make her cry -- but she didn't. My guilt attack has only partially subsided to this day though.

Vaudeville is NOT dead, judging from Dave Luckett's "My Roots in Fandom". 'There I met my future wife. I remember her first words to me: "That'll be two dollars please." And then he says it'd be nice to say he liked the people and was hooked -- but no, he thought most were nuts and stayed away for another two years. Drummer, hit that splashy phrase with the cymbal exclamation point! Still, I'm looking forward to the next installment.

JOAN HANKE-WOODS - "RATS?" Who decides these things? Vermin are a constant menace, but cockroaches 22/4/1987 are my favourite horror. From exotic Burma and Thailand (aboard freighters) have come the new "superroach" that is huge, multi-coloured, spits, flies and resists common pesticides... want to do a "roach" issue?

All in all I find the SW experience one of the best of the "fannish" sort. On the whole the "fannish" style of existence holds little charm for me; simply being "fannish" is hardly a recommendation to my tastes. Your choice of articles, their rendering of the various subjective experiences, the illos and hideous plethora of puns all served to enlighten and entertain. I note that the the veins of Australian humour run roughly parallel with the British obsession with fecal matter and things anal. (Whereas US humour seems deeply rooted in sexual misadventures.)

SARAH S. PRINCE - Thanks for the rats, verbal and visual. I used to have a rat... I've meant to 1/4/1987 write about her. (Well, at one point, I had lots... litters of a dozen, y'know. Fifty pounds of rat chow took a while to use up.) I'm particularly glad to have samples of the Hilton rats. I showed the pages on mice, rats and cats to several co-workers (on an off-day in the pressure-cooker sweatshop), including a guinea-pig owner. They had a great time with it too (being immune to the fannish gossip in other pages) especially the guy who went on to Anthony Peacey's "unspeakable death (about which we spoke a great deal)".

I'm sorry that what Lyn McConchie sees in Pamela Deen's THE SECRET COUNTRY is so unpleasant. And yet I can't fully defend it, much as I want to like the work of people I know; the combination of childlikeness, plot intricacy, and difference from the easy elegant prose I remember from her fanwriting didn't balance together and become really intelligible to me.

But I want to make a few points about what I think the situation was - perhaps too much idealism rather than greed. (See her Star Trek novel for something more ordinary.) Ace perhaps took a chance - publishing "anything" - on a kind of fantasy not exactly like anything else, but then confused the matter mightily by marketing THE SECRET COUNTRY as an independent novel, when in fact it has a pointless ending, and THE HIDDEN LAND as a sequel when in fact it is a necessary completion of the first book! But yet only a recognizable cadence results, not a satisfying end. The upcoming third volume will make it a complete work, if not one that suits all of us.

BEV CLARK - I saw drowned mice once, when I was a small child, but I didn't do it myself. My father 12/4/1987 did. I would at least have had the excuse of Craig Hilton and his friends: I wouldn't have known what I was doing. What my father did was perhaps even worse: he drowned the baby mice thinking they were newborn kittens, or so he said, and he hated cats. He used to joke about swerving in order to hit a cat in the street, though I don't think he ever actually did it. I hope. I'm a dog fancier myself, due to having a most unfannish allergy to cats, but I still have sympathy for felines.

I guess I'm still part of the great unwashed. I'm involved in media fandom, have been since 1973 when it was just Star Trek fandom, and probably will continue to be. Of course, I never wore a costume even to a media con except the first time, and I went to my first SF convention about four months after my first SF convention. Which means nothing. Lots of people in the weird costumes are intelligent and interesting people with valid things to say. Lots of them are nerds. Lots of the fannishly correct people at SF cons are nerds or jerks too, and lots of them are intelligent and interesting, etc. I don't believe in limiting my options. (Now maybe if I'd gone to the SF con first, as an innocent and naive 20 year old femmefan, I would have chosen a different path. I mean, right there in front of the elevator was a sign announcing a bedding party in some room or other, and probably another female would have been greatly appreciated. I was terribly disappointed when I learned that the sign had been misspelled and it was really a bidding party being held that night. I didn't know what that was either, but it didn't sound like nearly as much fun, so I didn't go.)

Love Michelle's rating guide. Wherever could she have found it? she asks innocently.

Along the same lines, how about Condom for a catchy name in these safe-sex days? It was illuminating to find a list of safe-sex rules in the program book for the recent Norweacon/Alternacon, and even more illuminating to discover an even more detailed list in WESTWIND. The latter list contained at least one item in the "unsafe" category that would never have occurred to me. I guess I lead a sheltered life.

DAVID PALTER - Thanks for ISW6. Very nice. In this issue I was particularly struck by the candor 2/6/1987 of several writers, delving into their personal lives, and achieving thereby a definite poignance. Ian Nichols and Mark Loney have opened a window on their souls and shown us themselves. The mingled beauty and madness of your lives touches a responsive chord. This is the true essence of fandom.

CY CHAUVIN - Ian Nichols' article "The Fruit of the Tree" is particularly effective, and I've often 27/7/1987 wrestled with the question of innocence myself. It's innocence versus experience as Ian seems to realize; what makes innocence such a curious state is that it's impossible to go back. Think of all the primitive tribespeople who have met modern civilization and have lost everything; their innocence shattered under the weight of our collective experience. Ian had little control over the experiences that led him to lose his innocence (and he seems to have had a far rougher life than mine), but what of those that do? Why do we associate happiness and innocence? Is innocence the happiness of non-experience? If we had total control over what should happen to us, what should we choose? I realize that the last verges on science fiction, but that's how my mind works. Innocence may not be something we only hurry up to lose, but this side is rarely presented (except as parents scolding their teenagers about sex, but I mean this more than in sexual terms). The only fiction this might have been presented in is Peter Pan (and there it's just silly). Anyway, Ian's article is among the best you've published -- certainly the most emotionally affecting.

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You will think me lamentably crude: my experience of life has been drawn from life itself.

Max Beerbohm

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BRIAN EARL BROWN - My wife works in a nursing home caring for patients that, like Ian's mother at the end of her life, are just waiting to die, unable to control their bodies, unable (really) to remember their pasts. It's a very sad place for me when I visit Denise at work, and makes me take comfort in the knowledge that both my grandparents died suddenly from heart attacks or strokes after long lives in possession of all their faculties. I'd hate to rust away like Denise's patients. I guess that's why I was surprised, but not too surprised, when Alice Sheldon (James Tiptree) took her life and her ailing husband's. It was, maybe, the only neat thing to do.

JOY HIBBERT - 'Evil' to me, is a word that has always had overtones of consciousness or deliberateness. While cancer is a very bad thing that ought to be wiped out, it is not evil, because it has no idea what it is, or what effects it has. 'Evil' would be the doctors who denied Ian's mother a reasonably dignified death, keeping her alive without hope to be a horror to her friends and relatives.

JEANNE MEALY - Interesting that Ian's first sexual experience was pleasant! That's unusual. The story of his loss of innocence -- due to his mother's illness -- was touchingly written, with many a chord played on the heartstrings. He said just enough about himself to make me stop and think about a few things... I'll not soon forget this little story. In fact, I'd be surprised if you didn't get a few letters about other people's losses. It somehow fits into the same category as "I knew I was an adult when..."

Mark Loney's stories about daydreaming struck a note with me, too. I was caught more than once in class, reading ahead of the class in our book or sneaking a quick read in another book entirely. Once, my habit of 'checking in' with the class paid off -- I was able to answer the teacher's question to me. She and I both knew I was just lucky, so I paid attention for a while. Another time, I was presented with a story writing award -- and barely looked up in time to catch onto what was about to happen!

As Mark says, "Thinking about the past is, of course, one of the occupational hazards of being a human being." That caused me to realize that it's amazing that we don't spend even more time in the past -- after all, it's all we have for sure. However, our 'wiring' causes us to rely on what we know from experience as well as extrapolating into the future for what to do next. We comfortably mentally ricochet between the past and future every day! Sometimes the balance goes awry, however, and people choose only either the past or the future. If you're stuck in the past, reliving what was without putting lessons into practice, no growth will occur. If you live for the future, you may be neglecting some important facts to be learned from the past. Ah, what time travellers we be.

Friendships built within certain milieus don't often survive being transplanted later on. Childhood chums take radically different paths and develop new interests and goals. School pals just aren't the same people we knew. Co-workers don't find much to talk about together besides work. One of the most difficult things I've found is to short-circuit the pleasure-seeking impulse (repeat good times, get in touch with X again). Trying to carry along old friends and acquaintances can be like kicking a dead horse. There has to be interest on both sides, or its best to let it go into the past in favor of finding new relationships.

## the Space Wastrel

HARRY WARNER, JR - I'm not sure if I misunderstood something in Ian Nichols' "Innocence" article or if Australia has a custom previously unknown to me. He tells about undergoing his first sexac just after he acquired a learner's permit. From the context, it seems that Australians are systematic about introducing young people to copulation, licensing them provisionally to do it when they seem to be old enough and apt enough. I hope you don't disillusion me by explaining that this was a learner's permit to operate a motor vehicle or to publish a fanzine or some other unexciting purpose.

Mark: Would I disillusion you at this late stage of the zine? Of course not! We all need our myths and cherished beliefs. I, for one, have long believed that Americans are enjoined by strict social custom to have their first sexac in a motor vehicle parked in Lover's Lane...





John  
hanke  
moody  
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