

THYME #79

The Australasian SF News Magazine
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1990 AUSTRALIAN SF (DITMAR) AWARDS - VOTING DETAILS:

A total of 40 valid voting forms were received (and one invalid form).

There was no William Atheling Jr Award for criticism or Review as there were nine nominations each with one nominee, and one nomination with two nominees, so it was deemed there were insufficient nominations to appear on the voting form, so no award was made.

Distribution of the voting preferences stops as soon as one becomes the outright winner.

BEST AUSTRALIAN LONG FICTION:

<u>Lake of the Sun</u>	Wynne Whiteford	12	12	Winner
<u>The Red King</u>	Victor Kelleher	5	6	
<u>The Sorcerer's Sacred Isle</u>				
	Keith Taylor	3		
NO AWARD		4	4	
	Total	24	22	

BEST AUSTRALIAN SHORT FICTION:

"The Quiet Redemption of Andy the House"				
	Terry Dowling	17	Winner	
"Total Devotion Machine"		9		
"If you go down to the Park Today"		3		
	Rosaleen Love			
"Over the Edge"	Petrina Smith	-		
NO AWARD		3		
	Total	32		

BEST FANZINE:

"Ethel the Aardvark"	Alan Stewart	13	15	17	Winner
ASFR	The Collective	10	11	16	
"Sweetness and Light"	Jack Herman	6	8		
"Get Stuffed"	Jacob Blake	5			
	Total	34	34	33	

[Members of the collective were most peeved to discover they had missed out by one vote AND that one of their own members had "forgotten" to vote. - Ed]

BEST FANWRITER:

Bruce Gillespie	8	9	11	14	16
Ian Gunn	7	9	11	12	16
Alan Stewart	6	7	7	7	
Jack Herman	6	6	6		
Terry Frost	6	6			
Yvonne Hintz	4				
Total	37	37	35	33	32

BEST FANARTIST:

Ian Gunn	14	15	22	Winner
Kerrie Hanlon	11	12	12	
Phil Wlodarczyk	8	8		
Craig Hilton	2			
Total	35	35	34	

[Ditmar Award Committee]

In respect to the last award we owe Kerrie Hanlon an apology. I asked "Does anyone know where I can get hold of anything Kerrie Hanlon did last year?", when all the time we actually had a copy of her major fannish opus for the year, Terry Dowling's 1988 DUFF Trip Report Prints From a Far Land. The report features 19 illustrations by Kerry, and even three by Terry himself. (I've found two of them, but can only guess which is the third.) Kerrie also appeared in Eye of the Newt last year (cover date 1988, but appearance 1989).

NEBULA AWARDS:

This is a peer award given by the Science Fiction Writers of the America, and as such is considered very prestigious. The winners for 1989 are:

BEST NOVEL

The Healer's War Elizabeth Anne Scarborough (Doubleday/Foundation)

BEST NOVELLA

"Mountains of Mourning" Lois McMaster Bujold (Analog, Borders of Infinity)

BEST NOVELETTE

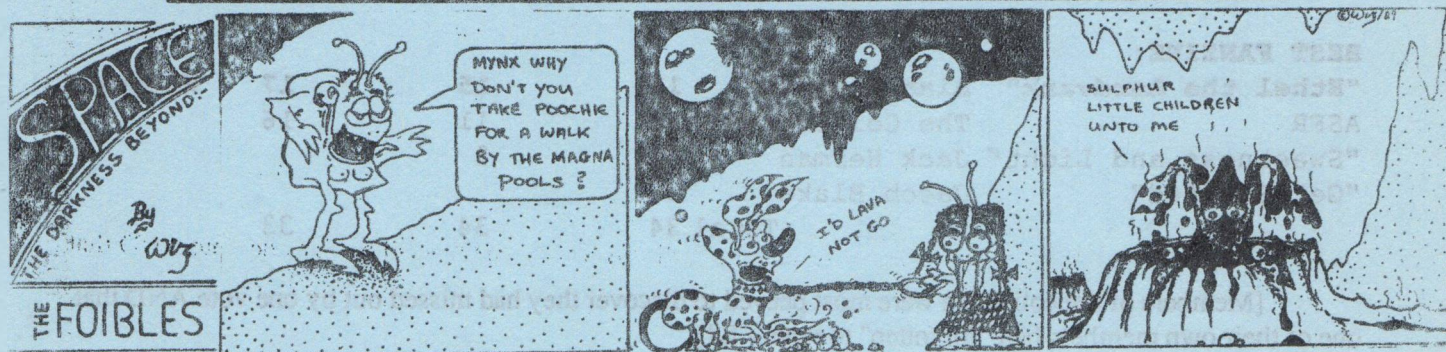
"At the Rialto" Connie Willis (Omni, The Microverse)

BEST SHORT STORY

"Ripples in the Dirac Sea" Geoffrey A Landis (Asimov's)

Our congratulations to all.

[Thanks to those who forwarded this over the network to Clive]



HUGO AWARDS:

These are the awards which the international reading public vote for at the World Science Fiction Convention, this year to be held in Holland in August (Confiction - see convention listing).

The nominees which members of the convention are voting for are:

BEST NOVEL of 1989

Poul Anderson, The Boat of a Million Years (Tor)

Orson Scott Card, Prentice Alvin (Tor)

George Alec Effinger, A Fire in the Sun (Doubleday/Foundation)

Dan Simmons, Hyperion (Doubleday/Foundation, Bantam Spectra)

Sheri S. Tepper, Grass (Doubleday/Foundation)

BEST NOVELLA of 1989

Lois McMaster Bujold, "The Mountains of Mourning" (Analog, Borders of Infinity (Baen))

Megan Lindholm, "A Touch of Lavender" (Asimov's)

Judith Moffett, "Tiny Tango" (Asimov's)

Lucius Shepard, "The Father of Stones" (Asimov's, The Father of Stones (WSFA Press))

Connie Willis, "Time-Out" (Asimov's)

BEST NOVELETTE of 1989

Orson Scott Card, "Dogwalker" (Asimov's)

George Alec Effinger, "Everything but Honor" (Asimov's, What Might Have Been, Vol 1 (Bantam Spectra))

Nancy Kress, "The Price of Oranges" (Asimov's)

Mike Resnick, "For I have Touched the Sky" (F&SF)

Robert Silverberg, "Enter A soldier. Later: Enter Another" (Asimov's, Time Gate (Baen))

Connie Willis, "At the Rialto" (Omni, The Microverse (Bantam Spectra))

BEST SHORT STORY of 1989

Orson Scott Card, "Lost Boys" (F&SF)

Suzy McKee Charnas, "Boobs" (Asimov's)

Eileen Gunn, "Computer Friendly" (Asimov's)

Larry Niven, "The Return of William Proxmire" (What Might Have Been Vol 1 (Bantam Spectra))

Bruce Sterling, "Dori Bangs" (Asimov's)

Michael Swanwick, "The Edge of the World" (Full Spectrum II (Doubleday/Foundation))

BEST NON-FICTION BOOK of 1989

Arthur C Clarke, Astounding Days (Gollancz, Bantam Spectra)

Harlan Ellison, Harlan Ellison's Watching (Underwood Miller)

Robert A Heinlein (ed Virginia Heinlein), Grumbles from the Grave (Del Rey)

Ursula K. Le Guin, Dancing at the Edge of the World (Grove)

Alexei & Cory Panshin, The World Beyond the Hill (Tarcher)

Greg Thokar (ed), Noreascon Three Souvenir Book (MCFI Press)

BEST PROFESSIONAL EDITOR of 1989

Ellen Datlow; Gardner Dozois; Edward L. Ferman; David G. Hartwell; Beth Meacham; Charles C Ryan; Stanley Schmidt

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION of 1989

THE ABYSS; THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN; BATMAN; FIELD OF DREAMS; INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE

BEST SEMIPROZINE OF 1989

Locus Charles N Brown

The New York Review of Science Fiction Kathryn Cramer, et al

Thrust D. Douglas Fratz

Science Fiction Chronicle Andrew Porter

Interzone David Pringle

BEST FANZINE of 1989

File 770 Mike Glyer

EOSFAX Timothy Lane

Lan's Lantern George "Lan" Laskowski

Pirate Jenny Pat Mueller

The Mad 3 Party Leslie Turek

BEST FAN WRITER of 1989

Mike Glyer; Arthur D. Hlavaty; Dave Langford; Evelyn Leeper; Leslie Turek

BEST FAN ARTIST of 1989

Steve Fox; Teddy Harvia; Merle Insinga; Joe Mayhew; Stu Shiffman; Taral Wayne

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST of 1989

Jim Burns; Thomas Canty; David Cherry; James Gurney; Tom Kidd; Don Maitz; Michael Whelan

There are two non-Hugo awards which are also voted on at the same time:

JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD (for best book by a new Author in 1988/1989)

John Cramer; Nancy Collins; Katherine Neville; Kristine Kathryn Rusch; Allen Steele

BEST ORIGINAL ARTWORK of 1989

Cover of QUOZL (James Gurney)

Cover of The Stress of Her Regard (James Gurney)

Cover of Rimrunners (Don Maitz)

Cover of Hyperion (Gary Ruddell)

Cover of Paradise (Michael Whelan)

Cover of The Renegades of Pern (Michael Whelan)

You must be a member of the convention to vote, and votes must be postmarked no later than July 13th. Full details are available in PR#5, which has reached Australia.

FAN FUNDS:

Both DUFF and GUFF have announced Australian winners to go overseas this year. The DUFF winner will head off to the Worldcon in Holland, and the DUFF winner will be going to this year's North American Science Fiction Convention (The NASFIC) to be held in San Diego.

GUFF:	Aus	O/S	Totals			
Roman Orszanski	40	6	46	46	59	Winner
Mark Loney &						
Michelle Muijsert	36	4	40	40	58	
Larry Dunning	27	6	33	34X		
Hold Over Funds	2		2X			
Write-In (Wilson						
Da Silva)	1		1X			
No Preference	1		1	3	6	
Total	107	16	123	123	123	

Roman will take up the reins of administrator on his return to Australia. His address is P.O. Box 131, Marden, SA, 5070, Aus. Financial statement and list of Australian voters are yet to be published. They are due at about the same time as Irwin's second child.

DUFF:	Aus	O/S	Total	
Greg Turkich	107	25	132	Winner (>50%)
Roger Weddall	64	41	105	
Write-In	5	1	6	
Hold Over	5	1	6	
No Preference	2	5	7	
Total	183	73	256	

Since Greg was an outright winner on first preferences, no distribution took place.

The DUFF voting represents some kind of record, a large percentage of whom (I believe) voted at the recent Swancon in Perth. As at 27th April Terry Dowling announced there was about \$2300 in the Australian account, and the US administrator, John D. Berry, announced there was around US\$1700 in the US account in February. With so many Australian voters, we will not list them, but the information has been made public.

Writers On Line:

Telecom, as their contribution to the International Literacy Year have sponsored a project called "Writers on Line". It was developed by the Division of Curriculum Services at the Queensland Department of Education, partly to extend the concept of literacy beyond print to the electronic media. The service will be available to any school in Australia that has a Keylink mailbox.

The idea is to enable children to communicate electronically with their favourite writers through the Telecom Plus "KeyLink" Messaging System. Messages to and from writers will be posted to a bulletin board, and the children will be able to look in on all the messages and take part themselves, asking the writers about favourite characters and perhaps gaining hints about the process of creative writing, rather as they would with a writer-in-residence. The first author chosen to take part is South Australian Gillian Rubenstein, whose latest book, Skymaze is a strong contender for this year's children's book awards.

[The Weekend Australian, May 19-20, 1990]

And on the subject of asking authors questions, two well known Australian SF authors (amongst others) were asked "Why do you write?".

Victor Kelleher answered "It's easier for me to explain why I *started* writing. In the mid-seventies, shortly after emigrating from Africa, I suffered so badly from nostalgia that, in desperation, I took to writing about the past. My early jottings gradually grew into short stories as I discovered the benefits of assigning often painful memories to fictional characters: and short stories in turn soon gave way to the larger canvas of the novel. Why I *continued* writing, especially about places other than Africa ... that's a more difficult question altogether. When pressed, I usually fall back on a number of stock responses: in order to exorcise demons; as a way of satisfying my need to make, rather than merely to consume; because writing is an inevitable extension of years of devoted reading; and so on. None of these answers is false; but by the same token, even taken collectively, they fall short of the whole truth."

While Damien Broderick simply replied "Why do I write? I write because I'm achingly sad and lonely. I write to be loved and admired." [Hmmm?-Ed]

[Australian Book Review (also sponsored by Telecom) April, 1990]



DANSE MACABRE - A Con Report

Danse Macabre happened over Easter, but it seems to have been going on a lot longer. Perhaps being an organising committee member with all the associated meetings, phone calls and conversations makes it feel that way.

Being day marshal for the Friday meant it became a succession of wandering corridors and the area around registration to make sure panellists were ready, and knew where they were going. Fortunately this was fairly easy, except for one problem. George Martin (the Guest of Honour) apparently vanished at about 11:30 to a chinese banquet lunch and didn't make it back until 2:50 pm, well after the 2:00 pm opening ceremony commenced, sigh. Thanks to all the panellists who were prompt and organised. The day ended with the team scrabble, which was interesting, with every team ending up winning at least one set of travel scrabble as a prize, thanks to Murphett. One of the four teams managed to get BOTH blanks!

Stelarc, a performance artist, currently at Ballarat TAFE, provided interesting sessions over the weekend. Featuring slides of his previous exhibitions on an artificial third arm and himself suspended from fishhooks (a few rather green audience members at this point) and thought on the obsolescence of the human body.

As usual at Natcon's various awards and prizes were handed out. The Ditmars are detailed elsewhere but some other awards are as follows.

From an interesting Art Show, Nick Stathopoulos carried off the first prize with an Album Cover painting, while Craig Hilton ('Rats of the Underworld' drawing - the cover of *Thyme* #72) and John Grasso (sculpture) were commended. When the items were auctioned off, most contested was a book-sitting cutesy dragon eventually taken off by David Russell over the bids of Phil Ware & Mandy Herriot. An astronaut lamp (lit bulb as helmet) also went for a high price.

Dennis Callegari had a great convention, taking out the Short Story Competition sponsored by the Australian Science Fiction Foundation, with the story "Highway of Crossed Destinies". Stephen Dedman came second with "Smile I no More". Dennis, also got into the Trivia Quiz with the lowest score, but emerged victorious over Tim Reddan, Peter Nicholls, and 'Garfield'.

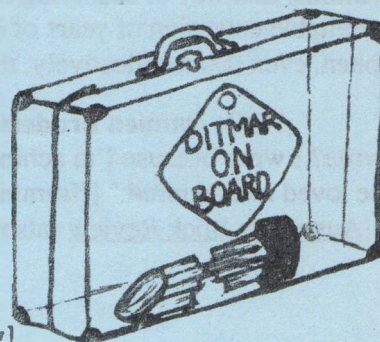
The number of Masquerade entries was disappointing. Apparently some people took too long preparing their costumes and didn't get there in time, but some good entries did turn up. MC Angus Caffrey livened up the affair by challenging Lewis Morley to assemble a plastic space shuttle. Lewis actually managed it! Anyway, the masquerade awards, as read out at the closing ceremony to the embarrassment of the calligrapher were: "Most Polished won Ken Haesler", "Ian Gunn won Best Performance", and "Cheap Frills won Gail Adams and Wendy Purcell". The categories were designated by the judges and were for (in order): Armoured Klingon, Spirit Authors' Past, and dresses from the film DANGEROUS LIAISONS.

The various night parties were very ordinary, with at least one a night being kicked out of a room and gravitating to the registration/Foyer area. Excerpts read from *Galactic Girl* were highlights from one room gathering.

Other things which remain in the memory are - Michelle Muijsert being such a successful audience heckler she was dragooned onto the Pun Panel. The current ANZAPA members group photo, which somehow managed to include Peter Burns. Danny Heap dragging around a wooden wheeled Constantinople the Cat. David McDonnell handing over the gavel to Cathy Kerrigan of Suncon, after scoring a cheap shot about the lack of committee members in Queensland. The signs and placards waved at the Ditmar ceremony, and used for badminton with a balloon by two new wave fans. Roger Weddall's attractive glass Ditmar design and the nice touch of a smaller award for the nominees.

Unfortunately the Space(party)line Motel locked its doors at 10:30 which limited access, but late night videos which included a four masted schooner in stock storm footage in one LOST IN SPACE episode; not to mention uncut BLACK ADDER episodes shown especially for George Martin and Paris, kept the fans amused.

Overall a pretty good con, and I look forward to Suncon 91 and Syncon at Easter '92.



[Alan Stewart - with apologies from the editor for any incorrect deciphering]

Danse Macabre: Another Con Report

Let's start with one item of fact: I've been going to cons for over ten years now.

Most cons tend to blur after a while, and after a few cons you stop bothering with the program and just go along to have a good time with your friends. This con wasn't like that.

Having dutifully scanned the program listing I realised two things. One was the timing of items. There were small gaps between items to allow people time to get from one to another, or duck out to the loo, or what have you, just like at school. In a rabbit warren like the Diplomat, where one item might be on the top front corner of the building and the next might be on the bottom back corner, this was sometimes essential. Yet no-one ever seems to have allowed for this at a con before, and so first one item would start late, then the next would have to start later, and so-on, so that starting times would end up suffixed with the ubiquitous "con time". (e.g. 7:00 pm con time could mean up to 7:30 pm real time). However (still on the subject of timing) there was no lunch break! For people like us who tend to roll up between 12:00 and 2:00 pm, this proved very useful. Usually when "lunch time" arrives there is nothing else for people to do so they just disappear, and we arrive to discover nothing going on, and no-one around, and wonder why we bother. Also having just got up, and had breakfast, few people really want to eat again at that time. After the initial surprise, I found it worked well. Others also commented on this matter.

The other item which struck me about programming is that not only were there panel items I wished to attend, but that I sometimes had to actually choose items and, since I didn't manage to get to a single Stelarc item, that I sometimes chose unwisely. The worst conflicts were on Sunday which had the business meeting (at a sensible 1:30 pm, which meant it was very well attended (~70)) against Last Words, a literary trivia quiz; and later the Auction, against Stelarc, and also against George Turner. George got rescheduled, and for us business meeting types an impromptu Last words was re-run in the foyer around midnight, but I missed Stelarc.

For those interested by gory business details: Sydney in '92 beat Melbourne in '92, 39 votes to 27. Swancon announced a profit of ~\$900 to be split equally between the three fan funds. Danse Macabre announced an approximate membership of 200, and that they too expected to make a profit. Suncon declined to report. Of the four amendments to the constitution only one was passed, and modified at that. Each natcon will now be awarding up to five "Australian SF (Ditmar) Awards", instead of up to five "Australian Science Fiction Awards". There you have it.

The banquet was also an interesting affair. The hotel staff just couldn't cope with people 'helping' themselves to the buffet. They obviously felt like slapping our wrists and telling us to behave whenever we beat them to an item. But the real fun came when the placard carrying chanting new wave invaded for the ditmar ceremony. (For those who don't know, the 'New Wave' are mostly members of the Melb Science Fiction Club, most of whom are also under 25. Us people over 30 have by definition become the 'boring old farts', even when we are members of the club.) Terry Dowling made a comment about hoping he'd been voted on by merit, and not by name only, because in Sydney, Rosaleen Love's works were even harder to obtain than they were in Melbourne. He was later gratified to discover that people had gone to extraordinary lengths to obtain photocopies of all the nominated works before voting, and that they had still voted for his work. Bruce Gillespie (self-nominated boring old fart) had two speeches prepared, one for if he beat the new wave, and one for if the new wave beat him. Neither event happened. He tied with Ian Gunn (new wave) for best fan writer. His speech consisted of relative scores "New Wave 1: Boring old farts 1". (The actual results are elsewhere). There was a neat and appreciated touch in that smaller awards were presented for all nominated works. Ian Gunn caused much laughter when he sauntered up in his bright multi-coloured check suit for his second Ditmar, carrying a transparent briefcase (attache case), with the sign "Ditmar on Board" draped over it.

Aphelion launched two new Australian books (flyers enclosed), one for George Turner's new collection A Pursuit of Miracles, and one for a Rynosseros collection by Terry Dowling, simply titled Rynosseros. Terry proved his ability as a showman by successfully thwarting a concerted effort by the McMullen urchin to interrupt for the umpteenth time. Terry was the only one to discover that "You're dead meat, McMullen" muttered through gritted teeth was the magical formula required to have the child removed.

Apart from the non-appearance of the guest of honour at the opening ceremony, which threw a lot of the strain of opening on the fan guest of honour - Eric Lindsay, the general impression most of the 200 odd people seemed to carry away with them was a good one. I certainly enjoyed myself.

THE PAUL MYRON LINEBARGER MEMORIAL TRIVIA QUIZ

It is easy to see why the members of the M.S.F.C. are so young. It's all got to do with survival of the fittest. Aging and creaking bones, such as those of the four Boring Old Farts who made their way to the Saint David's Church Hall to challenge the cream of New Wave Fandom in a Trivia Night, aren't made for those cold and drafty environs. Oh sure, I first met Roger Weddall in a cold and drafty Church campsite in the Adelaide Hills, but then we were still young and impetuous. Now I usually prefer my fannish activities somewhere with central heating.

Our team, "Welease Wodger", consisting of ASMS, Karen Small, Roger and I, soon discovered where the M.S.F.C. get their heat. Most of the prizes were edible and about 95% sugar, lots of calories or, as New Wavers would probably insist, kilojoules. As a concession to we oldies, the prizes were wrapped in handkerchiefs and, as I was suffering from the dread Danse Macabre sniffilis, I made good use of our first free hankie.

Alan Stewart had designed the questions and he promised that they'd be easier than the shockers he'd produced for the Danse Macabre Quiz. (I'm sure that most Danse Macabre attenders took one look at those and swore off Trivia Competitions for life.) In the long run, he was right but, after the first round, when we scored three out of ten, I was all for having Alan tarred and feathered. What the hell is RED DWARF anyway? [A film with a novel tie-in - Ed]

Karen Pendergunn did a great job as Quizmaster. She put up with just enough nonsense from the assembled wits. The multitude was rather diminished by rain and the sniffilis but there were still ten or so teams of four. Glenn Tilley's team obviously went to the Piers Anthony school of Mathematics, according to which there are six people in a quartet. Justin Semmell, on the other hand, could attract only Lucy Zinkiewicz and Bruce Barnes to his team. They also had trouble naming themselves; when asked for their name, Justin replied "We're thinking" and so WE'RE THINKING they became.

Alan carefully included a few gimmes for each team in the fannish questions. Having Roger on the team meant that we got the answer to the question "Who was the 1989 FFANZ winner", a question that certainly has to be considered in the well-kept secret category. Another team had, as two of its members, the answer to the question "Which M.S.F.C. members were married last year?"

Just to keep everyone busy during the breaks between rounds, Karen delivered "Who am I?" questions and Alan had provided a game of BOGGLE. James Allen kept us all well fed with coffee and cupcakes. I was told that I was not permitted to call them fairycakes. I still don't have the Melbourne argot down pat. That might have been why Wendy Ratter greeted me with an amazed "I didn't think you lived in Melbourne."

For \$4-00 a head, it was great value. Not only was there the supper, but the prizes between rounds were appreciated, except for the convention kit that our team scored. "What are a tired old bunch of fans supposed to do with Vaseline and condoms?" I asked. Fortunately, the answer was provided. We gave them to Andrew Pam, who was heading for the registry office the next day. Following the exhortations of Bruce Gillespie's Ditmar acceptance speech, I hasten to point out that THE BORING OLD FARTS WON! (We won the Boggle competition too, but then we did have ASMS on the team.) Congratulations to the New Wavers for providing us with a venue where we could show off. It was a good and well-organised evening and I gather that HUTTCON made a reasonable amount out of it too.

[Marc Ortlieb]

Thanks for this issue go to (in no particular order):

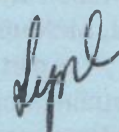
Mark (many times), Roger, Marc, David, Bruce, Clive, Roy, Alan (many times), Lucy (many times), Michael, Mandy, John, Sue, Laurie, Eric, Jack, Shane, Ian, Chuq, Lyn, Linnette, Irwin, Terry, Kerrie, Stephen., Sue, and Anne. A special Thank You, to all those people who kept not believing in the deadline, and so kept coming up with items that just HAD to go in this issue.

ARTWORK this issue:

Front Cover: "The Time has come..." The Wiz © 1989. Back Cover: MORI © 1989

"Space: The Darkness Beyond" The Wiz © 1990 (p2).

Page 5: Sheryl Birkhead © 1990. Page 6: LynC © 1990.



That's all Folks. 1137100690

BOOK REVIEWS:

The Judas Mandala	<i>Damien Broderick</i>	(Mandarin Aust., 228pp \$12.95)
The Black Grail	<i>Damien Broderick</i>	(Mandarin Aust., 310pp \$13.95)
Striped Holes	<i>Damien Broderick</i>	(Mandarin Aust., 179pp \$12.95)
A Pursuit Of Miracles	<i>George Turner</i>	(Aphelion Publications, 209pp \$12.95)
Rynosseros	<i>Terry Dowling</i>	(Aphelion Publications, 228pp \$12.95)

The three Broderick novels have seen previous publication, although this is the first Australian publication of Striped Holes, winner of the Long Fiction Ditmar on its US publication in 1988.

I had not previously read either **The Black Grail** or **The Judas Mandala**, and must admit that I found both books difficult to begin (I made three attempts on **The Judas Mandala** before managing to complete it), but with hindsight I feel that both were worth the effort. I have reviewed **Striped Holes** previously in these pages and welcome this opportunity to revise my earlier (perhaps rather hasty) judgement of it.

The Judas Mandala is the story of Maggie Roche, who travels through time from the early 21st century to the 61st century, where a curious 'utopia' has developed, but is being undermined by a small group of humans who desire a little more in the way of freedom. This is a 'revised' edition of the original 1982 publication and never having seen the earlier incarnation I cannot offer any advice on what those revisions might consist of.

The Black Grail is the story of Xaraf Firebridge, who travels from a distant barbaric past to a distant post-holocaust future, where he is used as a pawn by God-like beings attempting to ensure that history continues.

Striped Holes is in a lighter vein, opening with a time machine appearing in chat-show host Sopwith Hammil's apartment. The time machine "looked like a two-meter loaf of sliced bread". Thus begins a tale that involves a 22nd century revolutionary, God and (of course) a striped hole.

Broderick writes complex, sometimes difficult to read stories (a dictionary at hand is advised) but all three are enjoyable, challenging reading. And is good to see an Australian author's work in print in Australia. Odd that it is **The Black Grail** that bears the legend WINNER OF THE DITMAR AWARD and not the award winning **Striped Holes**, though.

Aphelion Publications previous foray into publishing SF was the short-lived, but much appreciated magazine *Aphelion*. Now the adventurous Peter McNamara has returned with TWO single author collections.

George Turner needs no introduction, and a **A Pursuit Of Miracles**, a collection of his short fiction, is a welcome reminder that George is a capable writer in this form as well as with the longer novel. All but one of the stories featured here have been previously published, and the odd one out had been scheduled to appear in *Aphelion*, but the magazine folded prior to its appearance. I think the best way of describing this collection is to quote from the review in the May, 1990 Locus where Faren Miller says this book "...is challenging, astringent, moving, and exhilarating. What more could you ask from a collection of speculative fiction?" I agree. Buy it. Read it.

Aphelion's other collection is **Rynosseros**, a collection of eight tales by Terry Dowling telling the story of Tom Tyson, master of the sandship Rynosseros, in a future Australia which echoes the past, present and future. Of the eight stories, five have not seen previous publication, although (if memory serves) Terry did read 'The Robot Is Running Away From The Trees' at Syncon 88. (Still the most memorable event of that con for me.) Tom inhabits a bizarre world, a mix of high-tech and strange tribal traditions, where the Australian interior is controlled by multiple Ab'O states. It is a strange, yet beautiful world, one I look forward to visiting many more times.

Next issue: The local publishing bonanza continues, as we look at Rosaleen Love's **Total Devotion Machine** (which finally escaped the warehouses and made it onto the bookshelves in April) and (maybe) Lucy Sussex's **My Lady Tongue & Other Tales**.

[Clive Newall]

LETTERS:

Last issue, I mentioned the Worldcon Bid for 1995, which Sydney is running. This produced quite a bit of response. One letter sums up all the other responses quite succinctly, so that is the only letter being re-printed this issue. If anyone has anything further to add, we will publish it next issue.

Dear LynC,

I received the latest Thyme and was glad to see you have, at least, reported on the existence of SYDNEY IN 95. However, I am less than happy with some of your comments. "...naming it after SYDNEY IN 95...", you say. There is a fairly long tradition in Fandom of identifying bids by the city and by the year. Hence, PERTH IN 89 (a Natcon bid) would suffer no residual angst because it carries the same baggage as a similarly named worldcon bid. What do you suggest we call it? Fred? [Could be interesting. I don't believe it's been done before.-Ed]

As for the choice of Darling Harbour - the Sydney Convention Centre - there was no real choice. It is a world-class facility, capable of handling cons up to 3500 with ease and is ideally suited to one with 1500-2000 attenders. The next largest Con space in the city holds 1000 in its largest room. AUSSIECON II showed the problems inherent in even the best hotel con space for a large scale con. [?-Ed] The Hugo ceremony and the Masquerade will be held in the Con Centre when we win.

Darling Harbour hotels are in fact expensive by most standards, but not particularly by Sydney standards, and we expect, as more are built, to get a cheaper rate somewhere. However, we are also investigating other methods of fan accommodation.

I don't see why every Australian fan has to fall into line if we are to win. Many overseas Bids are beset with some degree of local criticism and I find it quite helpful to have such issues thrashed out. You may notice that Tipper's subsequent METALUNA (#32) carried letters from both Edwina Harvey and me. John seems not to have been as vehement this time. [I don't actually receive METALUNA. The item I quoted last issue was photocopied for me by someone else. And I agree, discussion is healthy, and critical discussion of the bid can bear fruit, but not personal criticism of the people involved. I'm glad Tipper has calmed down.-Ed]

Finally, we are looking for a number of T-shirt designs, none of which has to be dependent on the logo - just as MELBOURNE IN 85 tram T-shirt had no rampant marsupial on an Arts Centre. [Touché-Ed]

Jack R Herman

Box 272, Wentworth Bldg, University of Sydney, NSW, 2006

[WAHF: Gerald Smith, Bruno Ogorelec, Sheryl Birkhead, and various others]

The Yarn Basket:

CofA's:

Michael Hailstone (The Matalan Rave) has taken out a new post office box: P.O. Box 15, World Trade Centre, Vic, Australia, 3005. There is a phone, but it spends much time out of order. The number, if you wish to try, is 480 0050.

Lucy Sussex (see below) & **Julian Warner** (The Space Wastrel) have taken up cat sitting as a hobby. The cat lives at 10 Manica St, Brunswick, Vic, Aus, 3056, so they've moved in with it.

David, Helen and Carla Hodson have moved to Melbourne from Adelaide. They have moved into 14 Woburn St, Heidelberg, Vic, Aus, 3084. The new phone number is (03) 451 257.

Anne Thompson has taken up residence in a post office box in Cairns, P.O. Box 277, Westcourt, Cairns, QLD, Aus, 4870.

Last issue we told you **Mark Linneman** had moved back to the states. His new address is 925-106 Red Mile Crt, Lexington, KY 40504, U.S.A. Phone is [USA] (606) 254 7534.

Also a word to **anyone planning to move** in the Melbourne Metropolitan region. We have heaps of boxes and packing materials. Many of the boxes are ideal for paperbacks, and many are perfect for records. All we ask is that you take care of them and return those in a suitable condition for the next poor soul.

Hatches:

Kevin & Denise Noonan welcomed a healthy son, Christopher Ross on the 18th April this year.

Oz Publishing:

As announced elsewhere (see con reports and attached flyers) Aphelion Press have just published short story collections by both **Terry Dowling** and **George Turner**. Aphelion Press are willing to airmail to anywhere in the world for the price listed as long as the money arrives with the order in Australian dollars. Discounts are available for more than one book: \$24 for the first two, \$10 per book extra thereafter. Australian dollars only. [For those who missed getting a George Turner flyer, the book is titled A Pursuit of Miracles, and retails for A\$12.95. It received a good review in the May 1990 issue of Locus, p17.]

Lucy Sussex' "My Lady Tongue" has been accepted for publication in a US collection The Women Who Walk through Fire, edited by Susannah Sturgis, which will be published by Crossings Press. **Rosaleen Love** also had a story accepted by had to withdraw because the Women's Press are trying to sell The Total Devotion Machine in the US, and there are copyright problems if both come out. Lucy is also due to have a short story collection published by Heinemann later this year. Titled My Lady Tongue and Other Tales, it will not be being published as SF, so look out for it in the mainstream section of your bookstores. It's the one with the old lace cover featuring brilliantly scarlet blood dripping from the head.

EIDOLON ("Our Ideal is Excellence") is a small, non-profit publication dedicated to new writing in SF, Fantasy, and Horror. It's solely funded by the people who produce it. First issue is supposed to include **Terry Dowling**, **Leigh Edmonds**, and **Keira McKenzie**. Cost is \$15 for 4 issues (a year) or \$9 for 2. Write to Eidolon Publications, P.O. Box 225, North Perth, WA, Aus, 6006

The Adelaide Festival Fringe runs a three-day novel competition. Authors are required to produce their masterwork in three days and sign a legal document swearing to that fact. This year the competition was won by **Jeff Harris** and **Chris Simmons** with Shadowed Magic. The winning novel is published within 4 days of the competition. Cost is \$8.95, it is about 30000 words long, and is I gather hard to find. [Doxy]

Sue Bursztynski has had her first short story "A Fishy Story" published in the April issue of Family Circle.

O/S Publishing:

Edgewood Press are interested in hearing from any small press organisation (supports only one person, circulation less than 10,000) publishing fantasy or Science Fiction in 1990. They are publishing The Best Of the Rest: The Year's Best Small Press Science Fiction and Fantasy. No originals. Editors are: **Stephen Pasechnik** and **Brian Youmans**, P.O. Box 264, Cambridge, MA 02238. U.S.A.

Short Story Competitions & Other competitions:

Canberra Science Fiction Society (Inc) and **The Esoteric Order of Dagon (Inc)** have announced their annual short story competition. The competition is for stories in either SF/F (CSFS) or Horror (EOD) of up to 10,000 words. The deadline is July 1 each year. This year the prizes are \$50 (1st in each category), \$25 (2nd in SF/F), \$10 (3rd in SF/F). For details write to either group. P.O. Box 47, Civic Square, ACT, 2608 for CSFS, or P.O. Box 2061, Canberra, ACT, 2601 for EOD.

The Australian SF Foundation in conjunction with **Suncon** and **Huttcon** is sponsoring two literary competitions. Total prize pool is \$300 for each.

For the **Huttcon** competition, stories must be no greater than 5000 words, must use only original characters. Closing date is 30/Sept/90. Typed double-spaced copies to be sent to Short Story Competition c/- 12 Flinders St, Matraville, NSW, 2036.

For the **Suncon** competition, entries can be poetry, scripts or short stories, and should be original to the author and not adapted from another author's creation. Closing date is 15/Jan/91. Entry fee is \$2. 3 typed double spaced copies must be sent to Short Story Competition, P.O. Box 437, Camberwell, Vic, 3124.

For full details of either, write to the respective addresses.

The Australian Science Fiction Foundation have also announced a competition for a lasting design for the Australian SF (**Ditmar**) **Award**. There will be a cash prize of \$200. Entries will accepted up to 31/Jan/91, and the winner will be announced at **Suncon**, the 30th Australian National SF Convention. Send detailed drawings and an artist's impression to P.O. Box 428, Richmond, Vic, 3121.

Full details of all the Foundation competitions should be mentioned in their newsletter The Instrumentality.

Clubs:

The Blue Mountains Science Fiction group have celebrated their 1st anniversary. This group gets together on the first Friday of every month, and numbers (informally) between 15 and 20 people. If interested contact Julie Hawkins (047) 824 331.

Worldcon Bids:

With the latest PR from CONFICTION (The worldcon to be held in Holland this year) comes news of both the official bids for the 1993 Worldcon and a write-in bid. The official Bids are **Phoenix, San Francisco, and Zagreb**. The write-in is **Hawaii**. [At the time of going to press last issue, Thyme only knew of Zagreb and Hawaii - which news came to us from Bruno Ogorelec who was hoping to get to Australia for our Natcon, but couldn't make it.]

Several bids have made themselves public for 1994. Perth of course has withdrawn but there are plenty of other contenders. They are **Winnipeg** (Canada), **Nashville** (Tennessee), **Milwaukee** (Wisconsin), and **Berlin**. [I'm not sure of the seriousness of the latter two.]

And of course there is our own bid for 1995, **Sydney**. To support this bid, write to P.O. Box 429, Sydney, NSW, Aus, 2001. \$10 Pre-supporting, \$5 for Synchronicity, the quarterly bid magazine.

Events:

On Thursday June 21, **Starwalking Inc** and **Huttcon** are bringing you the first night screening of **DICK TRACY**, at the City Village Cinema Complex, commencing at 7:00 pm. Cost is \$8.50 per Adult, \$5.50 concession. Bookings close June 15.

Write to Starwalking, P.O. Box 118, SPRINGVALE, VIC, 3171.

Marion Zimmer Bradley has been critically ill. Last heard she was off the ventilator, but still in hospital. She suffered a heart attack, which caused her lungs to fill with fluid (?), and had to be placed on life support machinery. She is now capable of breathing independently, and reading. Letters and cards can be sent to her c/- Other Realms, 35111-F Newark Blvd, Suite 255, Newark, CA 94560. [Chuq Von Rospach]

New Thyme Agent:

Lyn McConchie has, due to other commitments, chief amongst them her illness, and farm, had to resign as Thyme's agent. While we are sorry she feels that way, we are delighted to announce that **Linnette Horne** has agreed to replace her. Linnette's address is C.P.O. Box 2836, Wellington, New Zealand. The way our agents work, is that the potential subscriber pays the agent, who then lets us know to include an extra issue in our next bulk mailing to that country.

The THYME Convention Update

SYNCON 90:

Dates: 6-8th July (Not the Queen's Birthday!)
Venue: Hawkesbury AG College, Richmond, NSW
Rates: Residential \$130, Day membership \$30 (2 days)
FGOH: Ron & Sue Clarke
Mail: G.P.O. Box 429, Sydney, NSW, Aus, 2001

CONFICTION: the 48th World Science Fiction Convention

Dates: 23rd - 27th August, 1990
Rates: \$120 till 15 July 1990. \$35 Supporting. \$20 Child.
GOH: Joe Haldeman, Wolfgang Jeschke, Harry Harrison
Venue: The Netherlands Congress Centre, The Hague.
Mail: Worldcon 1990, P.O. Box 95370 - 2509 CJ The Hague, Holland

OZ Agent::J Ackroyd.GPO Box 2708X,Melbourne, 3001
[PR#5 is now available. It contains the Hugo and Site Selection voting forms, which close in July. This is the FIRST time that these items have arrived in Australia in time to utilise them.-Ed]

CONCUBINE '90:

Dates: 6th - 8th October 1990
Venue: Somewhere at Adelaide University
Rates: \$30 Attending, \$15 supporting
Mail: A Jenkins, 82 Highland Dr, Bellevue Hts, SA, 5000
[This is billed as the first Adelaide Convention in three years, and an event no green, bug-eyed monster would dare miss. It is brought to you by Adelaide's equivalent of the new wave. Should be fun.]

HUTTCON '90: (The 1990 Media NatCon)

Dates: 23-25 November 1990
Venue: The Diplomat Hotel, 12 Acland St, ST KILDA.
Rates: \$55 to 30/June/90, then \$60. Supporting \$25
GOH: Simon Jones (aka Arthur Dent).
Mail: Edwina Harvey, 12 Flinders St, Matraville, NSW. 2036

All details correct to best of our knowledge, no room for more conventions to be listed this issue

MEDTREK IV

-- A S.F. Media Convention --

Date -- 4th - 7th October, 1991.

Venue -- University of Western Sydney, Richmond, N.S.W.
(Hawkesbury Agricultural College)

Guest of Honour -- David Prowse (Darth Vader from STAR WARS)

Fan Guest of Honour -- Marianne Plumridge (fan artist, writer, etc).

Official Charity -- Childrens Hospital, Camperdown, Sydney

Mascot -- Boomer, the Martian Koala
(Representative of the Sydney in '91 Worldcon Bid at NOLACON in 1988)

Featuring -

Latex Modelling Demonstration with Peter Lupinski & Gary Armstrong,
Model-Making with Ian 'Ace' Auhl. Make-Up Workshop,
Costuming Workshop, Writers Workshop,
Role-Playing Games Demonstration and Instruction,
And much, much more of the usual Convention Activities ...

Cost -- \$20.00 Supporting Membership
(convertable to full-membership as \$25.00 -- \$5.00 discount)
\$75.00 until 1st August, 1991
\$85.00 at the door.



Yes, you can pay it off !!

For All Information Please Contact -

Treasurer : Mavis Smith (Phone - (043) 42 3947)
28 Trafalgar Ave. Woy Woy, NSW, 2256

-- or --

President : Susan Clarke (Phone - (047) 51 5740)
6 Bellevue Rd. Faulconbridge, NSW, 2776
(enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for all returns)

Contact Susan Clarke for the many Upcoming Fund-Raising Events

MEDTREK IV Membership Application Form

(please fill in one form for each family member)

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Contact phone number () _____

Full attending member () _____

Supporting member () _____

Family membership () Family name _____
(Special Rates on Application)

Live in accommodation YES / NO

Arriving Friday before dinner, leaving Monday ()
(\$170)

Arriving Friday before dinner, leaving Sunday ()
(\$130)

Arriving Saturday, leaving Monday ()
(\$140)

Arriving Saturday, leaving Sunday ()
(\$85)

Ground floor accommodation required ()

Party zone or quiet zone (please specify) _____

Other special needs, diet etc (please specify) _____

Live-out member - _____ meals required (lunch and dinner only
available) at \$7.00 each

I would be interested in bus transport from Sydney Airport
or Central Railway Station to the Con. (Cost extra) ()

I would be interested in coach transport from Melbourne
to the Con. (Cost extra) ()

Enclosed is a deposit / full amount for Membership of \$ _____

Enclosed is a deposit / full amount for accommodation of \$ _____

I would like to volunteer my help ()

All cheques to be made out to MEDTREK. Please complete form and send to:
Susan Clarke, 6 Bellevue Road, Faulconbridge NSW 2776. Please include a
long SSAE.

WELCOME TO THE CLUB

Anatol Carboli

Delany had arranged for the meeting with Ambrosia and Lee to be held in The Mirror's conference room, a spacious suite that technicians had long since transformed into the network's electronic heart. The old regency-papered walls had been overlayed with long rows of video screens. Data exchange units were aligned at floor level and boom cameras and sound equipment suspended overhead. Where once there had been an antique solid-wood table with three dozen matching chairs, now there were back-to-back rows of computer consoles, each with a coaster-mounted operator's stool.

A technical innovation, it had been spectacularly successful, the kudos (and boost in income) from 'special event' coverages more than justifying it standing idle for the greater part of the year.

The room was idle now, and for that Delany was grateful. He had seated himself at the end of the console row, at the terminal furthest from the doorway, positioning himself so that he could keep one eye on those with him and the other alert for unwanted intruders. What he was about to show his guests was for their eyes only.

He looked across at them, wondering, not for the first time, what they were making of it all. Julie Ambrosia was The Mirror's Managing Editor. A small, neat woman in her early fifties, she sat a couple of stools away to his left, very still, her hands clasped together across an inactive keyboard. Jeremy Lee sat opposite her. He was a little older, his tanned skin and well-muscled physique suggesting a vocation less sedentary than journalism. He was part owner of The Mirror newspaper, still the cornerstone of The Mirror Group. He worked intermittently for the Features pages, but it was more hobby than job. He seemed nervous, several times rolling his stool in and away from the console bank. Neither of his guests, Delany noted, looked very happy.

"Are we ready, Ken?" Ambrosia asked.

Delany grimaced. He was as ready as he would ever be. "I take it you're both aware of the subject?"

"Crockett," Lee said irritably. "Let's get on with it, eh?"

"Of course." Delany glanced at his notes. "I

wrote a bit of a preamble here, but since the basic facts are obvious, I'll break it down to a short summary."

Ambrosia took her hands off the console and re-clasped them on her lap. "Whatever you like, Ken."

"Briefly then," Delany began. "We're now in year seven of the Crockett presidency, seven years that separate into two clearly discernable periods. The first two years, Crockett was a national disaster. The job was too big for him. It was obvious to all of us. The less said about it the better. Then, about half way through that first term, he started to get things right. And by right, I mean spectacularly right. The budget he brought down in his third year was a turning point for this country: the devaluation strategy, tax cuts, farm reconstruction programs, welfare streamlining... That package was revolutionary. And it came from the same Crockett who, at the most generous assessment, blundered his way to the mid-point of his term."

Ambrosia raised an eyebrow. "Different advisers, Ken. Different policy options. There was a hell of a shake up in the White House prior to that budget."

"Exactly. One hell of a shake up! They sent in a whole new team. Most of the new faces were young and politically inexperienced, but against all expectation they never once put a foot wrong."

Lee, defying its design principles, rocked forward on his stool. "So the Administration's doing a good job. So what?"

"It's more than a good job. They've performed miracles. All of a sudden Crockett's a statesman. He's thrown party politics out the window. Look at the recent judicial appointments: people who campaigned against him, for Chris-sake!"

"They were good choices," Lee said. "They stood out."

"Oh, I agree. They were chosen strictly on merit, a truly bizarre concept in politics."

"So what? You saying there's something wrong in that?"

"No. It's good."

"Then what's this about? Get to the point!"

Delany glanced across at him. Lee's attitude

seemed deliberately antagonistic, and he wondered why that should be. What was Lee so upset about? The Mirror had never gone easy on the Administration - on any Administration.

"Okay. Summary continues. Crockett did enough to get himself re-elected. Three years now into his second term and he's gone from strength to strength. The whole damn country has. He's so popular that the 8 Year Limitation Bill looks sure to be amended. If it is, he'll run again. He could carry close to 50 states. He could go on forever.

"So, question: What is the magic ingredient that made a new man out of Hannibal Crockett?"

Ambrosia shrugged her shoulders. "We give up, Ken. Why don't you tell us?"

"He is a new man. Crockett the bumbler has been replaced, by another Crockett, Crockett the perfect president."

"A smart twin brother, eh?" Lee said sarcastically. "A sort of Billy Carter in reverse?"

Delany ignored him and clicked on the video. "Let me show you something." He pointed to the monitor rows. "Okay, six screens there in the middle; six frames from six different TV speeches or interviews. What you're going to see here is one of his mannerisms, the slight squint just before he fields a real tough one. Watch carefully. I'm going to run them now, simultaneously, six different squints edited out of six different TV appearances. Okay. Here we go."

Ambrosia's hands returned to the table. She watched the screens intently. Lee continued to rock in his chair, but the casual gesture seemed forced. His eyes never left the pictures.

"What did you see?" Delany asked at last.

"It's a consistent mannerism," Ambrosia said. "Same expression each time. So what?"

"It's exactly the same. I've had the six sequences digitally scanned. It's exact to the finest measure!"

"I'm sorry, Ken. What does this...?"

"It means, damn it, that there is no Crockett presidency. Real people don't reproduce mannerisms that accurately. Not anywhere like it. What we see as Crockett is an extremely sophisticated computer simulation." He paused waiting for reaction, but both just stared at him. Lee stopped rocking, but otherwise there was no sign he was impressed.

"Crockett stays out of sight," Delany expounded. "In the White House or home on the ranch; it doesn't much matter. They trot him out for strolls in the Rose Garden, or public relations jobs like welcoming astronauts and foreign dignitaries, but apart from that he's no more a president than I am. The reality of it is that this country is being run by a comput-

er program!"

Ambrosia's smile returned, but it seemed depleted, more a humourless mask. "Ken, this is a bit far-fetched isn't it? They don't write programs that can run countries, especially a country as complex as this one. It simply couldn't be done."

It was the reply Delany had expected. He had his counter ready and went to it with enthusiasm.

"Sure, it looks complex. It looks impossibly complex. But that's because people like us - and, equally, politicians and administrators - view the problem as a whole. Holistically. But programmers don't. They break up that whole into its constituent parts, and those parts into parts, and so on until all they have left are a whole lot of small solvable problems. They then work from the bottom up, setting up decision-making hierarchies, prioritizing, rebuilding the whole in a manner they can both understand and manipulate. 'Running America' - for want of a better name - must be one hell of a program, but it's still just a program. The principles don't change. It collects and processes data, making decisions based on that data. Whoever's running this thing's got a facility somewhere that's taking in quite literally everything. It'll be linked to all the major computer networks - military, financial and political databases, even the TV ratings surveys. Everything!

"No wonder Crockett always makes sound decisions, incisive decisions. So would you if you could hold every piece of available data simultaneously in your mind, if your decisions were sifted through every available expert opinion, everything that was known about human history, every socio-economic graph and analysis that exists or ever existed. How could you be wrong?"

He looked from one to the other, awaiting reaction.

There was disappointingly little. Lee asked: "What about the interviews? He fields questions doesn't he? Answers them off the top of his head?"

"You're wrong. Crockett doesn't hold live press conferences. The real Crockett makes TV speeches, set pieces; he never 'fields' questions as such. His press conferences are all electronic, questions taken direct at his desk - all very statesmanlike - from commentators situated in TV studios all across the nation. All we ever see are talking heads; we never stop to think about the geography.

"The TV Crockett's a simulation. Those squint sequences show you that. He always pauses a moment before answering a question, the squint or some other mannerism. The program's buying time. It doesn't need much, but it needs some; there are processes it just has to go through."

He paused, again expecting questions, but there were none. Ambrosia's smile seemed painted on; Lee was looking down at his console. Delany went on. "First off, the question has to go through a vocoder. That allows the main program to extract the question in a form it can handle and submit it to a whole batch of parallel processes. Each search through very fast relational databases for any relevant information, which is then correlated by the main program and an answer formulated - always correct - or at the very least, the best guess. We're probably looking at a holistic program, able to improve itself with each problem. It may already have reached a decision-making capability far beyond its programmers'. And of course it has perfect memory. Crockett never contradicts himself in the slightest. Have you noticed that?

"Anyway, the question goes back through the vocoder in Crockett-speak, synthesised with the TV image, and Crockett responds after a second or two's delay. Once you've spotted it, the simulation's easy to pick. What I showed you was just one of dozens of comparative sequences. I'll show you as many as you like."

Ambrosia's smile faded completely. She looked across at Lee who returned her gaze, pursed his lips a moment and nodded.

"Okay, Ken," she said quietly. "Let's extend the hypothesis. Let's say you're right and The Mirror decides to back you on it. Presumably it's not the simulation - the technicians and programmers - we're after, it's the bigger fish, the people behind it all."

"Damn right! And no there's no better way to flush them out than to break the story. Break it big!"

"Fine. But the big fish, Ken? Just who do you reckon we're gunning for?"

"The Administration, damn it! The Crockett Administration!"

"Not just a select few then? The whole Administration?"

"It has to be. And more. Anyone in close contact with the President: advisers, public relations people, all the immediate chain of command. On the technical side there has to be software and hardware designers and suppliers in the know, media coordinators, more PR..." Delany's voice trailed off. "There has to be an enormous number locked into this thing, locked in tight." He was shaken then by something he had not previously considered. "An organisation that size... Christ! It's amazing that nothing's leaked!"

"Committed people," Ambrosia said.

Delany shrugged. "More likely they're well paid

for what they do." He looked at her quizzically. "What's the point?"

"Point is, I believe what you're telling me. What we need to establish is the most appropriate course of action."

Delany could only stare at her. "This is still a newspaper isn't it? And this is the biggest story we're ever likely to break!"

Lee leaned forward on his stool, interrupting Ambrosia's reply. "Yes, it probably is. But what do you think's to be gained by running it?"

Delany looked from one to the other. He had an uneasy feeling he was missing something.

"Gained? For Chris-sake, Jeremy! This is fraud on a scale previously undreamed of. Hell! It's unconstitutional! The will of the people is being denied. Whoever's running this thing, they're about to knock over the 8 Year Limitation Bill. If they succeed, this Crockett program could run the country forever."

"Ah! Only if it's re-elected," Lee said. "If the people vote it in again at the next election. If that happens, then I don't see any countermanding of the will of the people. If the program's doing a better job than its human counterpart, why not vote for it. In fact we'd be fools not to."

Delany had his notes in hand. He slapped them down in anger. "That's hardly the point!"

"Isn't it? Think, Ken. We have a country that's pulled back from the brink of economic and social disaster. We're on the way to becoming a prosperous nation again, a world leader, and this time not simply because we've got more bombs. The fact of the matter is we're all better off. Why spoil it?"

Delany shook his head, slowly, disbelievingly. "I can't believe this. It's as if...."

Then realization burst on him. They knew! Somehow both of them knew. He opened his mouth, but the words would not come. He closed it again without speaking.

Ambrosia leaned forward. She caught his gaze and held it.

"I've known for almost a year. Jeremy's known even longer. Lots of people know." Her smile flourished. "You made the point yourself: nothing as big as this can be totally secure. People on the inside get careless, about what they say and who they say it to. And every now and then somebody from the outside, like yourself, sees through it. Though that hasn't happened much lately. The simulation is becoming more sophisticated all the time, more and more difficult to detect."

Delany opened his mouth again, but she waved him to silence. She hardly needed to; his dismay was rendering him speechless.

"Ken, how long have you known me? Ten years?"

He shrugged his shoulders, unable to offer more.

"We're colleagues and friends. That much doesn't change, whether we're dealing with Crockett or anyone else. You've nothing to fear from me."

Delany was instantly uneasy. Fear? Tendrils of paranoia busily wrapped themselves around his spine.

"Listen to me," Ambrosia said. "I'll try to make some sense of this."

Delany nodded. What were they going to threaten him with?

With effort, he croaked: "Okay."

"Fine. Well, for a start, let me anticipate some of your arguments. Since you're familiar with the principles of programming, I take it you've got no objection to them being used as a tool of decision making, even at the executive level?"

He found his voice, anger pushing aside the cold terror instinct told him he should feel. "As a tool, damn it! Not as..."

"It is a tool!" she snapped, and smiled wanely as she acknowledged the lapse in control. "Your objection," she went on, more calmly, "would be that if the program runs for re-election, people should know what it is. They should know what they're re-electing."

He stared at her, a growing sense of unreality undermining the logic he sought to employ. "More or less."

"Fine. Do you think Crockett would get back if the people knew what he was?"

"No."

"I agree. Not at the moment anyway. We'd be tossed back to the inanities of human decision making. All the good work would be undone. But - and hear me out on this, Ken - more people know about Crockett all the time; we're quite a little club now. And what's more important, more people understand computers, accept what they can do for us. They don't fear them as they used to. The longer Crockett continues, the more likely it is the real story can be told. A public announcement - through The Mirror if it's appropriate.

"But not yet! The people have to know what they're getting - but they don't know; they still don't adequately understand. Fear would still overcome logic - fear of the new, fear of unknown quantities - and that would be a tragedy. People need time to become familiar with what this offers. Time to lose their fear.

"I'm asking you to help give them that time. Let them continue to witness what it can do for us. Let the understanding grow. Then the Crockett program will be re-elected. It'll have to stand on its record like any other incumbent, and on its record,

it can't lose."

Delany was dumbfounded. Did she really think it was that easy? Sure, her arguments made sense; Ambrosia was always logical. But this...? Christ! He was a career journalist; did she expect him to sit on the story of a lifetime? It ran against everything he had taught himself to believe.

Or was there a threat yet to be articulated?

He shook his head, non-committally, trying to signal confusion.

"Tell you what," Ambrosia said. "Give us six months. Six months, then we'll talk again. Give yourself time to understand it."

Delany's gaze narrowed. Still no threat. So what was the six months? Was he being offered an out instead?

"It's not long, Ken," she pressed. "Not much to ask."

Then all at once he saw it. And his paranoia flooded back. "Time enough to have me taken out!"

"Ken..." Ambrosia's control faltered, but not in the manner it had a few moments ago. There was a sadness in her voice, something he had never heard from her before. "Don't fifteen years count for anything?"

"The world doesn't operate on trust, Julie. You taught me that."

She shook her head. "The world's a shitheap, I know." She looked miserable. "But it doesn't have to be. Some of us believe it can change, and we're committed, as individuals, to changing it. What I'm going to tell you now, you'll find hard to accept. Maybe impossible. But try. Keep your mind open and try."

Delany said nothing. The game had moved beyond him. Let her make the play.

She held his gaze. She seemed to be measuring him off, assessing him not as she would a friend, but as someone she did not know at all. "It's something of a new philosophy," she said quietly, "based on individual responsibility, individual action. Ken, collectivism has failed us. The systems that rise out of it have failed us. Responsibility passed to others is responsibility ignored."

Delany could hardly believe what he was hearing. "This is the very opposite! This is responsibility hi-jacked, for Chris-sake!"

"No! Listen: if those of us, who for one reason or another find ourselves in the know... if we're called on to do evil in order to protect the program, then, by definition, the program is evil and should not be protected."

She paused, watching him closely now, trying to read his reaction. Delany said nothing.

"We have something of an agreement," she went on,

"a sort of general understanding. If any one of us finds that another has done something like that, then that person is obliged to blow the whistle on the whole thing, as quickly and as publicly as possible. That understanding will apply equally to you if you agree to maintain the silence.

"Ken, what's happened is that the processes of government, of social order, are being given over to the most effective tools of process. Responsibility for the tools is being handed back to the individual. Slowly and cautiously - at times just one individual after another - because it's a hard thing to accept."

Delany replied with genuine incredulity. "It won't work, Julie! Human nature's against it!"

"It has worked," Lee interrupted. "It's worked because no-one feels threatened by it; they feel only that sense of responsibility. The moment anyone feels threatened, it's all over, and everybody knows it."

"The end never justifies the means," Ambrosia said. "And none of us labours under any illusion to the contrary. If we find that somebody's penetrated the simulation, we react; we take action on an individual basis. We argue our case, for all we're worth. It isn't hard because the case is good. We plead and cajole; we call on old friendships, anything within the bounds of accepted behaviour. And if any one of us doesn't adhere to that principle, then the whole thing falls to bits. And good riddance to it if it does; it obviously wasn't what we thought it was."

Delany reacted from a lifetime of cynicism. "You expect me to believe that you've kept the lid on this thing by offering anybody and everybody the chance to lift it?"

Ambrosia nodded. Her expression was bleak. She knew what she was arguing against. "Individual responsibility. Individual action. Believe it because we're offering it to you."

For Delany her expression told more than her words. "Christ!" he said softly.

She allowed herself a grim smile. "He worked on similar principles."

He was left to stare. So what if he believed her? That was only the half of it! What she was asking was that he enter into the greatest conspiracy of all time. Enter into it against every principle his profession held true. And she was leaving it entirely up to him.

Individual responsibility. Individual action.

It was almost crazy enough to work.

And, with that thought, he knew he was half-way to their side.

"Well, Ken?" Lee asked. "What do you think?"

Delany looked across at him, then back to Ambrosia. There was nothing threatening in their faces; if anything it was they who were afraid of him. "Six months," he said, muttering the words, not sure whether it was muttered question or agreement.

"It's a compromise," Ambrosia said. "A small concession."

For long moments Delany held her gaze. Then, surprised at how easy it was, he nodded. Six months, he decided, was not a long time. More to the point, under the terms of their new cock-eyed philosophy, he felt in no way bound to it.

"Okay," he said at last. "I'll sit on it for six months. No more."

Lee got to his feet. For the first time since he entered the conference room, he smiled. He came around the table and extended his hand.

"Welcome to the club, Ken."

Delany accepted the handshake, too dazed to do anything else.

"Ken?" Ambrosia said quietly.

He looked across at her. There was more! He could see it in her face.

She was all seriousness. "This raises another matter. We need someone to cover the Moscow Bi-lateral. The way things are, we need someone who knows. How about it? Want the job?"

"Moscow?" Delany was startled by the change of tack. Surely this wasn't a bribe? Not now, after the deal had been struck?

Then fresh realization took him. "Christ! How's Crockett going to cope in Gdansk, face to face with Strugatsky. That's not a TV encounter. The program won't work there!"

"That's why you have to go, Ken," she said. "We need someone in the know. On this one, all the networks do. Truth is, Crockett and Strugatsky are going to play billiards; seems they both have a passion for the game. It'll keep them out of the way while the real agreements are being fixed. Of course the networks will report otherwise."

Again Delany found himself staring. It was becoming a habit.

"You can't mean...?"

She unclasped her hands, offered them in a gesture of defeat. "I'm afraid so. The Crockett and Strugatsky programs have, let's say, met, seven times already via satellite, all encrypted of course. I've seen the first drafts of the Bi-lateral discussions. It'll be an outstanding success, Ken, a blueprint for global stability. I'll let you have a copy just before you leave. Can't give it to you too soon. We need a certain amount of spontaneity after all."

Delany shook his head. It was too much, more than

he should have to cope with. And he was part of it! The sheer absurdity brought him to the brink of laughter.

"Six months," he said. "Damn you, Julie! Not a minute more!"

"That's all we ask. And, Ken...."

"What?"

"It really was a great piece of investigative

journalism. At any other time...."

He watched the smile creep back across her face, and was conscious that he too was smiling. "For Chris-sake!" he said, and still shaking his head, began slowly to pack away his gear.

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ENCLOSED VALUES

Wendy Frew

For the time being she was shut in on all sides. The five walls that surrounded her were made of a gleaming metal substance, a kind she had never seen before. She could not break, dent or scratch those walls despite repeated attempts with her gun. She wondered at first why they had not taken her gun away. Now she realised it was because there was no hope of escaping the enclosure.

They would come for her sooner or later.

She spent her first waking hours searching, crawling around the floor with hands outstretched and palms face-down, for some kind of exit. Her fingers sought seams or welding lines, anything that hinted at the construction of the enclosure. There was nothing. There were no joins between the floor, five walls and five sections of the roof. It was as if the enclosure had been made from one piece of metal and then turned inside out so that the seams were invisible.

Yet, that was impossible. Her people had a reputation as master technicians and engineers and they had never constructed anything like this enclosure.

The enclosure was brilliantly lit and the air was warm. She looked for the source of light and heat but couldn't find it. This strange light-heat filled the entire space but didn't radiate from any particular point.

When they arrived to take her away the secrets of the enclosure would be revealed. She waited.

Alone, there was no reason to speak. For the first few hours she didn't speak. She knew that sooner or later they would come for her, but the waiting became unbearable and the sound of her pacing footsteps echoed from wall to wall, to roof, to floor. At the end of the fourth hour she screamed out in frustration, then dropped to her knees as the noise ricocheted across the enclosure, piercing her

eardrums with pain.

She had lost control breaking the first of the fifteen values. By the fifth hour she had wept, breaking the second value. The penalties for breaking the values were severe but in the enclosure there was no one to enforce the law. She suffered torment only from herself, from the personal degradation that accompanied a breach of values.

It didn't matter what she did in here for she was alone. The laws of her people did not apply because she was no longer part of a community. She had no human contact and therefore no responsibility to uphold. She would devise a new set of values or rather, the enclosure would impose a new set upon her.

She began to go through the plaptyn logarithmic scale and then through the antilogarithmic scale. She wanted to keep her mind alert and prepared for their arrival. She whispered phases in Utai, Prentix, the seven dialects of Simbie, Tenph and Logaeodic. She composed verses in dactyls and iambs. All in the hope that she could communicate with them when they finally arrived.

For they would arrive.

She slept through the ninth hour but her dreams were of torture and torment. She dreamt of a society that inflicted unbearable values upon her, values so horrific that her mind could not put pictures to them but left them as grotesque, floating abstracts.

She awoke at the beginning of the tenth hour and the fears of her dreams were immediately dismissed. She knew now that there was only one value operating in the enclosure. Solitude. The essence of the enclosure was seclusion - an absence of human life and activity apart from her own. She knew now that they were not coming for her.

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INTERVENTION: In order to smooth the process for the more eagle-eyed of our readers, and not wishing to be taxed with poor transcription skills, I point out that I have carefully checked each occasion on which the shortly-to-be-mentioned spaceship's name is mentioned. Yes, the writer does refer to it both as the Bessa and the Bella. Is he testing me?, I asked myself, as I peered closely at the text. Should I exercise a copy-editor's judgement? I decided, finally, to transcribe faithfully, noting, if I'm not reading it too closely that the ship seems to have 'external' and 'internal' names. What think you? Am I correct?

KEPT ON ICE

David Tansey

An eternal memory: the mining crew, twenty men and women, single file inside the O-Frame. Helmets like steel bullet caps, protective, lacking faceplates. On the inside, eye-level panels, tiny monitors linked to dual external telecams. The smell of my body in the suit, water too precious to wash with. The back of the person ahead of me, his or her surname stencilled on helmet and limb segments, for ident purposes should we blowout. Frantic, peering at the hasty plastic patch-up on the suited arm holding the O-Frame rib.

The sneering voice, "...ten seconds. Converters enabled. Time to earn your air, fools."

Fingers manipulating the feed line valve, providing extra, precious, expensive oxygen. Would need it for the imminent exertion.

The Bessa, revolving slowly, a huge black shape above us. Only the corner lights shining, delineating it as a constellation enclosing a black hole. Dark, not advertising its presence; our find might easily be pirated by one of the hundreds of other lost ships threading the asteroid belt.

The Bessa, like a lover, manoeuvring against the rock-ice fragments, the safety bar rising and the teams pouring out onto the surface. Ice crunching under boots; small pieces flying up and settling slowly. Shadows flickering over a lightless landscape. Nearly all ice, but solid rock under it. Outcroppings as evidence, pushing through the ice crust like islands.

Bores sunk, charges lowered. Blasts breaking up the ice, making it digestible for the meshed mouths of the vacuum hoses.

...working to survive. Don't want to end up like the crew of the drift-ship we found last year, rotting in their space-suits, emergent skull faces grinning in claustrophobic despair...

Others working next to me. Teams feeding the ice into the hoses, to be drawn up to the Bella's converters. The converters worked on the ice, threw hydrogen and oxygen ions out the other end. The oxygen was compressed into the storage tanks, the hydrogen went to the drive. Any gases useful to the drive were sent there; nothing went to waste, ever.

The most important product was the oxygen. It was the only currency in the belt. Food was trivial, could be made in a test tube.

Three hours to suck the rock dry and vanish. By then any ship within 100,000 kilometres would have read the heat profile from the converters. There was always a risk. But Foreman was in a good mood. We would take enough on board to boost the reserves several months. Might even be a bonus in it, hopefully an extra air cylinder.

...Earth too far away; nobody goes back...

Existence sheared, cruel. Each miner with their daily oxygen ration. To conserve air, the Bella's crew live in their suits. Even inside the ship; light weight suits are worn, feeding off hand bottles. Too much waste to fill whole compartments with air, as had been done with early spacecraft. Those ships, emulating Earth-bound architecture with their rooms and corridors, were all wastefully filled with air. The Bessa's class was different, merely a series of interconnecting oubliettes, with no wasted space.

...had two hours passed in work and contemplation? Approaching exhaustion. Run. Set charges. Stand away. Let the hose team get in. Nearly all the ice mass sucked away. Only patches left, and the deep stuff.

A voice crackling in my ear. "...picking up something strange." A tech's voice from Control. "An energy pattern. Increasing strength. Uh, a little got burned in the converter...going for spectro analysis..."

Wasn't getting enough oxygen. Twisting the feed valve. Radio link chatter confusing me. Heating up inside the suit.

"...hydrogen, helium, xenon, carpathium...unrecognisable...off the scale."

Coming out of the hole, a huge cloud of something. A fog, spreading across the small plain where we worked. Beyond it, the stars spinning slowly as the rock turned end over end through the belt. Inside the white, wispy fog: tiny yellow sunbursts, dimming then flowering.

Eye-level monitors warning of rising heart-beat

and oxygen consumption. Staring fascinated at the fog, seeing... a nucleus, like a cell's, a living unit's, hovering above the most recent blast hole.

Tech chatter in my ear, unaware of my eavesdropping. "...seen nothing like it before..." "...organic, possibly, with loose, non-carbon structure..."

The miner next to me running back to the O-Frame; while I tried to run, staggered on a slippery patch, clutched at the curved metal hose.

The blast cannon on the Bessa's underside blazing into life, ripping up the dark landscape until it reached the fog. The blasts dispersing the mists, which then swirled back into place when the firing stopped.

"...doesn't seem to be affecting it..." "...hold your fire. The heat is only melting the ice further, letting more of that thing out..."

This last was accurate, from my vantage point. The cloud seemed rooted in some very deep ice. The blaster heat had only helped dissolve that anchor. A gloved hand fell on my back; someone using me as a hand-hold to claw their way back to the ship. Panicked.

The reason for their panic: the arm of yellow-white fog, shot through with pulsing light, reaching from the main mass to tickle the other miner's back. Vasserman, the stencil read.

"...all dead...get away..." His panic in my helmet.

The fog arm holding him while I scrambled back. Its particles, like rain, showering Vasserman's suit arm then coalescing. A dream solidifying into reality. The suit arm becoming part of the fog, pulling away. Smoking flesh as the cloud poured through the breach.

A scream inside my helmet. Vasserman trying to clutch me, to escape.

A few seconds to empty all the air in his suit, to allow the subzero temperature and vacuum of space to enter in its stead. Meanwhile, the fog dissolving the miner, unable to distinguish between suit plastic and flesh. Vasserman's flayed arm jutting up

against the black of space, red muscle and white tendon flapping in the wind of escaping air. Then the fluids in his body crystallizing, expanding and exploding the human form into something unrecognisable; a thousand pieces of frozen tissue easily absorbed by the cloud.

Before he had gone, me tearing loose the oxygen bottle from his belt. It would have been a waste to let it be destroyed too. Turn and run. The fog arm sensing me, starting to unwind.

All the surviving miners inside the O-Frame, being withdrawn into the Bella. The decision made somewhere to keep what was already in the tanks and vanish.

The ship's thrusters being warmed. Foreman yelling in my ear, "...you're the last one outside, fool! You've got fifteen seconds to get into the Frame. Then we leave without you."

The asteroid is far behind the Bella now. Foreman didn't keep his promise, when he saw what I had done to the cloud. It was, I suppose, a living entity whose type had never been encountered in the belt. Formed of gas, frozen under the asteroid for - sometimes I dream - millions or billions of years. A traveller to our system, a casual visitor, or an early native?

It was academic now, for I had struggled along the length of the vacuum hose, dodging the glowing arms drifting about me, to find the control ring. It was easy after that to extend the hose, bury its three-metre wide mouth into the cloud's centre. I pushed the power to maximum.

The converter took the whole cloud in three minutes. Apparently the meal was acceptable.

Like I said before, nothing goes to waste here in the belt - ever.

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THE HOMECOMING

Roger Kennett

They had landed. From the viewport he had seen the blackness of space turn into the red and ochre ceramic of this desert world - his world. Now they

were here, resting on a lonely station in a field surrounded by a wall of stone.

They had begun loading; he must begin unloading.

Through the viewport, he could see the desert sand dunes vanish into the distance. No-one had arrived to welcome him: but then, that was how he'd known it would be. In his head, the shadow-clocks of memory told him it was early morning.

In his dreams, a boy watched the single ship descend, a needle of metal above a violet flame. Strange and exotic, it spoke of far-away mysteries and excitement...of a life far removed from the dust and toil....

Now the boy had returned.

Silently, he gathered his few belongings and went down to the cargo bay - wondering all the while how things would look to a son returned...whether anything would in fact have changed. He knew only that he had.

Ilban was at the cargo bay, supervising the transfer. The Ralek ore had already been stowed, bags of grain unloaded in their place.

Mylan hesitated, halfway down the steps. He took in the arid surroundings, then contrasted them with the life he had come to know. Much of him questioned the wisdom of coming back.

He would miss his companions...and the familiar sounds of space. He would miss the security of machinery, and the sensation of metal and plastic in everything he touched. Already the silence of this world was oppressive.

He would miss Ilban, with his rough, head-on approach to life. He had been a good companion on all their journeys. He would even miss the hazards of their shore-leave adventures.

Uneasily, he descended the remaining steps. The ground was gritty and already warm beneath his feet.

"So this is your home world?" Ilban said as he looked out across the deserted sand.

"Uh-huh," Mylan replied. "Doesn't look much, does it?"

"It doesn't look very alive, either," Ilban said quietly. "I haven't seen as much as a bird since we landed. Sure there hasn't been a plague or something since you left?"

Mylan caught the smile beneath Ilban's mop of unruly hair, then found himself hoping he'd cleaned up enough to be reaccepted here. "Only us. Any stranger is avoided - or was. I doubt they've changed." He looked up, searching pointlessly for a cloud. "They'll probably disinfect the seed before they take it."

A stoney silence ended the conversation. The machinery had stopped and not even the wind was stirring.

Ilban finished his checking. "Will we see you when we get back?"

Mylan smiled. "Of course. A month here will be

about all I can take."

He accepted a hug a little stiffly.

"Good luck," Ilban said.

"Let's hope I don't need it."

Mylan collected his bags and walked away from the ship towards the distant wall. Only when he was sure that Ilban was securely on board did he dare to look back...and admit the fears that were building up inside him.

He found the cycle in the half-collapsed shed by the wall, just as he'd left it all those years ago. Long after the ship had departed, he stood there taking in the silence and tried to remember how it had been back then, before he'd known the taste of other worlds and other lives.

The wall was an enigma - he'd never known whether it was meant to wall the landing zone in or the planet out. Either way, it was symbolic of his people's desire for isolation. Seba was a planet that clung to old ways and old truths. It traded only for that which its people could not produce themselves, and even then that dependence was seen as a weakness. The cycle itself was a sign of their reluctant acceptance of technology: old, equipped with a third-hand and barely functional petrol-driven motor.

He hoped there was enough fuel left to get him across the dunes to Rimar, the nearest city - if city was in fact an appropriate term. Taking the machine out into the sun, he stared back at the open expanse of the port. It was the only hard, flat area in a sea of sand. The lone pile of goods rested like a statue in the bone whiteness. Starting the engine, he moved off through the single gap in the wall, down a track he remembered travelling as if only yesterday. He took one last look at the remnants of the ship's visit, and one look at the single moon that was the only object to break the fiery blue of the sky.

It was hot; sweat trickled down his face and into his eyes, making it hard to see. Nothing on this world was designed for comfort. He didn't stop to wonder if he'd be welcome on his arrival: he already knew the answer. The journey would be long and hard...and at that moment, more than any other thus far, the boy within remembered just why he had left.

"Siobhan? Why do the stars twinkle?" a child asked.

They were gathered around the fire, a lone group in a stoney field. Above, the blackness was endless. It descended to the barren silence of the horizon, interrupted only by the flickering of stars. Occasionally, if you watched, one would fall in a streak of flame, then disappear.

He huddled in close to his sister, nestling against her long, dry hair - itself of fire colours - where it ran down her back like a shawl. He shivered in the chill air as he watched his mother prepare the evening meal over the flames. His brothers and sisters were seated closer to the warmth, discussing the events of the day or half-sleeping. Quietly, looking up at the tiny pinpoints of light, he repeated the question.

"I don't know," she replied. "Perhaps they're laughing at us. We must be an amusing lot, don't you think? Tilling this lifeless soil day in and day out."

He thought about that for a few moments before catching the secret smile in her eyes.

"Is it true they're really distant fires, like our own sun?" he asked.

She drew him closer, stroking his hair. "So they say, Myl. So, they say."

Chenoweth, his brother, approached to join in, seating himself opposite. His short-cropped hair encompassed a face that of late held youth in its eyes and age in its skin.

Tonight, however, even his eyes were weary.

"The Book says we once lived on a world of water, around one of those stars," he said quietly. "They say it was a world full of life and colour, where grain grew wild and people had time to rest, and learn."

"The Book says many things," their father said firmly as he approached, passing the hraki bread, "but there are some things that are not ours for concern."

Chenoweth returned to silence, recognising the beginning of a lecture in his father's tone.

"We must be content with our lot," the older man added, moving along the line of family with his food.

Eating quietly, the child watched him there...looking so old and weary...so much bone, his skin the colour of cement. Yet his father was barely older than thirty turns.

His mother, working the thick broth over the heat, seemed just as weary and aged. Occasionally her eyes would belie her fatigue with a knowing laugh or a sparkle of understanding, but those lights were becoming fewer and farther between. All his older brothers were bent like old men, the youngest at only ten turns. Only his sister's eyes still held that spark of life, like a trapped fire.

Sad, he held onto her tightly.

"I'd like to see such a world," he whispered.

In his mind, he tried to imagine whole fields of golden grain, rippling in the sunlight...and wide expanses of water, for Chenoweth had spoken of that

too. But always he felt the colours were wrong, so much the grey of the world he knew.

Chenoweth smiled, passing him an extra slice of bread.

"Perhaps you will, Mylan," he whispered in return.

The low-slung buildings of Rimar appeared over the horizon, a dreary sameness already visible in their construction. All were little more than stone huts, ochre and grey, partly dug into the ground - single room affairs which used high ceilings and natural air-flows to keep them cool in the heat of day.

The white, noon-day sun blazed almost directly overhead as he entered the street. Nothing appeared to have changed in the four-odd turns he had been away.

He had expected nothing less, though he had wondered.

The cycle was low on fuel. stopping to fill up, he recognised a familiar face.

"Hello, Pimal."

A brief, cold stare, lacking recognition, returned his, then paled. "Mylan?"

"How are you?"

Visibly confused, Pimal unscrewed the cap on his tank, zeroing the scale on the pump. "Is it really you? You've hardly aged!"

He grinned. "Last time I looked it was still me."

She spoke slowly, carefully - with just a trace of that forgotten accent. He took in her face as she ran the fuel from the battered, age-scarred pump. Her skin carried that familiar greyness that matched the land around her, though doubtless there was youth in there somewhere, beneath the husk.

It was with somewhat of a shock that he recalled she was younger than him, by several turns.

"So what brings you back?" she asked. "Have you exhausted all the joys of space and returned to chide us for our old ways?"

Just for a moment there was the glimmer of a smile, of the old Pimal.

"No." He shook his head, remembering long-gone days shared with her family, days when they had been children together on the collective. "Just a visit. How are your parents?"

She turned off the pump, replacing the cap. "They passed away last winter."

"And you're running this by yourself now?"

Again, just the hint of that smile. "As always, we survive." Her eyes looked directly at him, still unsure. "It really is you. Who would have thought...?"

"Are they still out on the same kwitech?" he asked.

"Still the same." She hesitated. "Siobhan is away in the North with her husband, and Chenoweth is down South in the mines for the moment. Your father is poorly - just age. Simtath and Prav are running the land now.

"They had another son last sowing too, so you're an uncle again."

The air was so still, so dry and hot. Though he was perspiring less than when he had left the field, the sweat still trickled down his face.

She looked nervously at the bike. "What about you? Have you united yet?"

He laughed - at the phrase, and at the immediate return to such topics, knowing then that she at least had begun to accept him back. "No. Space isn't really the place for that."

"Still injweh?"

"Well, maybe not that."

"No," she added, with a shy smile. "I've heard tell about some of those planets you visit." She reattached the fuel hose to the pump. "They won't be glad to see you."

"I guessed as much."

She turned away from him. "If you need a place to stay..."

"Thanks for the offer," he said softly, knowing what that would mean in terms of local gossip.

She stood beside the bike, then smiled as he handed her the money, accepting it but offering no change. "It's not often we see Rhytak money here," she said.

He watched her go into the stone hut, remembering when her hair had been rich and black, without the arid greyiness of time. The engine started nervously. Nursing it, he drove off through the grimy settlement.

How welcome would he really be, he wondered. Would they even speak to him? He had tried to explain his feelings to them all before he left, but only Chenoweth and Siobhan had ever seemed to understand.

It had been the right decision for him, but this was not a world that recognised the needs of the self...nor forgave them with ease.

Following the tracks ingrained in his memory, he rode out to the little collective on the outskirts of Rimar. The dryness of the land was so much more noticeable now, to his more travelled eyes. Trying to grow anything on Seba was a labour of little joy. Irrigation pipes ran everywhere, and there was no sign that they had received any rain.

If Chenoweth had gone to the mines, then times could not be good.

The people on Seba stuck to old ways, refusing help: but he knew them. They were a proud people -

some said arrogant. What little was exported was exchanged for grain and other life-supplies. There were few luxuries. In a drought year all suffered, and all shared.

Above all, Seba was a communal world. Everything belonged to the community - there were no personal possessions. Only distance and the inadequacies of transportation left some areas less evenly supplied than others.

Everyone born into this world was expected to play their part...and even as he saw the jadhobe in the distance, he doubted the wisdom of his returning. In their view, how could his leaving be seen as anything but a betrayal of their whole way of life?

How then would they cope with his returning to remind them?

There was suddenly a line of fire in the darkness, rising up from the edge of the world. Its violet light hid the silver needle he knew to be above.

"The strangers have gone; that is well." His father spoke the accepted words as they finished their broth, cleaning the bowls of every drop.

"They will take back our refusal to join their Federation, once again," he added. "We have always survived without help. We will continue without them."

Siobhan's hair glowed in the firelight. He watched it now, and the anger in her eyes.

"But still we trade with them...and their help would make our lives so much easier...."

All eyes fell on her face as she spoke, her words riding silence.

"Their help would make us dependent on them, child - and as weak as they," their father replied, spitting out his words to emphasise their distaste. "Would you have us become as weak and frail as they show themselves to be? Why, their agent could not even brave the heat of our open fields, so strong was he! Is that what you would have us become?"

She backpeddled, realizing that her words were falling on deaf ears. There was no way to discuss it rationally, no way to make them change. The matter was closed and always would be.

"No, father."

"We survive, and we depend on no-one," he added, glaring. "That is how it should be."

"Yes, father."

He prayed for silence, catching her sight as she turned. Watching the flame smothered by the masses, the child knew better than to intervene.

"We have done well this year," Chenoweth said, trying to diffuse the ill-feeling. "We must be thankful for our successes and accept our failures. There is, as father often says, a joy of living that

can come only from one's labours."

The child sighed. All around was dust and age. The air was ripe with the smell of harvested grain, and the sweat of toil. They knew nothing but the labour of the days and the arid ground they worked for the whole of their lives - in waking life and in dream.

What would it be like to see water, to float in emptiness, and to rest - away from all this?

Would he then find others who dreamt as he did?

He waited for Siobhan to come back to his side, longing for her understanding. Of all of them, she seemed the most able to accept his yearnings.

"One day, sister," he whispered to himself, "I'll be on such a needle to the stars."

"Mother? Father?"

He stood there, in the shade of the squat stone building. His eyes still hurt from the salt of his sweat and the glare of the sun. Out in the plajna he could see figures, like silhouettes, moving. Perhaps everyone was out ploughing.

He leant against the wall, absorbed in familiar smells, yet feeling the strangeness of it all.

"Prav?"

A small boy peered through the screen as he waited. Something in the eyes seemed familiar, but the returning stare was cold. Unsure of what to say, Mylan took in the fire-colours of the hair and saw Siobhan before him.

"Who are you?" asked the boy.

"I am Mylan, son of Chwieth," he replied. "I claim the shelter of this jadhobe as is my right. Who might you be?"

The frozen stare changed to shock. "Uncle Mylan...?" Slowly the door opened. "My mother said...."

Mylan said gently: "You still haven't told me who you are."

The boy hesitated, then edged out.

"Everyone is in the fields," he said, staring, unsure of how to behave. "Siobhan isn't here now, but... Nanna sent me home to get some water. I... I can fetch them if you like?"

Mylan looked down at him, so much like his mother. There was a fire behind that distant wall.

"Is it really you, Uncle Mylan?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, Aran."

"Shall I get the others?" - and he was gone, a wind tracking dust across the fields.

Shaking, Mylan sat himself down on the step and looked out across the plajna, remembering. Aran had only just been born when he left.

In the grey dust he could see the figures stirring: stick figures. Their motion itself was a fleck of dust in time.

But this was their world. This was all they knew.

How would he explain to them how much more he had seen?

Above, the sun blazed in its seemingly endless fashion, over dust and the sweat of toil. Inside him, a boy still looked up at the stars and heard his sister's voice urging him on.

Follow your dreams, Myl. They'll never understand, but I do.

In the distance, a smaller fleck approached. All motion ceased. He watched, hoping...but only two lay down their tools and began to walk towards him. He recognised their youth; the older two slowly returned to their work, as they had always done.

"Welcome home, son," he said out loud, then sighed. He raised himself from the step and moved out towards them.

He could hear their stoney silence without listening.

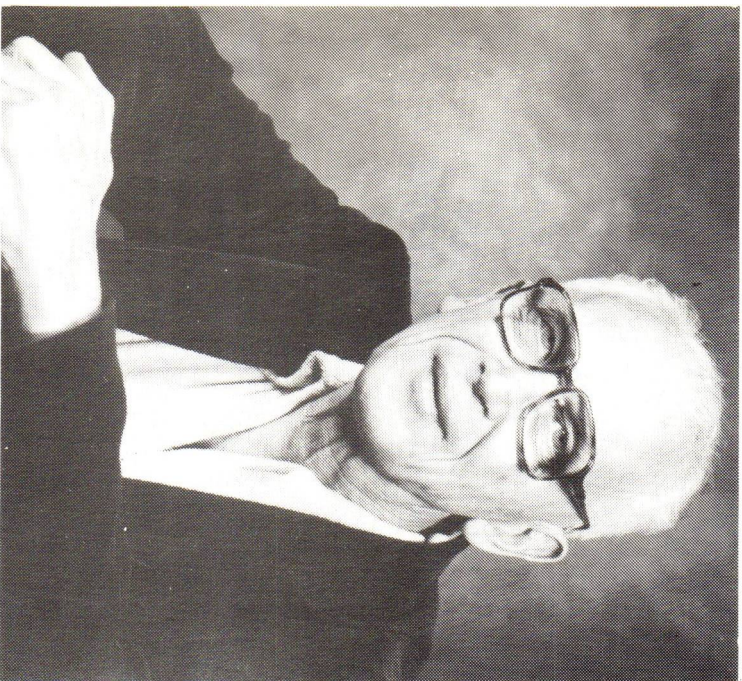
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review

I'm beginning to gather some useful feedback from readers. A shortage of time and space have rendered it impracticable to use that comment in this issue, but I thank those who have taken the time to write and promise that, together with further letters, I'll be running the comments already in hand as part of a substantial 'feedback' section next time round. There'll also be an update on what APHELION PUBLICATIONS is up to (and/or is planning) in the post-Turner/Dowling period.

Remember: for submissions: THYME FICTION, P.O. Box 619, North Adelaide, S.A. 5006

GEORGE TURNER



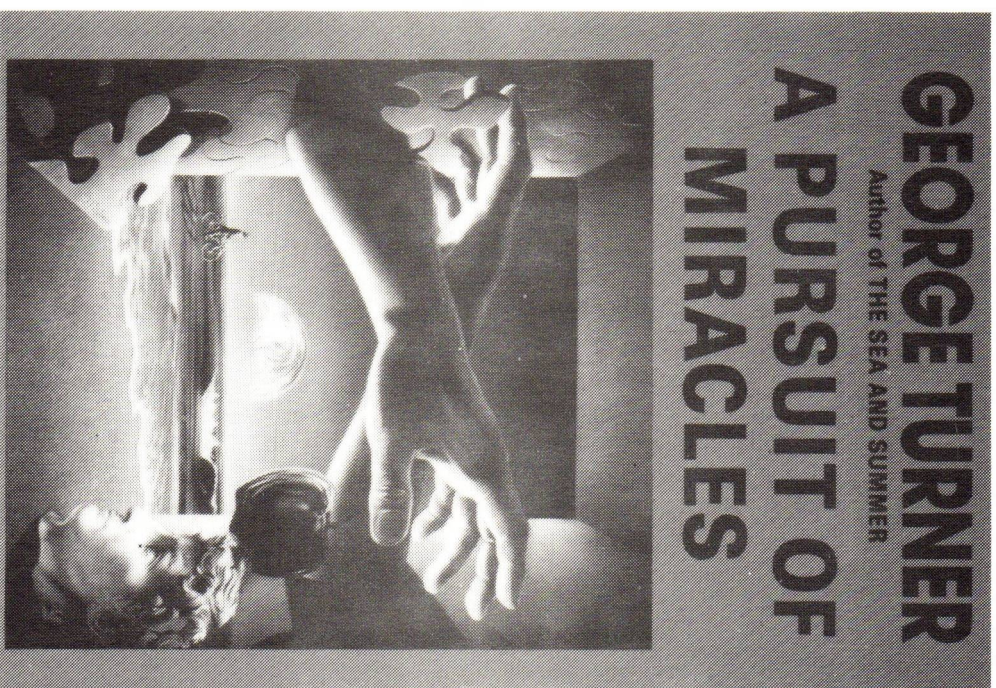
Rarely does a writer ascend the peaks of both Mainstream and Science Fiction. George Turner has done just that. His novel, **THE CUPBOARD UNDER THE STAIRS**, was joint winner of the Miles Franklin Award, and, since turning to Science Fiction, he has won Ditmar Awards with **BELOVED SON** and **YESTERDAY'S MEN**. His recent tour de force, **THE SEA AND SUMMER**, won the Arthur C. Clarke Award and a Commonwealth Writers Prize.

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(winner, Ditmar Award)

THE SEA AND SUMMER

(Commonwealth Writers Prize: Arthur C. Clarke Award)

Biographical Memoir:

IN THE HEART OR IN THE HEAD

Editor:

THE VIEW FROM THE EDGE

George Turner was born in Melbourne and grew up in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia. He was educated in Melbourne. As an infantryman in WWII he served in the Middle East, North Africa and New Guinea. He has worked as a District Officer for the Commonwealth Public Service, for Volkswagen Aust. and Carlton and United Breweries.

As a literary critic he has had a long association with the Melbourne Age. He now writes full time.

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EIGHT JOURNEYS INTO A FUTURE THAT
IS AT ONCE POWERFULLY IMAGINATIVE AND
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The presentation of the 1990 Australian Science Fiction Awards at Danse Macabre was followed by all night soul searching at room parties and a lively panel discussion the following day. Areas of concern about the Awards included the paucity of nominations and the small voter turnout.

In an attempt to revitalize the Australian SF (Ditmar) Awards, the SunCon Ditmar SubCommittee has decided on a nominating and balloting process that will attempt to involve as many Australian fans as possible in the determination of award categories, nominating and voting.

The SubCom proposes to open nominations for the 1991 Australian SF (Ditmar) Awards at the beginning of November 1990 and close nominations in mid-January 1991. As well as circulating nomination forms in SunCon Progress Reports and Australian fanzines, the SubCom intends to directly mail nomination forms to as many fans as it can get addresses for one month before nominations close.

As well as making nominations for categories, fans will be asked at this stage to vote for the categories that they want the 1991 awards to be presented in. Fans will have the opportunity to make eight nominations in up to ten categories and to vote for the five award categories to be presented. This will remove the allocation of award categories from the fiat of the SubCom and allow Australian fandom a more direct role in determining the nature and type of its awards.

Voting will open in mid-January 1991 and close approximately two weeks before SunCon in mid-March 1991. Voting forms will be circulated in SunCon Progress Reports and Australian fanzines. One month before the close of voting the direct mail approach will be used, once again to as many fans as the SubCom can get addresses for. Voting memberships will be heavily emphasised during both the nominating and voting phases.

The SunCon Dit SubCom welcomes comment on and reaction to the above plan. Please direct your responses to the fanzine in which this letter appears.

8 June 1990

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