

TWINK 25



Congratulations are in order:

* Jennifer Capriati lost the first set and was down 0-4 in the second; fought off four match points and came back to win her second Australian Open tennis title in a row.

* Sarah Hughes was not considered the best American skater, but nailed the free skate of her life to win the Olympic gold medal.

* As long as we're mentioning Olympic champions, to be fair we should congratulate the Canadian women's ice hockey team, which beat archrival the U.S. to win that title.

* The U.S. Military Academy, founded 1802, celebrates its bicentennial this year.

* The FAAN Award winners, whomever they were. (If anyone tells us before we close out this issue, we'll try to get it into Miscellany.)

We declare our feud with Andy Hooper to be inactive. Not over, just inactive. On a related topic: No, we did not attend Corflu. No, we did not vote on the FAAN Awards. (Yes, we did receive a ballot. Here's a thought -- how many on our mailing list, not members of Corflu, received FAAN ballots? "Voting is open to all fans", it says here.)

Reaction was mostly muted to our writing off the Fan Hugos. We note only a couple of people disputed our labelling them a "lost cause". In theory, we're prepared to re-assess our position, when and if there is some actual evidence to support such an idea. For now, we stand on our stated position.

Seems we lit at least a small fire, in terms of encouraging more contributions/fanac. Sheryl Birkhead and Dale Speirs sent in articles, and they were both so aptly formatted, we saw nothing to be gained by messing with them, and simply plugged them in. Coming down to the wire we had to choose between Gene Stewart's reflection on the philosophy of escapism, and Lloyd Penney's Ad Astra report. After careful consideration we decided to go with the con report of grounds of time-liness.

The ubiquitous Steve Stiles provides yet another fine cover. Steve Sneyd contributed a book review.

For #26, we already have set up our article on the SFnal uses of caves (lead illo by Marc Schirmeister, who is also doing the #26 cover); Gene's piece aforementioned (lead illo by Gene); and Lyn McConchie explains the many joys of dealing with trolls for fun and profit (lead illos by Sue Mason). This is not to say we might not have room for another short article, if one were forthcoming; due to the conspicuous absence of interest/contributions, we are seriously considering dropping the book/film review section entirely, thus freeing up more space. Down the road somewhere, a piece by Franz Miklis we have long intended for a cover will probably grace the #27 cover; our analysis of the Miller & Lee "Liaden" books, and our third and probably final religion article (if that does not get bumped to a special issue, see "Miscellany"). Ample room for longer articles in #27, if you have an idea.

So, on the whole, we're doing pretty well. Now we need to get some of you to contribute to Peregrine Nation and Aztec Blue and Covert Communications and Visions Of Paradise. And so forth.

In theory, this is Twink #25 (at least that's what it says on the cover), a quarterly fanzine from Chaffinch Publications. Next issue: July 2002. Deadline for next issue: May 31, 2002. We cannot guarantee the inclusion of late arriving material. Our main focus is on SF, fantasy, and fandom. Twink is available for "The Usual", defined roughly as: articles/reviews, letters of comment, art, or arranged trade. All rights belong to the contributors and revert to them on publication. All letters and cards will be regarded as LOC's and considered for publication unless clearly marked "DNO". Anyone who writes, contributes, or trades regularly, defined as roughly every other issue/six months, will stay on the mailing list. If this title page is highlighted in yellow, you will not receive any further issues unless you respond promptly.

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"I'D LIKE TO THANK ALL THE LITTLE PEOPLE..."

by E.B. Frohvet

A few years ago (Twink #12 p. 29 if you really care) we made a small joke to the effect that there are so many awards in the science fiction field, "You can't walk down the street without tripping over one." Of course that is not the case. It is easily demonstrated that one can spend an entire career in SF, pro or fan (or both), without receiving any awards. Still, there are a bunch of awards out there. Herewith, a brief survey of the field:

Science Fiction Achievement Awards (commonly, "Hugo Awards")

for: achievement, both professional and fannish, in SF/fantasy and its related fandom

voted by: membership of Worldcon

plus: oldest, best known, therefore carry an aura of respectability and validity

minus: uninformed voter base nominates/votes by habit or name recognition, resulting in numerous categories seen as unfair or unrepresentative

Retro-Hugos

for: achievement for years prior to establishment of Hugo Awards

voted by: membership of Worldcon

plus: "better late than never" egoboo?

minus: only avid historians or extremely well read fans are really qualified to nominate/vote; very narrow pool of voters leaves awards vulnerable to error or bloc voting; 50-year rule results in most awards being posthumous

John W. Campbell Award

for: best new writer (first two years of publication)

voted by: membership of Worldcon

plus: recognition/encouragement of new writers

minus: by definition, difficult for achievements of nominees to be known to anyone but avid completists, hence name recognition of any sort tends to win out over talent; ample history of winners going on to careers of well-deserved obscurity

Nebula Awards

for: professional writing achievement in SF/fantasy

voted by: membership of SFWA

plus: generally recognized as valid and important

minus: guild award; distant and inaccessible to many readers

Nebula "Grand Master"

for: lifetime achievement as SF/fantasy writer

voted by: membership of SFWA

plus: recognition of long and distinguished careers by writers who have become inactive, or have not produced the sorts of works likely to win the usual awards

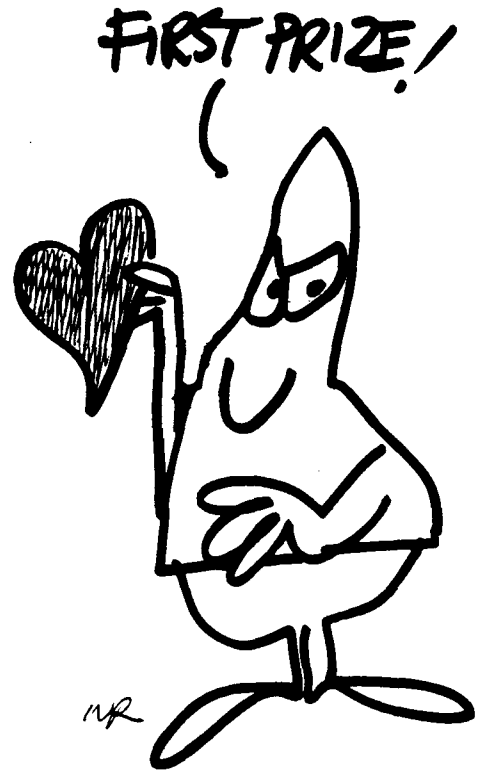
minus: air of being a "consolation prize"?

World Fantasy Awards

for: professional writing in "fantasy" (distinguished from SF)

voted by: membership of World Fantasy Con (?)

plus: Hugos and Nebulas tend to go to works which are clearly SF



minus: increasingly seen as an award for horror; numerous nominees/winners virtually unknown to wider SF field

Chesley Awards

for: professional artist achievement
voted by: membership of ASFA (Association of Science Fiction Artists)

plus: recognition of artists in a mainly verbal genre

minus: by definition, isolated from majority of SF/fandom community, therefore exclusionary (henceforth defined as "Problem A")

Prix Aurora (AKA Aurora Awards)

for: achievement by Canadian fans, pros
voted by: membership of "Canvention"/national con?

plus: gives Canadian SF community, largely outnumbered and ignored by American SF, some recognition of their own

minus: Problem A

Compton Crook Award

for: best first novel in SF/fantasy
voted by: membership of Baltimore SF Society

plus: same as Campbell, recognition/encouragement of new writers

minus: small size/influence of group translates to lack of general recognition of this as a meaningful award (henceforth, "Problem B")

Writers of the Future Award

for: achievement by new writers
voted by: panel of SF writers?
plus: same as Campbell, recognition/encouragement of new writers, plus offers cash and publication to winners

minus: cryptic selection process (pro SF-writer judges see only a handful of finalists) and source of award (L. Ron Hubbard, Church of Scientology-owned Bridge Publications) result in widespread suspicion of these awards; to date awards have produced no major new writers

Mythopoeic Awards

for: achievement in writing/studying mythic fantasy?

voted by: membership of Mythopoeic Society (?)

plus: recognition of a specific subgenre
minus: Problem B

Sidewise Awards

for: achievement in alternate history
voted by: ?

plus: recognition for a specific subgenre
minus: narrow focus not relevant to the genre as a whole (henceforth "Problem C")

Tiptree Awards

for: achievement in transcending usual gender roles

voted by: membership of Wiscon(?)
plus: recognition of specific subgenre (or specific point of view)
minus: Problem C, possibly Problem B

Rhysling Awards

for: achievement in SF poetry
voted by: SF Poetry Association
plus: recognition of specific subgenre
minus: Problem C, Problem B

Rebel Awards

for: achievement in Southern fandom
voted by: membership of DeepSouthCon/Southern Fandom Confederation (?)
plus: egoboo
minus: Problem A

Nova Awards

for: achievement in British fandom
voted by: membership of "Nova con"/national con (?)
plus: egoboo
minus: Problem A

Rotsler Award

for: achievement as fan artist
voted by: membership of Los Angeles SF Association/or judges appointed thereby?
plus: egoboo, recognition of subgenre
minus: Problem B, Problem C

Ditmar Awards

for: achievement in Australian fandom
voted by: membership of national con (?)
plus: egoboo
minus: Problem A

Darrell Awards

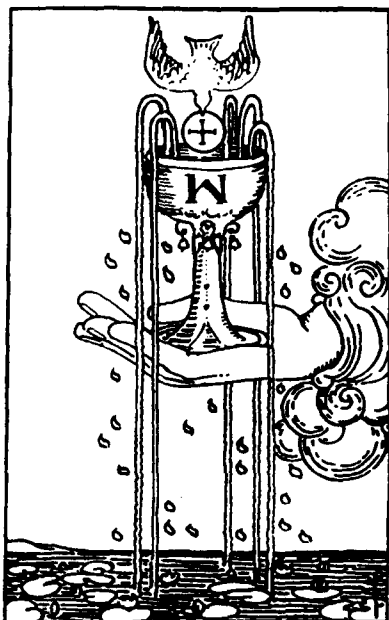
for: SF set in Memphis area
voted by: membership of Memphis SF Society
plus: egoboo?
minus: Problem A, Problem B; ridiculously small base of eligible material results in inclusion of what an impartial observer would call horror or mainstream

Endeavour Award
for: SF novel by a writer from the Pacific Northwest
voted by: Oregon SF Conventions Inc.?
plus: egoboo (?)
minus: Problem A, Problem B

Seiun Awards
for: achievement in SF published in Japan
voted by: ?
plus: international focus in what is otherwise an English language field
minus: dependent on writer's agent's contacts in small Japanese SF field; dependent on skill of translator; Problem A, Problem B

FAAN Awards
for: achievement in fanzine fandom
voted by: membership of Corflu and other fanzine fans known to the administrators
plus: egoboo
minus: Problem C; even given the narrow focus of the subgenre, awards tend to be dominated by a specific faction within fanzine fandom

Philip K. Dick Award
for: best original SF paperback novel published in U.S.
voted by: ?
plus: recognition,
minus: tends to go to a fairly narrow subset of SF, i.e. novels which are seen to be suggestive of the work of Philip K. Dick, hence Problem C?



Arthur C. Clarke Award
for: best new SF novel published in U.K.
voted by: a rotating panel of judges appointed by the British SF Association, the Science Fiction Foundation, and the Science Museum
plus: recognition, cash award (now 2000 British pounds); association with the much revered Sir Arthur Clarke lends this a substantial air of validity
minus: nominally, books published elsewhere (i.e. U.S.) are eligible in first year of publication in U.K.; in practice, leans heavily to highly literary dystopic SF by British writers, hence Problem A

BSFA Awards
for: best original U.K. publication; in addition to the novel award there are awards for short fiction and art
voted by: membership of British Science Fiction Association
plus: recognition?
minus: similar to Clarke, a strong preference for a specific type of work; according to our source, the art and short fiction categories are almost invariably from the covers and contents of Interzone, resulting in an exclusionary pattern, thus Problem A?

British Fantasy Society Award
for: achievement in British "fantasy"?
voted by: membership of British Fantasy Society and/or its convention (?)
plus: recognition distinct from SF awards
minus: according to our source, much like World Fantasy's, this is dominated by dark fantasy/horror works

Richard Evans Memorial Award
for: "A body of work that has attracted critical acclaim but without commensurate financial reward", sic!
voted by: a jury, appointed by ?
plus: award is not restricted to specific works or years, but recognizes career achievement; contributions to field in non-fiction (e.g. criticism) can be factored in; tends to recognize work of gifted but non-commercial talents; cash prize (2000 British pounds)
minus: apparently restricted to British writers?

James White Award
for: achievement in short fiction?
voted by: panel of judges selected by ?
plus: recognition, publication of
selected story in Interzone
minus: ?

Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award
for: achievement in short fiction?
voted by: according to our source, a
large panel of editors and reviewers
selects a list of finalists, which are
then judged by a small panel of pro SF
writers; unclear who administers this
plus: recognition
minus: Problem B?

George Turner Prize
for: best original SF novel published
in Australia by an Australian author (?)
voted by: ?
plus: local recognition in a field
dominated by American and British writers
minus: Problem A, Problem B

Les Prix Boreal
for: achievement in French-language SF
writing in Quebec/Canada
voted by: membership of Boreal, a French
language convention in Quebec
plus: gives a voice to Francophone
writers in a field dominated by the
English language
minus: Problem A, Problem C

Mark Time Awards/Ogle Awards
for: achievement in SF audio production/
radio drama (Mark Time); or in fantasy/
horror audio production (Ogle) [Ogle is
named for Charles Ogle, a silent-film
actor; there is also a "Grand Master"
award.]
voted by: American Society for Science
Fiction Audio
plus: recognition of a really obscure
subgenre/field of achievement
minus: Problem B, Problem C

Lambda Award
for: achievement in gay/lesbian SF (?)
voted by: ?
plus: recognition of a minority position;
possibly tends to diminish homophobia?
minus: Problem A, Problem C

Student Science Fiction & Fantasy Contest
for: stories, art, and science essays

produced by students up to grade 12
voted by: panel of judges appointed by
Worldcon/Nasfic?
plus: In theory, encourages reading,
writing, and interest in genre by students
by providing certificates to all entrants
and prizes (T-shirts, bookstore gift
certificates) to finalists
minus: seems like an awful lot of work/
expense (several thousand \$/year) for a
program whose problematical results may
not come due for years

There may be others. We have heard in
very vague terms about a "Sunburst Award"
which has something to do with Canada; a
"Sapphire Award" concerning "SF romance"
(?); we seem to recall hearing somewhere
of a "Golden Duck Award", possibly having
to do with children's fiction? There is a
"Prometheus Award" given by the Libertarian
Futurist Society; it is unclear whether
this could be called genre-specific.

Some former awards have disappeared. A
reliable source mentions at least two SF/
fantasy/dark fantasy poetry awards which
apparently were discontinued some time in
the 1980's, the "Clark Ashton Smith Award"
and the "Balrog Award". There was a short-
lived "Gryphon Award" in the early 1990's
affiliated in some fashion with Andre
Norton, apparently for fantasy novels
written by women; at least once (Orlando,
1992) it was presented in conjunction with
the Hugo Awards ceremony. We have heard
no mention of this in several years.

Sources from which we gathered/received
material relevant to this article include:
Robert Lichtman, Steve Jeffery, Steve
Sneyd, Lloyd Penney, Thyme, and File 770.
Contributions were not always deliberate,
that is to say we have in some instances
drawn information from things presented
elsewhere. It should be emphasized that
these sources are not responsible for our
opinions, not for any errors which may
have crept into our interpretations (or
misinterpretations).

To the extent that any general conclusion
is possible, it seems clear there is a
balkanization into too many petty or
narrowly focussed awards of little import;
and that even those recognized as having
some value are limited by problems. The
question of whether any award at all is
preferable to no award, remains to be
settled, or debated, elsewhere.



Shall We Potter Around Lord of the Rings?

(well...it sounded better inside my head)

Sheryl Birkhead

(Disclaimer: although I have seen both of these movies, I did not feel any burning excitement about seeing either one of them. They both went onto my (long) list of movies to see, but neither went to the head of the class. I saw *LOTR* because a group was going and I was asked if I wanted to see the film. I saw *Harry* because I had some gift certificates that would soon be expiring and figured to give the movie equal time.)

I read the *Ring Trilogy* way back in the Dark Ages and never re-visited it. I listened to all four of the *Harry Potter* books on tape well ahead of the movie buzz. So, I have a basis of knowledge for both movies.

My sister enjoys *Asimov* and *Star Trek*-beyond that, I make no claim for her fanishness. She, and her family, saw both movies way before I did and I asked for her thoughts on the movies. Her background for the literature is that she had tried, several times and unsuccessfully, to read the *Tolkien* books; she had read the *Harry Potter* books.

Her assessment of the two movies was that she felt the *Harry Potter* movie was a far better movie than *LOTR*- primarily because there was closure, to some degree, and resolution. She felt that *LOTR* simply had no finality and was left open ended.

About a week before I saw either movie, I watched the *PBS* special on *J.R.R. Tolkien*. There was the explanation that the trilogy was never meant to be one...that the original book was simply too long for publication and was split into three (arbitrary) parts-i.e. none of the three had been intended to have any closure, but merely to be a portion of the whole. A trilogy that never was. I had never even thought about this since I read all three books back to back and never worried about transition/closure from one to the next.

Okay, knowing that ahead of time, I expected *LOTR* to be very good technically and yet poor as a movie, *per se* (by me definition). I expect a movie to have a plot and resolution...something to leave the viewer with a feeling of satisfaction for having invested three

hours of viewing time. This is totally removed from a viewer versus a cult(following). For a cult, there is no expectation of such things- the item is merely a reflection of the original and that is reason enough to to be. This means it is a pretty good bet that the film would be a spectacular (pun intended) success, despite/in spite of the story self-contained within the movie.

The *Harry Potter* movie, on the other hand, appears that it was never meant to be more than a juvenile entertainer. It was not meant to be an allegory, or to be dissected level upon level. In other words, it was *only* meant to be entertainment- end stop.

I have no real idea what the budget was for either of these movies, but it is *very* apparent that neither was run on a shoestring. Some projects may actually look good if you throw enough money at them, but they will collapse after the initial brouhaha dies down and the viewing public sees that the film does not live up to the hype. In this respect, I think both films are fairly evenly matched. Both are at least *quasi-epic* eye candy.

My, naive, thought was that the true test of these films would lie in the thoughts of an *uninterested* bystander who had not read either work and would be viewing the movies merely as cinema. With all the hype surrounding the release of these two movies, I doubt there are many (any?) movie-goers who do not have preconceived ideas about the films (or at least one or the other of them). It would appear that, perhaps, *Harry Warner, jr.*, might fit this description, but he also admits it is unlikely he will see either of the movies, so that removes him (at least for now) from the pool of potential reviewers.

Okay. So, it appears that the, to me, perfect reviewer, is going to be almost impossible to find; let us muddle along with what I felt about the two films.

First, I am glad I saw both , but will not make any serious attempts to see either of them a second time right now. To repeat, I am not a follower of either , but I have read both books.

Yes, *LOTR* has lack of closure, but does that mean we have to wait until all three movies are complete before we consider we have one product? Don't think so. Having read the book (albeit a *while* ago) and not looking for closure--yet, I thought the movie was true to the book and well done. I was a bit distracted by some of the filming--by techniques which I thought I had figured out, but which I was told were incorrect explanation. Specifically, it would seem that children were used for any distance shots to portray the hobbits. Children do not have the same body proportions and do not move the same way that adults do and in any scenes which were cuts from close-ups and then back, it appeared, to me, that there were discontinuities. Then, it seemed that when a shot was upward, that one of the hobbit's legs would appear thicker than the other, as if the camera had been tilted upward to foreshorten the foreground and lengthen the background (i.e. make the hobbit actors appear shorter and the *humans* appear taller in comparison). I was told that I was wrong in this ...that all this was computer re-figured. Okay, if that is true, then perhaps it is a function of the screen on which I viewed the film. I was close enough that side edges appeared fuzzy and I was tempted to keep my fingers firmly jammed in my ears--way too loud.

Did I enjoy the movie? Yes. but for what I was expecting and not for what I would expect from movies in general. Aha- so I have a double standard...hmm. Yes.

Spectacular...yes. Dark...yes. Worth seeing...yes. Self-contained...um...er.

Now about *Harry*. The theater was very small (ie. uncomfortable seating) and the print was pretty lousy. Granted that I have *read* the book much more recently, I felt that a lot of the mortar that filled in the literary cracks was missing. Here one would need a *Potter* virgin to determine if there is a real flaw or not. I found it

much more interesting to see how the movie *magic* would do its thing. I am not quite clear on how *Hagrid* was made to appear 8'6", but it worked. I didn't feel that the three-headed *Fluffy* was quite as much of a success, but passable.

My quibble with *Harry* is that the screen did not match the images I had inside my head; the *Harry* I saw on the screen, while a perfectly good *Harry*, was not the one who played the lead in the personalized version I had. That being said, did I enjoy the movie- yes, but for different reasons than *LOTR*..

Alright, bottom line. For me, were both films good cinematography- yes. Were they both good movies---- *Harry* wins out by a small margin on that one (for me at least). *Harry* is a simple story- written and filmed. *LOTR* is a much more complex story written and filmed-

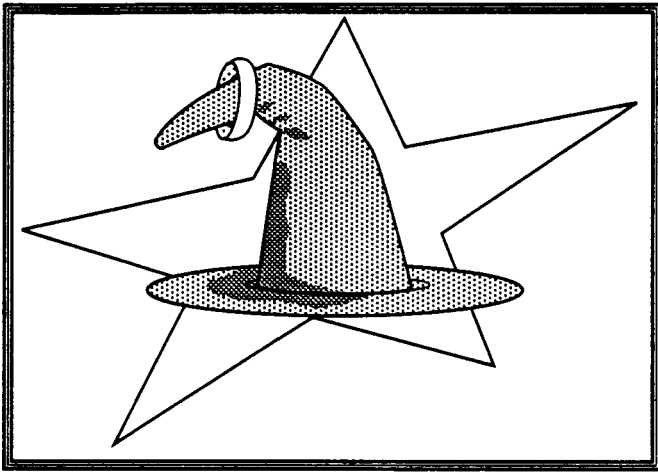
but still incomplete. So, many people saw these movies because they had pre-viewing information about the book(s)/film(s). Any personal assessment would probably revolve around how much the viewer is, personally, caught up in the book that went into the film and may not necessarily come

from the merit of the film on its own.

Okay- will there be people lined up time and again to see each film- of course. Is each film enjoyable? Yes (bearing in mind that *LOTR* is very dark- content and filming values and *Harry* has sports!).

Do I think either film belongs on my short list of the best movies out there (sf/fantasy or otherwise)? No. (Okay- holler, but don't hit--them's my impressions and I stick by 'em.)

(A footed note-- the *AFI* awards were given out in January and, however they are determined, have *said* that I am wrong...isn't the first and won't be the last time.)



**JOHNSON'S PROLOGUE CONSIDERED AS COMMENTARY
ON SCIENCE FICTION**

by Dale Speirs

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I was reading an anthology of essays on Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) and came across his poem "Prologue at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury Lane, 1747". This poem was written for Johnson's friend David Garrick on the occasion of the latter opening his new theatre in London, England, in September 1747. The poem covers the history of theatre in England from the past to the present of Johnson's time to the unimaginable future of our time 250 years later. As I went through it, I was struck by the commentary in it that might well be applied to science fiction. Science fiction was unknown in Johnson's time, although fantasy was known well enough, and science fact itself was still struggling its way out of the chrysalis of natural philosophy. The poem begins with Shakespeare:

*"When Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous
foes
First reared the stage, immortal Shakespeare
rose;
Each change of many-coloured life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new:
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
And panting Time toiled after him in vain:
His powerful strokes presiding truth
impressed,
And unresisted passion stormed the breast."*

Substitute the name of a good SF writer (your choice, please) for Shakespeare's, and one will have a fair description of the responsibility and obligation of writing SF. Good SF, that is. Not media SF where spaceships zigzag in combat like WW2 fighter planes in defiance of orbital dynamics and fuel versus delta vee calculations. That is an exhausted world, written by those who cannot imagine new. They who write fantasy novels about some lad or lass on a quest to overthrow an evil monarch or to seek the Sacred Knicknack of Qwerty prefer to stay well within the bounded reigns.

The next verse discusses Ben Jonson:

*"Then Jonson came, instructed from the
school,
To please in method, and invent by rule;
His studious patience, and labourious art,
By regular approach essayed the heart;
Cold approbation gave the ling'ring bays,
For those who durst not censure, scarce
could praise.
A mortal born he met the general doom,
But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting
tomb."*

A journeyman SF writer, in other words. A steady seller in the publishers' midlists. An author like Andrew Harmin, Tom Holt, Terry Pratchett, or Piers Anthony, selling steadily on name recognition but with no powerful strokes impressing truth.

*"The wits of Charles found easier ways to
fame,
Nor wished for Jonson's art, or
Shakespeare's flame;
Themselves they studied, as they felt, they
writ,
Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.
Vice always found a sympathetic friend;
They pleased their age, and did not aim to
mend.
Yet bards like these aspired to lasting
praise,
And proudly hoped to pimp in future days.
Their cause was gen'ral, their supports were
strong,
Their slaves were willing, and their reign
was long;
Til shame regained the post that sense
betrayed,
And Virtue called oblivion to her aid."*

The trendy and the bestsellers. New Wave SF, mercifully called to oblivion, kept readers baffled by substituting obscurity for plot and adding obscenity as if it were wit. Obscenity is almost never wit, although stand-up comedians can always get laughs with it from the drunks in the audience at nightclubs. The only person who ever demonstrated good use of obscenity as wit was George Carlin in his routine "Seven Words You Can Never Say On Television". Vice always finds a sympathetic friend because it sounds cool and the effects don't catch up with the victim for awhile. Fortunately, as Johnson mentions, the bestsellers of this kind soon vanish into oblivion. Stephen King is one of a long line of authors dominating the bookstores in

his time, "then vanishing by the next generation despite selling millions.

Media SF may aspire to future praise, but is mostly substituting special effects for characterization and plot. Television and movies have had a long reign, and their slaves are still willing. B-movies are given the same emphasis as 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Television pleases only the current age, in quest of ratings. Its flow of content pours by, so fast that the trivial and the significant blur together. STAR TREK aspires to lasting praise; books are published on its future perfect as if "Live long and prosper" was serious philosophy and not a trivial epigram.

*"Then crushed by rules, and weakened as refined,
For years the power of tragedy declined;
From bard, to bard, the frigid caution crept,
Til declamation roared, while passion slept.
Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread,
Philosophy remained, though Nature fled.
But forced at length her antient reign to quit,
She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of wit:
Exulting Folly hailed the joyful day,
And pantomime, and song, confirmed her sway."*

Hollywood and the New York City publishers always want something new and different, as long as it is like the last big thing. Frigid caution creeps from movie screen to movie screen, with crushing rules that insist starships must make an audible sound as they whiz by in space. Ten-volume fantasy trilogies must have wizards either incompetent bunglers or pure evil. The message is always that if you believe hard enough in something, it will come true (with lush orchestral music in the background). At one time you had to at least clap your hands, but that was refined and weakened to where all you have to do is let the Force be with you. In real life, of course, wishing doesn't make a thing so. Someone still has to crawl under the machinery and re-wire the circuits.

*"But who the coming changes can presage,
And mark the future periods of the stage?
Perhaps if skill could distant times
explore,*

*New Behns, new Durfeys, yet remain in store.
Perhaps, where Lear has raved, and Hamlet died,
On flying cars new sorcerers may ride.
Perhaps, for who can guess the effects of chance?
Here Hunt may box, or Mahomet may dance."*

Johnson was practical enough to realize that prophecy is laughable to future generations riding on flying cars. He correctly realizes that chance makes the future unguessable. The future of theatre is unknowable. No one could have imagined that a canceled television show of the 1960s would turn into a billion-dollar industry because of Trekkies. No one in 1990 could have imagined that the World Wide Web would become a multi-billion dollar industry in five years, and that every television show and movie would have its own Web site.

*"Hard is his lot, that here by fortune placed,
Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;
With every meteor of caprice must play,
And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day.
Ah! let not censure term our fate our choice,
The stage but echoes back the public voice.
The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
For we that live to please must please to live."*

In short, ratings and box office takings are still the motivating forces behind performing arts. SF movies and television shows must please to live. The actors are only as famous as their last hit, and if they fail to watch the wild vicissitudes of fate, are condemned to oblivion or at best cult status. Johnson suggests, hopefully and hopelessly, that better performances are within the responsibility of the theatre-goers:

*"Then prompt no more the follies you decry,
As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die;
'Tis yours this night to bid the reign
commence
Of rescued Nature, and reviving Sense;
To chase the charms of sound, the pomp of show,
For useful mirth, and salutary woe;
Bid scenic virtue form the rising age,
And Truth diffuse her radiance from the stage."*

a convention report by LLOYD PENNEY

Ad Astra is the annual regional SF convention in the Toronto area, and has been held in February for the past few years. This year's convention Ad Astra 2002, was February 8th to 10th, and featured author guests of honour Guy Gavriel Kay and Julie Czerneda, and artist guests of honour John Howe and Ted Nasmith.

I will preface my report by saying that for the past 20 years, Yvonne and I had been on the committee in one position or other, and I had been the chairman of the convention for two of those 20. For the first time, neither of us was on that committee, and our departure wasn't entirely voluntary. However, with journalistic integrity in mind, I shall try to review this convention as objectively as possible.

After more than 15 years out by the airport strip of hotels, the convention moved to the downtown area in the hope that affordable hotel and function rates might be found, and the convention had been lucky enough to do just that. After hopping around from hotel to hotel, they seem to have found a long-term home in the Toronto Colony Hotel, just north of Toronto's futuristic City Hall. It's still relatively new, but is starting to look a little run down, which seems to be a perfect combination for annual cons. The hotel seemed to be happy with the con, and the con's attendees were definitely happy with the dim sum restaurant downstairs, and the proximity to the restaurants of one of Toronto's Chinatowns.

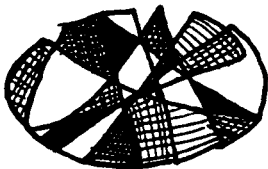
Usually, we know most of what's happening with the convention, but with what happened to us, we were in the dark, and that was an unfamiliar feeling. Never the less, we were still bust, staging a surprise party for a friend from Windsor, Ontario on the Friday night, and assisting with a bid party for the Los Angeles in 2006 Worldcon bid on the Saturday night.

Even with all of this, I could still see a lot of what was happening at the con-

vention, and still found it a little lacking here and there. A look in the large programme book saw a bit of programming for various fannish and media interests, but found that the majority of panels were for those who are writing their SF novel. I see so many conventions unconsciously fall into that programming trap; there seem to be lots of fans out there who are working on their skiffy oeuvre, but they are still in the minority when it comes to attendees. (Another article in the programme book detailed that about half a dozen people [including us] had left the committee, and some attendees made comment on this unsettling fact.)

When we weren't running a party in the evening, we were at the LA in '06 bid table, frantically selling pre-supporting memberships. The dealer's room was poorly stocked, yet I don't blame the convention for that; most cons I go to seem to have a tough time filling dealers' rooms. In order to make the room seem fuller, the Torcon and LA bid tables, and the con's flyer tables, were relocated in the dealers' room; and even with that, there were still three or four empty tables belonging to dealers who didn't claim their tables. Those tables occupied sold jewelry, comics, game modules, tarot readings, Worldcon memberships, costuming supplies, and heavy weaponry. Ad Astra has always prided itself on being a literary convention, yet the greatest problem it's had in the past few years is attracting SF booksellers. (There was one bookseller who was deathly ill that weekend, and couldn't arrange for some one else to run his tables. The only place to sell a variety of books was the con's own table, which was also selling convention T-shirts and other con-related clothing. They've been smart to accept and sell books on consignment.) The local SF bookstore, Bakka Books, can't afford to take tables and hire someone to look after the store while they're gone, and there are other bookstores in the same position.

Because of our rushing about during the convention, there were some areas we didn't see, and had to rely on others for their own impressions. The art show was



enjoyable, but was a little small and a little familiar, as in "We saw those pieces last year." Again, I don't fault The Team, Eh? for this; I think they have a tougher time each year finding artists willing to send their art to Canada, and new artists within Canada still producing art for sale. The gamers were in their rooms, rolling the dice, throwing cards and generally enjoying themselves. I spotted the guests from time to time, and the convention seemed to employ them well, giving them various panels to take part in. Ad Astra was Julie Czerneda's first con in attending; she was thrilled to actually be a guest at it.

The con suite was great. It always is at this con, and such a room has been traditional for Ad Astra. This time it was about double the size of previous rooms, which made it more comfortable for smokers and non-smokers alike. I know there have been complaints about charging for food and drink (except for beer), but I guess we're used to it by now, and it's good food that's inexpensive, anyway. The comfortable rooms more than made up for it.

I heard that attendance was approximately 600, but it was difficult to tell in the hotel, which had its function space on several floors. We also shared the hotel convention space with a policy gathering of the Ontario branch of the Liberal Party of Canada, which only added to the surreal atmosphere. Overall, the convention was a little tainted for us, but most people seemed to enjoy themselves. Perhaps the fact that I've been going to cons for 25 years has jaded me a bit, so I observe others to see if they're enjoying themselves. If they are, the con's a success.

Next year's convention is Ad Astra XXII, moving to March 21st-24th (four days for the first time), 2003, at the same hotel, and main Pro Guest of Honour is Michael Moorcock, which should hike attendance. I've also heard that Ad Astra may be combining itself with Orion, a local gaming convention, to combine the two for a thousand-person-plus, SF and gaming event: probably the smart thing to do in an increasingly difficult and expensive market.

I figure that any convention that has lasted as long as Ad Astra must be doing something right. I hope we can return to the concom some time in the future to try to assure that, and keep it going and vital. So, I'll shuffle off a little of my objectivity, and recommend the convention to anyone who'd like to come up to Toronto in the early spring.

[[Editor's note: Lloyd advises the convention's website is:

www.ad-astra.org

Or, contact Lloyd and Yvonne at: 1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9C 2B2, Canada, for information about Ad Astra; also about the 2003 Worldcon. Ditto, the fanzine con, will also be in the Toronto area October 2002, contact: Murray Moore, 1065 Henley Road, Mississauga, Ontario, L4Y 1C8, Canada. Busy area!]]



©Brad W. Foster 2001
"WINTER ON SATURN"

SPECIAL TOLKIEN REVIEW SECTION

The Fellowship Of The Ring director:
Peter Jackson 2001 rated: PG-13
(review by E.B. Frohvet)

In making a film of a classic, the first rule ought to be: Don't mess with it more than necessary. Rabid purists will object that Bombadil and Goldberry have been dropped. We don't have much problem with that; as we've said elsewhere, those are peripheral characters who were tossed in because Tolkien had them available, and serve no essential plot purpose. In contrast, the role of Arwen (Liv Tyler) has been upgraded from an essentially passive and minor figure in the book, to an active participant. Other aspects have necessarily been compressed to fit a feasible film length (still nearly three hours). The question then becomes: Has Jackson, in general, been true to the story and the spirit of the story? We think the clear answer must be "yes". Details have had to be compromised to fit the medium; basically, however, this is the story as Tolkien told it. We have heard it speculated that the author would have hated to see LOTR made into a film. Even if that were the case, we can speculate that Professor Tolkien would have preferred it to be done by someone who genuinely likes the book; and that's the case here. We hesitated to see the film for several weeks for fear that it would spoil the story for us. We cannot say the film significantly expands our understanding of LOTR. But this is about as well as it could have been done. It's a worthy and honorable effort, with little attempt to intrude the director's vision in place of the author's. That's about as much as any reader could hope for.

J.R.R. Tolkien, Author Of The Century
T.A. Shippey 2000 Houghton Mifflin
\$26.00 hardcover
(review by E.B. Frohvet)

The relevance of this book is immediately elevated by the high visibility of Tolkien and his work resulting from the first Peter Jackson movie. This work will be dense going for those who have only seen the film; but will amply repay the

time of dedicated Tolkien readers. Dr. Shippey is an academic, a philologist (expert in languages and their origins) very much in the pattern of Tolkien's own career, and well qualified to assess the works from that perspective. Yet a genuine affection for the writings of Tolkien is evident, as Shippey sets out to defend them as a real contribution to literature, not "a mere freak of popular taste."

The author begins by placing Middle Earth squarely in the tradition, not of children's fairy-tales, but of the older and more serious fantastic literature of which, say, "Snow White" is a debased



only our opinion....

remnant (and Beowulf a rare surviving fragment). The least attentive reader will have observed that The Hobbit and The Lord Of The Rings are small and recent portions of an enormous bank of history and lore. Dr. Shippey explains neatly how Tolkien achieved that effect (though he does tend to get bogged down in philological trivia).

He then proceeds to evaluate LOTR's "ideology" as specifically 20th Century: "While critics have found fault with almost everything about The Lord Of The

OTHER REVIEWS

Rings ...no one, to my knowledge, has ever quibbled with what Gandalf says about the Ring. It is far too plausible, and too recognizable." This leads Shippey unfortunately into defending both sides of the same argument concerning the nature of evil -- admittedly a problem which can be troubling even to the wise. Although he tends to get sidetracked in too-clever articulations, Shippey understands why LOTR is "a fundamentally religious work", as Tolkien described it. There are also sections on The Silmarillion and Tolkien's minor and academic works, and an attempt to explain why the success of LOTR is so bitterly resented by the literary and critical establishment.

Meditations on Middle Earth Karen Haber, editor/John Howe, illustrator
2001 St. Martin's press \$24.95 hardcover
(review by E.B. Frohvet)

Halfway through a paragraph by Poul Anderson about the parallel histories of realistic and non-realistic fiction, we flashed on "What about Moby Dick?" and skimmed to the end of the section, where Anderson made the same point. Great minds think alike. (Okay, even lesser minds can occasionally anticipate their betters.) It's a sorry disgrace that Terry Pratchett gets his name on the cover and Anderson does not.

In a profound oddity of proofreading, every other title is italicized, but LOTR is not. On a more serious note, this book lacks both the unified vision and the scholarly depth of the Shippey volume. These are mostly brief (few beyond 4000 words) essays on "How Tolkien influenced me", ranging from Michael Swanwick's "Long ago, I ran away with the elves, and I never came back" to Esther Friesner's crediting her career to a favorable book review of The Hobbit in, of all places, Seventeen magazine! Orson Scott Card's attempt to explain how Tolkien remains popular, to some extent echoes Shippey. Ursula K. LeGuin's scholarly essay on the metrical and rhythmic structure of the language of Tolkien, seems out of place here: enlightening, but from a different realm than easy personal recollections. John Howe's (originally pencil or charcoal) sketches are okay and faithful and not spectacular.

A Plutonian Monologue Brian Aldiss
2000 The Frogmore Press (42 Morehall Avenue, Folkestone, Kent CT19 4EF, Great Britain) limited edition 3.25 pounds
(review by Steve Sneyd)

Brian Aldiss has a towering reputation as a science fiction novelist, while his Billion Year Spree and Trillion Year Spree are outstanding critical overviews of the genre.

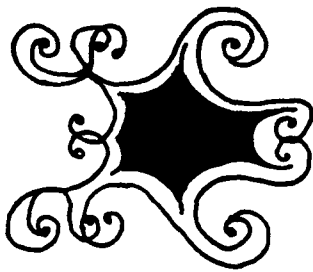
His poetry is perhaps less well known. Yet it includes, as well as a prestigious publisher's Selected Poems collection At The Caligula Hotel (1995), also the long book form narrative poem Pile, the slim collection Farewell To A Child, etc., a variety of anthology appearances, and the presence of poetry within several of his novels, most notably in the psychedelic era Barefoot In The Head, where poems make up nearly a third of the text, and much of the rest is prose-poem form.

This new collection of seven poems is, as the subtitle "On His Wife's Death" makes clear, a response to the death from cancer of Margaret Aldiss in 1997.

They are stoical, often startlingly honest (as when in "V, In Her Bureau" he meditates on how, after her death, he discovered a notebook containing her secret "list/Of my misdeeds, without insistence/Noted"). They have, predominantly in free verse, occasionally as prose poem, a clarity and precision in their pictures of the changing weathers of grief, the impacting of seasons and interior and exterior locations around the home once shared, that compel continued reading even when the feeling begins that here is a one-sided dialogue with a ghost rather than a message for any living reader.

The verse, then, is moving and strong. But where, aside from the author's role as genre giant, is the connection with science fiction that makes it relevant for review here?

The connection lies in the remarkable poem "IV, On Pluto", where Aldiss draws directly on SF tropes to give a benchmark demonstration of how the contemporary, the personal, can illuminate -- and be illumined by -- the genre's outreach into the vast Beyond. In this poem, the view-



point "I" disembodiedly accompanies, mind voyager or thought experimenter, the probe Zond -- "bauble...Its only breath ...seventy-five watts" on its journey to "what the Russians call/"Nasha dyevoshka" -- "our dead little girl", the title planet. The imagery is beautiful in its precision of strangeness: left-behind Jupiter is "sizzling on all wavebands" while, as Zond (and Aldiss) witness "avalanche... fall soundlessly" amid "crystal-line valleys" where "Kelvin's Zero burns like fire" and "The cumbrous moon of Charon sears the sky", "The mother ship flies on to lose itself/Among the frigid wasp nest" (beautiful concision) "of the Kuiper Belt", metaphoring absence felt "on solar system's ragged skirts" as in the "frozen orbit" of personal loss.

American Gods Neil Gaiman 2001
William Morrow \$26.00 hardcover
(review by E.B. Frohvet)

Shadow had served his time (three years for aggravated assault) quietly. Two days before he was to be released, they told him his wife had been killed in a car accident. The stranger calling himself "Mr. Wednesday" offered Shadow a job; and having nothing better to do, he walked freely into the grey country of strange dreams, visits from his dead wife (still quite dead), old Russian fortune tellers, Egyptian undertakers, and cold Wisconsin winters...

It is possible to write grim and bleak, and yet with empathy. Few writers dare, as it requires immersing oneself in the pain of one's characters. Harlan Ellison did it with great intensity, but seldom beyond short story length. Neil Gaiman does it here, for 461 pages. American Gods has less of that whack-you-upside-the-head quality found in vintage Ellison; it has something of Bradbury's tendency to admire weirdness just because it's weird. In no way suggestive of Delany, it

stands to early-2000's SF as Delany stood to 1960's SF: which is to say, elsewhere.

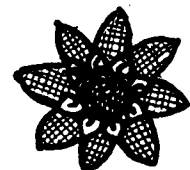
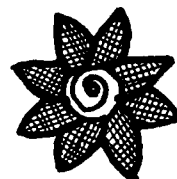
For all that we found this book both admirable and highly readable, we also found in it an element of wonderful writing to no special purpose, of great scene-setting more for the sake of great scene-setting than to advance the story. Built over a science fictional frame (you can tell that Gaiman, unlike, say, Margaret Attwood, has read SF), this is clearly a postmodern novel.

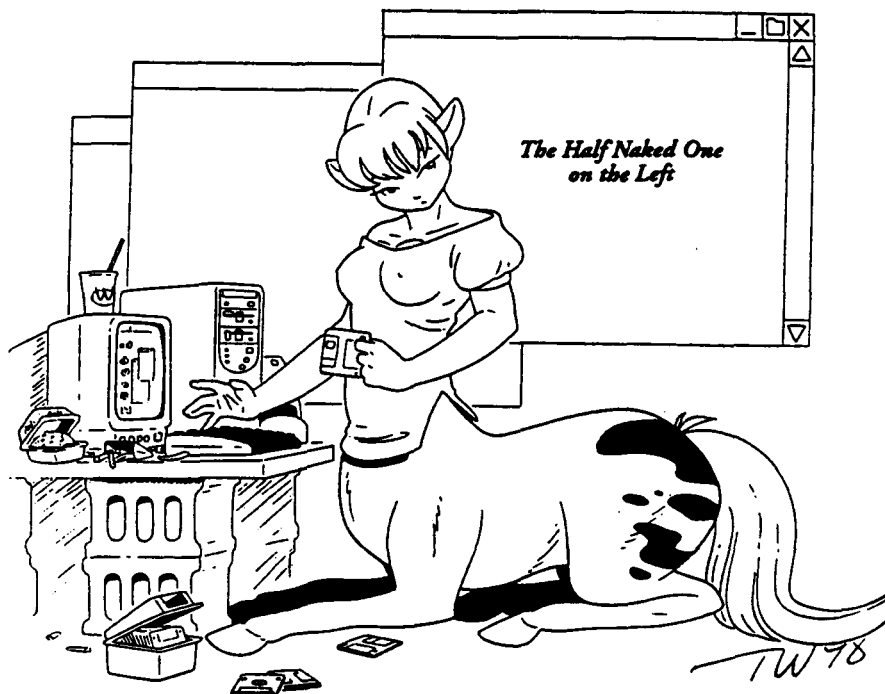
Song In The Silence (The Tale of Lanen Kaelar) Elizabeth Kerner 1997 Tor
\$23.95 hardcover
(review by E.B. Frohvet)

Lanen starts as an archetypal fantasy heroine, a tall, plain, frustrated girl bored with the smallness of life on her father's horse ranch, until his death frees her to pursue her own destiny. The story then grinds to a halt for pages of historical backfill. This is Kerner's principal fault as a writer, and it's a common one in first novels: lacking confidence in her ability to convey anything by indirection, she is reduced to narrating and explaining every detail, to the detriment of any sort of narrative pace. The effect was so tedious that we just lost interest in the story long before we got to the dragons. Well, there were supposed to be dragons; we're not sure, we never got that far.

Worlds Of Wonder (How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy) David Gerrold 2001
Writer's Digest Books \$14.99 trade paper
(review by Barkie the Talking Dog)

Gerrold describes "effective communication" as the basic writerly skill, being defined as "evoking the experience". The rest is generic writer-advice, divided into micro-chapters: "sex scenes" gets nine pages, "style" three. The only look at the real problem is a sketchy remark on page 229: "You will practice receiving rejection slips. Remember, they don't count..." Easy for you to say.





Peregrine Nations Vol. 1 #3
 Janine G. Stinson
 P.O. Box 430314
 Big Pine Key FL 33043

This promising small (12 pp.) genzine has a firm identity and editorial voice; now all it needs is some material. Janine leads again with the lettercol; other than that she wrote it all, including zine reviews, a book review, and a short piece on her mundane life as a journalist on a local paper. Neatly formatted, nice Marc Schirmeister cover. You should send stuff to expand on PN's untapped potential.

The Leighton Look
 Rodney Leighton
 RR #3, Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia
 BoK 1V0, Canada

An occasional, combined letter-sub and review item; with comments on Rodney's life, and material about films, books, and zines he's encountered lately. Like most personalzines, this would probably be of interest chiefly to those who know Rodney.

Ansible #173
 Dave Langford
 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire
 RG1 5AU, Great Britain

We saw it observed recently that zine reviewers never describe Ansible, taking

it for granted that everyone knows about it. Actually that seems like a fairly safe guess, but hey, we're adaptable. Okay: monthly, single sheet/two pages of fine print, micro-news of British pro/fan scene, address changes, deaths, mockery of bad writing, very occasional mention of some American. Lots of people find it amusing or informative. So, does that about cover that?

Visions Of Paradise #89
 Robert Sabella
 24 Cedar Manor Court
 Budd Lake NJ 07828

Consistently one of our favorite zines. The good news is that Bob is inserting more editorial voice; the bad news is that the schedule is slipping back to 3/ year. Several months of the editor's personal, family, and professional journal; book and zine reviews, and separately collated lettercol. The strength of VOP is not in any one issue, but in its view of a life over time. Plus the jokes are usually pretty funny.

Opuntia #50
 Dale Speirs
 Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta
 T2P 2E7, Canada

Regular small personalzine featuring a cactus fetish/trademark, occasional short

letters, and short articles on such topics as the oddities of postal history; mail art (we think we've finally grasped why we don't grasp this subject) and a review of a romance novel.

Southern Fandom Conf. Bulletin Vol. 7 #11
Julie Wall
470 Ridge Road
Birmingham AL 35206

An aura of resigned grief permeates a long series of remembrances for Southern fan Meade Frierson; on the up side, Naomi Fisher describes with relish the Mardi Gras-themed wedding of Guy Lillian III and Rose-Marie Donovan. Tom Feller with the usual con reports, including his Worldcon, and brief zine reviews; Southern club and convention listings. A valuable source of news for those in, or following, fandom in the southern U.S.

The Knarley Knews #91
Henry L. Welch
1525 16th Avenue
Grafton WI 53024

Teddy Harvia's spectacular, full color, star-spangled-dragon cover must have cost Henry a bundle to print. The editor reports on Ditto, and a family wedding; book (J.G. Stinson) and zine (Rodney Leighton) reviews; regular columnist Sue Welch, the editor's mother, discusses observing lion prides in Africa (Mom sure gets around). A full lettercol, though more interaction from Henry might liven it up. Very consistent.

Mimosa #27
Richard & Nicki Lynch
P.O. Box 3120
Gaithersburg MD 20885

Hugo artists Teddy Harvia and Brad Foster collaborate on an elaborate, wrap-around cover. The editors discuss their summer, with emphasis on Worldcon, Ditto, and Capclave. Eve Ackerman's article on e-publishing, with its focus on the actual future, seems an oddity here; however the zine soon returns to its trademark focus on fan history, with pieces by Robert Madle, Mike Resnick, Forrest J. Ackerman, etc. You may want to hold off submissions, as the Lynchi promise two issues of "Best

of Mimosa" (how to choose?) and a final number in 2003.

For The Clerisy Vol. 9 #44
Brant Kresovich
P.O. Box 404
Getzville NY 14068

"Clerisy" are intellectuals, or in the editor's broader definition, those who read for pleasure. They will find much to agree and disagree with in this personalzine-with-LOCs, which somewhat overlaps with SF/fandom. Book, film, and zine reviews; an essay on the nature of death, and one on why Kresovich does yoga even though it's "an assault on the fragile male ego". It would be fun to pit the lettercol of Clerisy against the FOSFAX lettercol and let them slug it out.

Fanzine Fanatique (Autumn 2001)
Keith Walker
6 Vine Street, Lancaster
LA1 4UF, Great Britain

Four pages of micro-reviews from all over the self-publishing field. Of the 43 listed, we get 11 and would call fewer than that SF fanzines. Worth getting if your taste runs to poetry/music zines.

Derogatory Reference #98
Arthur D. Hlavaty
206 Valentine Street
Yonkers NY 10704

DR inexorably closes in on #100, at which point fandom will self-destruct and we'll be forced actually to read SF. That being the case, the best part of this personalzine for us was Hlavaty's report on Worldcon, in which he describes "Harry Potter" winning the Best Novel Hugo as, "The gargoyles have taken over the cathedral." Also comments on life (another job lost), death (of pets), and sundry.

Covert Communications From Zeta Corvi #8
Andrew C. Murdoch
508-6800 Westminster Highway
Richmond, B.C. V7C 1C5, Canada

We always enjoy this small (16 pp.) genzine, though we'd like even more to see it more frequently. Editorial on the

perils of downloading e-fiction; brief reviews of fanzines, most familiar, and "Retro Reviews" of overlooked books; a report on V-Con, Mr. Science's recipe for Liquid Nitrogen Ice Cream, and LOC's. Another good small zine which could use your support (their name is legion).

Vanamonde #'s 433-437
John Hertz
236 S. Coronado Street #409
Los Angeles CA 90057

Regular APazine. Always a supply of interesting fragments; always limitations in continuity and explication.

Thyme #133
Alan Stewart
P.O. Box 222, World Trade Center
Melbourne, Victoria 8005, Australia

Nice Hugo/phallic cover by Grant Gittus. The thymewarp remains confusing; some of the LOC's are from December 2001, yet you also find bits about contests with a May 2001 deadline. (Issue is dated March 2001.) New Zealand fan Mervyn Barrett's take on the 1999 Worldcon does tie into discussion of a future Aussie bid, and timeliness is not critical to book reviews. Still the best overview of Aussie fandom.

Nonstop Fun Is Hard On The Heart #5
dwain Kaiser [[lower case sic]]
P.O. Box 1074
Claremont CA 91711 [[note COA]]

The Marc Schirmeister cover is a hoot, though the paper is such a dark blue you have to squint. Contents mostly L.A.-focus fan history with much attention to William Rotsler and his skin-flick career, including full backal nudity photo of his butt -- maybe more than we cared to know, thanks! Also extensive lettercol, and Lyn Pederson's totally non sequitur account of a car accident in Nevada.

Joie de Vivre
Yvonne Rowse
Evergreen, Halls Farm Lane, Trimpley,
Worcs, DY12 1NP, Great Britain

At least this time Rowse explains that, if not why, Martin Tudor copies and mails her zines; in short, we're just a leftover

from an old unpurged mailing list. Okay, now we know. Rowse's take on the LOTR film and a Novacon report, half a book review, no lettercol. Probably more relevant to Britfans who know who these people are.

Dasfax Vol. 34 #2
TayVon Hageman
408 Grant Street
Englewood CO 80110

Typical little club newsletter. How can you have a Dead Dog Party every month?

Data Dump #57
Steve Sneyd
4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield
W. Yorkshire HD5 8PB, Great Britain

Four pages of very fine (hand)printed news on the SF poetry/music scene; where to find the collected poems of Lovecraft, where/when panels and articles related to the topic have taken place; access to collections and chapbooks. A worthy guide to its very specific sub-fandom.

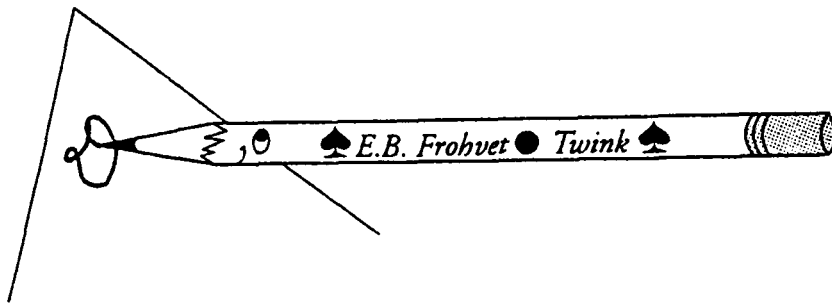
The Mongolian Jird (December/January)
Alan Sullivan
26 Thornford Road, Lewisham, London
SE13 6SG, Great Britain

Newsletter of a party and nominally SF group in London; presupposes local knowledge. Alan admits that reality is at times glossed over for humorous effect.

Conferring With Earthquakes #9
Brin-Marie McLaughlin
247 19th Avenue #6
San Francisco CA 94121

An agreeable if irregular personalzine about the life of the editor; unhappily, much of this is taken up with the death of Brin's father. Also discusses the musical career of a friend. Brin and John will be at the San Jose Worldcon, seek them out.

Vanished in the Mist: Trap Door, This Here, Quasiquote. Overdue but not yet written off entirely: well, let's not get started on that...



Rheaders Rhevenge

[[Editorial comments appear in the customary double brackets.]]

ROBERT M. SABELLA
24 Cedar Manor Court
Budd Lake NJ 07828

Thanks for another fine issue of Twink, especially for your latest overview of the SF field, "Child Characters in Science Fiction". I've often wondered how much research and re-reading you do for these articles (such as the series about blacks in SF and religion in SF), or are they primarily done from memory? In any case, they are quite interesting reading.

[[Part memory, part research and re-reading, part material that just crops up in everyday reading.]]

In the case of "Child Characters", your discussion of Heinlein juveniles led me to consider Alexei Panshin's Rite Of Passage. He wrote that novel immediately following his in-depth study of Heinlein entitled Heinlein In Dimension, and considering that Rite is structured almost exactly like a Heinlein juvenile, some critics considered it the second portion of his analysis. Whether that is true or not, it was a good coming-of-age novel.

[[Certainly Rite Of Passage is a textbook imitation Heinlein juvenile, as are also Palmer's Emergence; John Barnes' Orbital Resonance; and many others.]]

PAUL DiFILIPPO
2 Poplar Street
Providence RI 02906

Many thanks for Twink 24. Another sterling issue, even if it had nothing by Bruce Sterling in it!

Did you know that in New England, the initials "EB" are most commonly associated with "Electric Boat", the large defense contractor?

[[The Electric Boat Company of Groton, Connecticut, builds nuclear submarines. Fandom may draw its own inferences about the risk of messing with Frohvet!]]

CATHERINE MINTZ
1810 S. Rittenhouse Square #1708
Philadelphia PA 19103

In my limited experience publishers lean pretty hard on you for writing adult novels that start out with the protagonist as a child, assuming he/she/it is relatively normal for wherever and whenever they are. If you are going to have the main character go on to serious adult adventures, then the lead-in is considered pages that might be better spent in adult activities and you get asked to crop them.

No matter that the reader really needs to know where the character is coming from or that children have interesting lives and a different take on the world. This has to do with what is perceived to be commercial and probably some of your other readers will have a few pithy remarks about that. Anything is commercial once it makes money.

[[Mmm. The grave-robbing scene in the first chapter of The Shadow Of The Torturer is germane to the plot, but takes up only a few pages of an extensive description of the character's childhood. Of course, that's Gene Wolfe...]]

As for the elves and housekeeping, the traditional view is that humans are

carried off to work in elfland. This was back when vampires were not elegant gentlemen and ghouls really did want to eat you. We will assume Rivendell has its staff of non-elves laboring away for the greater good and protected from the wild world outside in turn.

[[Not to belabor the obvious, but the text doesn't say that; on the contrary, it does pretty clearly that non-elves are very rare visitors in Mirkwood and Lorien -- Aragorn being a special case.]]

Bilbo lives comfortably among them. He knows how to fry a sausage, and I presume as bachelor living alone how to empty a chamber pot, although Tolkien never descends to mentioning anything so earthy.

JOSEPH T. MAJOR
1409 Christy Avenue
Louisville KY 40204

For me the greeting for this holiday season has always been, "Merry Christmas Happy Birthday here's your present." And my niece will also grow into this...

"Child Characters": Zenna Henderson's "People" stories contain a fair number of child characters, although usually as background. Since the bulk of them involve elementary school teachers this is sort of a foregone conclusion. The narrator of "Gilead", the first one I read, starts as a 6-year-old, though he grows up by the end of the story. One of the characters in "Wilderness" is an idiot, or mentally retarded, or exceptional child who is occasionally violent and ends up having to be rescued -- and of course for all the sweetness of the People she can't be given a normal intelligence.

The later People stories I felt (to go back to the topic of lastish) fell all too easily into the trope of sweet innocent People person, or sweet innocent sympathetic human with People person friend, gets involved with cruel harsh fundamentalist sect led by charismatic leader who interprets the Bible very harshly, but everything works out due to the inherent gentleness and sweetness of the People.

[[Have you read "Return"? In general, though, the People are Henderson's ideal of what perfect Christians would be like in an ideal universe.]]

Review of The Fata Morgana: I managed to

get all the way through the book. The death on p. 49 appeared to have come out of left field, but (SPOILER ALERT, but then, who should bother reading it?) was actually a case of bad aim. It seems that the POV character... had been bilked of "his business, his wife, his house, and everything" by a conspiracy between his wife and his lawyer... Anyway, just to make sure they tried to have him whacked, but the sniper had a bad scope...

Frankowski is very good at writing engineering -- how the skilled engineer applies engineering principles to resolve a problem. Alas, he writes a lot of other stuff, all of which is adolescent wank-fantasy or political fantasy, to encase it. Result, such bad works as The Fata Morgana.

"The Half Naked One": Reading Niekas made me feel plergb.

[[As the inventor of "gremflod" we're hardly in a position to criticize, but has this juvenile practice of making up nonsense words not run its course?]]

"Rheaders' Rhevenge": Jack Speer theory on the firstborn: Lisa is third-born and I am second-born. Tim Lane is second-born, Elizabeth Garrott is first-born. Grant McCormick is an only child.

[[We saw a book in the library, of which the premise was that one's personality could be largely predicted based on one's place in the birth order. Seems pretty iffy to us.]]

Ned Brooks: Heinlein got "Mota" (and the rest of the gods of The Day After Tomorrow) from its original draft, John W. Campbell's "All" (c. 1938).

Garth Spencer: Mad once had an ad for used movie props. Among them was a "Villain's Gun" which was guaranteed to miss, even at a range of two feet.

Milt Stevens: I know what you mean. "Pentium" doesn't sound like a computer part, it sounds like a body part ("I strained my pentium and had to stay in bed for a week."). There is a booming business in inventing meaningless names for products and businesses.

"Miscellany": And our C'Mell has figured out what packing signifies. The first time after we got her, when we packed, she fled and hid. Which made Lisa conclude that she had been given to the shelter when her previous owners move. Now she knows that

we are coming back and acts normal.

New LOTR fans: History repeating itself: There was a big Tolkien boom in the 1960s when the paperback editions came out, but the new fans formed Tolkien-specific groups, and their enthusiasm did not lead them on to fandom in general.

SHARON LEE
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Unity ME 04988

Hope everything's going well with you. We're over committed (did we really agree to write all those stories this year?) but happy. The final of Balance Of Trade is due to be with the publisher at the end of February; we're reading for an anthology entitled Low Port; and Ace has decided that instead of releasing the mass market reprints at two per year, they're releasing four this year (Local Custom in February, Scout's Progress in May, Conflict Of Honors in August, Agent Of Change in November) which is two more sets of galleys than we had been looking for. In addition, we've sold the non-Liaden-universe space opera The Tomorrow Log to Embid, as an electronic original. Embid has also bought the first of my Maine-based mysteries -- Barnburner. Plus, Warren Lapine has acquired "Veil of the Dancer" for Absolute Magnitude and is reprinting Liaden-universe story "A Choice of Weapons" in an upcoming anthology and a Sharon Lee vampire story, "Passionato" in another upcoming anthology.

And I'm running for SFWA president, in my abundant spare time.

[[Just so you're keeping busy! Okay, readers, as the Liaden books are being reissued in mass market paper, you have no remaining excuse for not going out and buying numerous copies.]]

JOHN THIEL
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I've been noticing the confusability of mainstream press and SF fanzines myself, and I think it goes against the tendency science fiction and fantasy have had to separate themselves from other forms of literature. At one time poet Tennyson and musicians Mozart and Wagner were shaping a new viewpoint that could be called a

fantasy approach to the world. This was a tendency toward separation. But it could be that SF has been distinct from the rest of literature as much and as long as it can be by now. At any rate, SF and fantasy seem to be getting erased out of a lot of fanzines, to the point where they can't really be called fanzines any more. (Although a crossword puzzle I've seen defined "fanzine" as a movie personality magazine.)

I didn't think Pablo Lennis would be obscure in this respect. In fact, the people who do the fiction and poetry don't have a pure SF attitude, and it may be that their viewpoints are non-scientific and mundane or materialistic, but they are writing in a science fiction or fantasy mode, which I think perpetuates that viewpoint.

[[At the risk of appearing a philistine, we find a lot of the material in Pablo Lennis inaccessible. (The, uh, unique format one factor there.) But then we find some of what is published as SF inaccessible, too.]]

What does Joseph Nicholas want, a total revolution in thought from one article? Your piece certainly introduced the topic well enough, and left plenty of room for reader reaction, which I see is appearing in the letter column...

[[Alas, it appears that pleasing Joseph is not within our modest skills.]]



TRINLAY KHADRO
P.O. Box 240934
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We haven't really been up to much lately. Lots of parties, half of them have been fannish. I see Georgie Schnobrich semi regularly, and Henry Welch & family regularly.

I'll ponder kids in SF and "Dead momma syndrome"/ AKA "Disney syndrome" in SF. IMHO it's an older trend than that; look at all the folk tales with the orphaned hero or the fight for survival in a household with the evil stepparent.

[[It's an obvious and useful plot device as amnesia is a useful plot device; but both are overused.]]

I'm pondering some bird art for you. I did see a lifelike stuffed toy vulture and was amazed. I wonder about the market for that!

Smallville is a big hit w/KT and friends; the girls discussing "Who is hotter, Lex or Clark". And yeah, Lana is so "exotic"; no one else in town looks anything like her. But this is a generally mobile society -- not excluding small towns.

[[We read in TV Guide that Kristin Kreuk, the Canadian actress who plays Lana, is of mixed Dutch and Chinese ancestry; which certainly accounts for her striking looks, but still seems unlikely in Kansas.]]

KT and I went to see Lord Of The Rings and enjoyed it greatly. Saruman/Christopher Lee bears a striking resemblance to a fannish friend. Legolas is a hottie!

On Halloween we went to the fan party at the house described in Georgie's article in Wabe. I was kimonoed w/ plastic swords and KT went as Sanosuke from Rurouni Kenshin. We were there again for "Christmas orphans dinner" (it's not our holiday but I needed social context). The tree had a train and xmas village underneath, with Godzilla marching through the village. Most recently the fannish New Years party -- huge potluck spread, conversation...

Bill Legate: I've been finding FOSFAX simply exhausting -- I'm generally finding I'm very tired of meanness and rudeness using "conservatism" as an excuse.

Joe Major: My cats when I had them would stare at me in the tub, inquiring "Why in Heaven's name, did you put your self in THERE?!" The ferret wants to know if I'll let him come swimming with me.

Did y'know, that up until World War II, Hostess Twinkies had banana filling. It was replaced by the creme filling due to the banana shortage that was the result of the war.

California considers ferrets a danger to livestock and thus they are illegal there. The largest ferret I've ever seen was a male who was about 8-10 pounds. How heavy is a cow or sheep?

[[Ferrets are natural small game predators. We imagine the intent is that they might prey on poultry.]]

I love Lyn McConchie's letters and reports, particularly the stories with animals in them. The goose story in this ish cracked me up.

What ARE the rules for [[masquerade]] competitions? Could something put together from second-hand stores and odds and ends be acceptable? My kimono costume, that I've worn to an event or two, turns out to be a rather nifty costume, but I only put the parts together. I didn't design or sew the thing.

[[A little outside the range of our con-running experience. Maybe someone more knowledgable could send sample rules to Trinlay?]]

ALEXANDER SLATE
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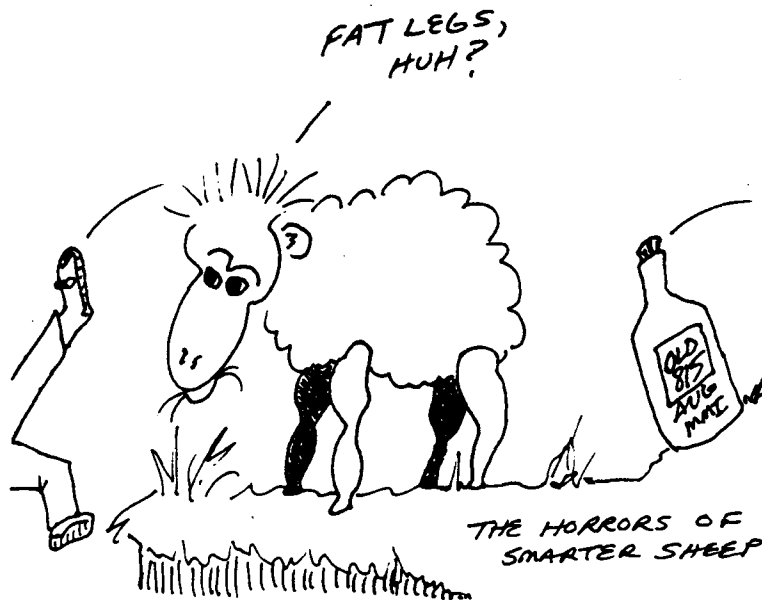
Happy New Year.

I think you did a good job covering the issue of child characters in your article. As I was going through it I could only think of three you missed, but as I was crafting this response... I thought up a couple more.

What's her name in the second book of LeGuin's Earthsea trilogy. She is certainly an adolescent playing a grown up role. And the sense of adolescent rebellion present in all teens is an important contributing factor to the plot line; without it Ged would almost certainly have died.

[[We were trying to draw a line between child and adolescent; if we had to be specific we'd put it no older than 12 or equivalent. Perhaps we did not express that clearly enough.]]

Then there is the alien child in Longyear's Enemy Mine. They killed off the parent here, but for a very different purpose than the one you describe.



Next comes C.J. Cherryh's Cyteen. Although, how much of a normal child Ari Emory may be, is open to debate. I recently re-read the book and still found the transition of Ari from child to adolescent to young adult interesting. She has to determine how to come to grips with who she is, why she is, and what she was in her "previous incarnation".

There are the children/adolescents in Lloyd Alyandin [[? spelling?]] Welsh mythos series; Finally I could throw in the protagonist of Christopher's (White Mountain?) series -- a couple of books set after a successful Wellsian Martian invasion. The purpose of the books were to show what happened to humanity.

[[Frederick Pohl, Wolfbane...]]

I though Flinx was a little younger than you did in The Tar-Aiym Krang. I would have put him a late 16, or 17 to 18.

JANINE G. STINSON
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In vain did I wait for you to mention one of the most famous child characters in SF, Ender Wiggins in Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card. There is also Bean, from the recent Ender's Shadow.

[[Have not read them.]]

I was puzzled by your statement that, "It's hard to come up with a significant child character in Cherryh..." when there are, in fact, several. Hilfy is immature for a hani, and The Pride Of Chanur shows her as an adolescent. Thorn, from Cuckoo's Egg, starts the book as a baby and ends it around 18... The children in 40,000 In

Gehenna are strange by human standards, but then, they were born of azi. Raen a Sul in Serpent's Reach sees her family slaughtered at a young age (around 15, I think) and spends the rest of the book in an adolescent search for revenge; at book's end, she is living a Peter Pan life with azi Jim among the majat... Altair Jones is 17 in Angel With The Sword. Ari has to suffer through her childhood as the clone of a very famous person... in Cyteen. There are other characters in other Cherryh books...

[[Raen, Hilfy, and Altair are all adolescents -- see our previous comment in Alex's LOC. We have not read Cyteen.]]

Michael Swanwick uses a major child character in The Iron Dragon's Daughter. Kaye & Godwin's Wintermind has a female child who's certainly significant to her mother, as well as to the plot...

Re: whether the LOTR will bring new fans to SF in general or just to Tolkien in particular. Back when one could conceivably read all the SF novels published in a year, gaining new general SF fans was easier... Now that Star Wars has imprinted popular culture with some of the basic SF concepts ... and there are far too many SF novels in a year to read them all-- gaining lots of new fans for SF in general with one film is probably not likely. Fandom is seemingly fragmented beyond reconstruction and personally I don't think it should be that homogenized anyway...

[[Watch us alienate half of fandom by suggesting that fandom is a dying institution precisely because it has abandoned its centre and raison d'etre, the SF literature. (Before you leap at our throat, remember our nuclear submarines.)]]

CUYLER W. BROOKS JR.
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Lilburn GA 30047

Fans have different talents -- I can write a LOC (sometimes) and the book commentary in IGOTS (over a period of time), but the idea of writing an article defeats me. I have only done so a few times in 40 years in fandom...

Odd that your article on children in SF should have failed to mention the example

I remember best -- Sturgeon's More Than Human. The central character in Stephen King's Firestarter is a child as well, though I can only judge this from the movie version. Another good example is my favorite short story, Kornbluth's "Words of Guru". And a fantasy with an excellent comparison of the point of view of the main character as a child and then as an adult is Graham Green's "Under the Garden" which at 62 pages may be a novella.

It never bothered me that Tolkien omitted the details of sanitary necessity from his books! I doubt if he had ever read any fiction that mentioned them, and I really didn't miss it. There is a lot in the book (though omitted from the film) about the pleasure the hobbits take in hot baths at the in at Bree... As for the food in Rivendell or Lothlorien, the Elves are probably capable of producing anything they need by magic.

[[But the wood-elves trade with the lake-men for agricultural products; and in Lorien they make rope, and tell Sam they could have taught him about it -- clear implication that it is a manual skill learnable by mortals. We suspect the elves don't do everything by "magic".]]

Glad to hear they have revived the Washington regional. I guess I would go to a con that I could drive to in 25 minutes! There is no regional here unless you count the monstrous DragonCon.

SUE BURSZTYNSKI
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Victoria 3184, Australia

Thanks so much for the lovely photo. Those two did make a wonderful Aragorn and Arwen and I don't know anyone who objected to the slight expansion of Arwen's role -- I certainly didn't! It was a great film, too.

[[Actually it was a TV Guide cover.]]

We've been having a British summer. The temperature got over 30°C precisely once in December, making it the coldest December since 1854! The warning is that it will heat up in February once everyone is back at work and school. Sigh! My library is not air conditioned.

[[You should come to Howard County. Central Library's air conditioner has two settings in summer: "off" and "glacial".

We always take a long-sleeved jacket, even on the hottest days.]]

Yes, the Appendices [[to LOTR]] do explain about female dwarves -- have you noticed how close it is to Terry Pratchett? There's no mention of beards, but it does say they dress like the males and can't be told apart from them. And in The Hobbit, "may your beard grow ever longer" suggests the men like their beards, that it's a cultural factor, so maybe the women are bearded. Yeah, I'd forgotten about the "working elves" in The Hobbit... But they are unusual. They never went to Valinor, you see, and Tolkien implies this makes them humbler -- they didn't learn all those elvish tricks for making magic swords and rings. They're Legolas's people and he certainly seems to have more in common with Elrond, Galadriel, etc than with the "working elves", but I think Tolkien hadn't worked this out originally. He was writing and re-writing The Silmarillion all his life...

"Jeffersonian", huh? But wasn't Jefferson also one of the "idle rich"? Bilbo is a middle-class Victorian gentleman... I think J.R.R. wished he could be idle rich and spend his days writing fantasy novels instead of marking exam papers!

[[Editor's note: In response to what we said in correspondence to Sue, that the Shire is a "Jeffersonian ideal", a nation of small farmers and small artisans, and Bilbo was "idle rich", with no profession beyond some amateur scholarship.]]

SHERYL BIRKHEAD
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Gaithersburg MD 20882

I still am pleased with that flower.

I always love Lyn McConchie's work! I keep intending to hunt down her professional writing at the bookstores -- and persist in getting sidetracked and not getting to it.

You should be proud of the Sue B submission, and hey, if you get a Schirm cover -- fantastic! You glibly mention a Steve Stiles cover -- you have been blessed!

[[As we have said often, the covers are a strength of this zine; we sometimes worry that the contents are not up to the standard set by the covers.]]

I really enjoyed the "Child Characters" article. Sadly, I'm not big on homework, and tend not to do literary homework -- but can appreciate it from others.

Smallville both intrigues and disappoints me. I assumed it would be a Superman show -- in the way of other Superman shows -- but it is NOT. It is a fine show for what it is, but not for what I expected it to be.

Argentus seems to be a sercon zine -- we have yet to see.

[[Too soon to tell; on the first issue we'd say serious, not yet "sercon".]]

Seeing your comment about TRF, I trust you appreciated the Harvia cover on TKK -- impressive to me... Just when I thought Challenger was starting to shake out, things changed again lastish. I'll wait to see what shows up over the next few issues. It is obviously a labor of love.

JOY V. SMITH
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I like the simplicity of your cover for Twink 24. And I love the title of your children-in-SF article: "See Dick And Jane Fly The Spaceship". Interesting look at children and teens in SF and trying to decide where to draw the line. "Who Washes The Dishes In Rivendell?" is another good article. I wonder about things like that also.

I enjoyed your Capclave report. Sounds like you had fun. And your Smallville (Clark Kent as a WB teen) and book reports. AS I recall, I liked Connie Willis's Miracle... I haven't read Alan Dean Foster's latest Commonwealth series books. Are they interesting?

[[Well, we've pretty much had it with Pip and Flinx. (Note the snake gets first billing.)]]

Great selection of zine reviews and LOCs. I enjoyed Lyn McConchie's "Tale of Two Geese"; btw, congrats on doing so well at the women's group meeting.

[["It was the best of roast goose dinners, it was the worst of roast goose dinners..." Huh? What was the question again?]]

Re; Miscellany. I'm really glad to hear that Dorsey Hall has been restored, even if it's only office space. My favorite shows on HGTV are the restoration shows where people work hard to save beautiful homes and buildings that have been neglected and wasted. I love old buildings and recycling.

LYN McCONCHIE
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Fluffy continues strange events into December. While hanging out the washing I heard odd noises behind me. From the corner of my eye I's shortly before seen Fluff meandering down the path carrying a kitten by its scruff. Heading for the under-bathroom again... Now as I looked again I realised it hadn't been a kitten but a good-sized and dead rabbit: prey for the kits to devour. There was just one small problem... The access gap to under the bathroom is only about two inches high. The kits go in easily; even Fluff who's a small cat doesn't have a lot of trouble. They however are doing in voluntarily; the rabbit, large, limp and uncooperative, wasn't being so helpful. What I'd been hearing were Fluff's mutters and growls as she tried to persuade the prey to insert itself into the small gap. I finished hanging up the clothing and started back inside. Fluff dropped the rabbit, cut me off, and gave an imperious trill. I should assist her -- at once! What else were humans for? I should be grateful that someone caught the rabbits infesting this place. (There aren't that many but cats exaggerate.) So I gathered up the rabbit, inserted its head through the gap and fed it into the under-bathroom area, where the kits fell on it like miniature lions. Fluff hopped through to join them, pausing only to squeak approval at me. Humans could be quite useful at times, even if you did have to explain. Poor things, they're often a bit dim. I don't mind that opinion really, and it's one less rabbit. So we're all happy.

GENE STEWART
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Bellevue NE 68005

Fnoord, you'ns.

I'm finding that hard copy zine fandom is so much preferable to online clubs and discussion groups that it's a relief to get back to them. A much nicer, more intelligent, and more articulate group of folks all around are to be found on the pages of print zines, Twink being a prime exemplar.

I applaud your withdrawal from Hugo politics, which are even less relevant

than the Hugo Awards. I mean, Harry Potter, indeed. That win says it all.

Nice cover, and yes, simplicity works.

You're right, participation is down throughout zine fandom. One suspects a creeping malaise is no longer creeping, but has pounced.

[[Oh well, there are "maybe six or seven" fanzines worth reading, of which this is clearly not one.]]

Welcome back, Finch.

"See Dick And Jane Fly The Spaceship": Charles Dickens killed off Paul Dombey and was forced to bring him back as a ghost when the public proved too shocked by the child's death. And in Earth Abides by George O. Stewart, the children provide a balancing joy of life against a backdrop of ecological disaster and adult angst.

You missed John Wyndham's The Midwich Cuckoos, which brings out adult fears of precocious, exceptional -- dare one say SF'nal? -- children.

You're right, parenthood is practically absent in all the cited examples... Is science fiction too juvenile a mindset to allow for such subtle considerations as parenthood? ...Face it, kids are not portrayed well by adult writers, in any medium. They're marginalized, patronized, or simply small adults advancing small plots... Maybe it's as it should be. Can adults in propeller beanies be expected to show children more than they've done already?

"Who Washes The Dishes In Rivendell?" -- Given Tolkien's incredibly detailed creation of Middle Earth, it's surprising so few drudge-level workers are shown. Then again, it's over 1,000 pages as it is, with him sticking pretty much to the quest story, so perhaps it's a strategic decision to show only what the story requires.

"Only Our Opinion": There is an "obligatory level of expectation always at odds with reality" at Xmas/Yule only if one accepts such media pressures. Slough them off and it

can be a magical time of starlight, candles, fresh snow, and a warm hug.

Drugs help, too.

[[Hauckk. Hauckk. Pardon us, we're just horking up a furball or something. Go on, talk among yourselves...]]

Is Connie Willis terminally silly? While I enjoy a comedy now and then, and cherish Dickens, who was as often funny as horrific (often simultaneously), I tend to avoid tight-hearted fluff such as Pratchett, or Piers Anthony, or, yes, Willis...

I've bailed out of books of late several times, myself, and never regret it. If they haven't hooked me in 20 or 50 or 100 pages, then to hell with it...

Harry Warner Jr.: The Vatican has recently reiterated its view that we are not alone in the universe. Guess it's official, huh? I figure first contact will be so blase and ho-hum that it will be a ten minute media wonder...

We should take up a collection so Harry can afford some Hershey bars.

Bill Legate: I rather agree about FOSFAX. It seems diverse, fairly scattershot even, and represents a wide range of political idiocy, all politics being idiotic of course.

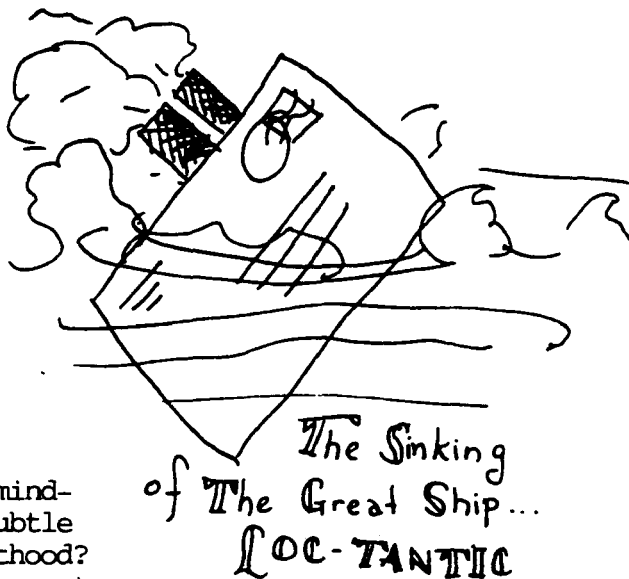
Joseph T. Major: Hey, bro. So you presume fans are slans? Interesting and probably largely true, when it comes to self-image. The outside world would probably go with the term: Nerds.

With you, I'd like briefer, more focussed novels featuring good stories well told.

Trinlay Khadro: Marriage is all about property laws. It is mixing it up with romance and so on, that causes problems.

[[Precisely. Marriage is a contract first, and an expression of romantic affection second. If more people understood that, there would be many more successful marriages.]]

Steve Sneyd: I think you're right, Einstein was aiming his God/dice remark



at Heisenberg & Co.

Joy V. Smith: Like our estimable editor, I've never gotten along well with Harry Turtledove's work.

Steve Jeffery: Bravo for mentioning The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay by Michael Chabon, a novelist I've been watching since his first book.

Lloyd Penney: Your list of religious types is a good one. You being a psychologist in Sawyer's book is a clever pun: "A Penney for your thoughts." Lovely.

Mark Plummer: Everyone needs a Plummer sooner or later.

Joseph Nicholas: But tell us what you really think. An article in depth would focus on one prime example, whereas Monsieur Frohvet's methodology allows maximum resonance for those of us familiar with most of the works he cites. He was speaking about the field of SF, not a given viewpoint.

Mike Deckinger: Bravo your mention of Eric Frank Russell, whose work surely deserves a better fate than being out of print.

All & Sundry: Anyone remember an SF book, offbeat, no big-name, about a dying hit-man who agrees to take the contract for killing God? If so, what the hell was the name of it, and oif its writer? It's been itching my brain for ages now.

Lyn McConchie: You realize of course that geese having FUN hints at intelligence not attributable to the average congressman, right?

Sue Thomason: Does this person with whom you reside read the SF and fantasy with enjoyment? If so, he's a fan, if not a member of fandom.

And a fine time was had by me; nice issue. Oh, and get an e-mail address, wouldja? Gassho.

[[Gesundheit.]]

STEVE SNEYD

4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield
W. Yorkshire HD5 8PB, Great Britain

Oddly sinister expressions on your cover flowers -- eyes tight shut to concentrate on beaming "the Fluence"?

[[And here we thought being a florist was relatively safe. Shows what we know.]]

Your back page item re: alarmist weather reports chimes with experience here, that

ever since they failed in '87 to predict devastating storm across SE England, there's a tendency to accentuate the negative weatherwise. There's an intriguing case in Brazil at moment, mentioned on radio: a weather forecaster is being prosecuted for predicting storms which didn't appear, thus deterring people from attending New Year beach parties; his defense being of the "better safe than sorry" variety, that on a previous occasion 76 people were killed by an unforecast beach-hitting storm. It is, I think, to be fair, one where meteorologists just can't win.

Garth Spencer's suggestion that SF where "science and technology are simply assumed" are "comfort books" has truth -- but doesn't it also reflect how real societies work, that the vast majority haven't a clue as to the technology and how it works, or the science behind it, and manage to function in their lives... So to depict a future society in which everyone knows/cares how things work and why, seems in many ways unrealistic...

Dragon enthusiast Rodney Leighton might like to know of The Dragon Chronicle, the "international journal of dragons and dragonlore", well established mag covering all aspects of dragons -- they have a website, www.tdc.f2s.com, and free e-mail subs from editor, or print version \$8 cash from 106 Oakridge Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 2PL.

[[Interesting trivia: Who was the first woman to receive a Hugo Award for writing, independent of any male co-writer? The answer may surprise you!]]

Llamas must be ferocious -- a farmer being interviewed as to why he used them instead of dogs to guard his Christmas-tree plantation, said anyone who'd rather confront a llama than an alsatian was a fool. So maybe your local authority isn't quite as daft as you think.

There are a lot of reasons for buying books you haven't time to read... (a) it's a limited edition, unlikely to be reprinted -- it's now or never; (b) it's a reference book I'll desperately need at some unpredictable future point; (c) it fits the parameters of a future project and is better read then, when project is active; (d) it's a sequel, and I need to read the earlier ones first. Oh, there's

buying a book for the illoes, whether you ever read the text is irrelevant. And there's getting the book heavily plugged by reviewers, finding it unreadable, but you're stuck with it. Und so weider.

[[Fribble us! When will we ever learn to keep our mouth shut? ...Even though, since SF is the topic on the table, we had in mind read-for-pleasure fiction, which evades some of your categories.]]

MURRAY MOORE
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Ontario L4Y 1C8, Canada

Re: Your withdrawal of energy to support fan awards, all awards should be enjoyed by the recipient while not being taken too seriously. I was a helper during the counting of a portion of the 2001 Aurora ballots. Seeing nominated names voting for themselves was amusing.

[[We'd like to see some new people get the opportunity to feel that enjoyment. Unfortunately that does not appear likely.]]

My experience of obtaining articles to print is like yours, similar to pulling teeth.

Numerous references in Twink 24 to Tolkien and Lord Of The Rings... led me to wonder, why is the novel named Lord Of The Rings? Is the lord of the rings not Sauron? It could by equivalence be named The Devil or Middle Earth's Hitler.

[[Actually, that's a good question!]]

The fanzine in "The Half Naked One On The Left" that I no longer receive, and that I regret not receiving, is The Reluctant Famulus. Copies don't seem to cross the U.S./Canadian border any more.

Miscellany: Robert Lichtman reports he will not attend Corflu but will attend Westercon and San Jose Worldcon. He should attend Westercon, he is a Guest of Honor.

Also in Miscellany, you question the benefit of a commercially successful LOTR film, to the genre or to fandom.

I think fans of the written version have great potential to become our kinds of fan.

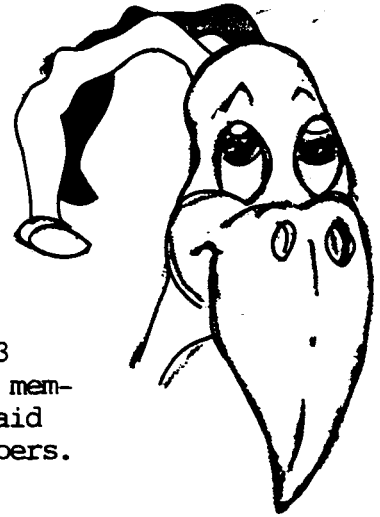
[[We'd like to see it, Murray;



but on past performance it just does not seem likely.]]

Thanks for the Ditto 15 plug. As of January 12th, Ditto 15 has 13 paid attending members and two paid supporting members.

LYN McCONCHIE
address previously given



On the subject of the article on kids in SF. Part of the thing about so many of them being 13+... is something I was told years ago. That if you are writing for that lower age, they prefer to read about kids who are a year or two older than themselves... Kids of 10 like to read about those who are 12/13 and 16-year-olds like to read about 18/19. So many writers stick to that formula... And, ahem, my Ciara's Song starts with the main character at 9 and goes on from there... And in the other half of the book, her granddaughter Aisling is about the same age when that portion begins. In another book Tor is publishing in a couple of years, the main female character is about 11 when the story begins. I like to show some of the early events which have shaped the character and how they grow and change within that life.

Re: Rivendell and all the aristocrats etc, plus lack of bathroom breaks in SF/fantasy: Yes, but that sort of thing isn't exclusive to our genre. I also enjoy mysteries, and read a lot of them. How many of those have stowaways who seem to pass several weeks in a hold without ever having a bowel motion? How often is some one hiding in a cupboard all night, under a bed for six hours, or up a tree all day without ever needing a toilet?

[[Actually there are some graphic moments of that sort in the much-hated Dhalgren, which we think actually lends a certain verisimilitude.]]

Re: Your comment in Trinlay's LOC, yes, I too have never seen the use of algebra. ... Oh, and Robert Lichtman wondered which "Sharman" I was at Wiscon with:

Sharman Horwood, a friend of mine, a Canadian teaching ESL in a university in Seoul. Why?

...New Year was more books to read. Several friends had found books they thought I'd like and posted them around Christmas. Because of the usual mailclog, these parcels wandered in one at a time across the week between Christmas and New Years... I read, beamed around, and felt loved. The cats who were cleaning up the Christmas turkey were following suit, when they weren't eating, they too were beaming and purring. Joy to the world, we've got turkey!

RODNEY LEIGHTON
RR #3, Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia
B0K 1V0, Canada

Well, my almost lost desire to publish reviews of good small press stuff seems to have resurfaced somewhat... All this coincides with the culmination of my active participation in SF fanzine fandom...

Anyway, this is the final letter directed to Twink. I did want to thank you for the opportunity to have a few reviews and essays printed...

I read book reviews the same way I read books, articles, zines. I start reading and when it becomes obvious I have no interest in what I am reading, I stop... I read the first two reviews in this issue because I would watch the show, if available here, at least once, and I would read the Willis book...

I suppose this lloks like a LOC although I don't consider it to be one. Habits die hard... But I am not LOCcing, by my definition.

[[You can define as you see fit, Rodney. But you have regularly responded, you've been honest with your opinions (even if not always Politically Correct), and you gave us Lyn McConchie's address. You're on our mailing list for the duration.]]

MARGE B. SIMON
1412 NE 35th Street
Ocala FL 34479

I read with pleasure the LOC's in #24. I still marvel at what the faned can recall precisely when some of us who are writing and publishing and artifying lose track of our OWN stuff sometimes. Were it not for fans, we would lose a lot of

genre history. Bless y'all!

About Garth Spencer's mention of Anne McCaffrey dubbing SF books that have little or no reference to real science as "comfort books" -- I'd never heard of that one, but I really like it. That's me, I like a "comfort book". Most of the time, anyway.

I also loved Zenna Henderson's stories about The People. After I read those, I stopped reading the S&S books. But then, that was aeons ago. I wish we had more current writers like Zenna and editors willing to publish them -- most SF/F editors don't know what THIS reading fan really loves. But maybe I'm all alone, right? Where did my People go?

[[At one point we seriously tried to get up a shared anthology of new, next-generations People stories (we've written a couple). But we could never find out who owned the rights, and eventually gave up on the project.]]

ANDREW C. MURDOCH
508-6800 Westminster Highway
Richmond, B.C., V7C 1C5, Canada

Your little editorial about the dearth of text contributions for your zine touched a chord, not only because I have the same problem of having to come up with verbiage for my pages, but also because I am not the world's most prolific LOC writer.

Sue Bursztynski may be interested to read some of the Shadowrun novels, based on the role-playing game of the same name. In that world, the near future's high-tech society has been turned upside-down with the return of magic to the world, along with the sudden appearance of some children being born as elves or dwarves (or worse, suddenly turning into orcs and trolls). In those novels, most of the other races not only work for a living, but some of them seriously worry about making ends meet when they aren't allowed full citizenship. (Those that do take on aristocratic airs are derided by harder working elves as being a little too Tolkien.)

[[Would not an elf born in the U.S. be a citizen? Of course citizenship only applies to people, but then elves and humans are interfertile... This may be a problem for the Supreme Court!]]

Regarding the means by which authors leave their child characters on their own to face the wilds... one that I notice is absent is another Heinlein novel, Tunnel In The Sky. Interstellar transit happens through an interdimensional gateway... a class full of students are put on a sort of survival outing. However an exploding supernova in the vicinity causes too much interference to get them back on time, and they end up having to colonize the planet just with what they had... I remember it being an interesting take on frontier societies.

[[Odd we should have overlooked that discussing the Heinlein juveniles, even as an example, though as we recall the youngest characters were in the 15-16 range, and some were college students.]]

I'm glad your library's renovation was generally favourable. The one nearest my mother's home underwent a similar mass renovation. Despite being expanded to include meeting rooms... they also closed off the whole basement floor, with the effect that the branch now holds fewer books. I was aghast.

One comment on things from the letter-col: Trinlay Khadro (and you) may be interested to know that in Canada, common law marriages are enshrined in law country wide and have also been expanded to include same-sex couples (mostly because it's advantageous to the government tax-wise)... Although the legality of the bigamous marriages described by the editor are illegal in Canada. My home province has stopped prosecuting polygamy on the grounds that it's unconstitutional. This has made the province a haven for fundamentalist Mormons.

[[There are very few prosecutions for bigamy/polygamy in the U.S., but bigamous marriages are still void, and people who rely on them are almost certain to run into legal trouble sooner or later -- e.g. inheritance or child support issues.]]

MARTY CANTOR
11825 Gilmore Street #105
North Hollywood CA 91606

Too much whatever has been going on in my life of late, and I have produced fewer LOC's than I used to. It is now time to do something about alleviating that condition.

So, therefore, a LOC for you. Treasure it -- it will not be better eaten with ketchup.

A few miscellaneous items, firstly. Such as, it is indeed true that Robert Lichtman will be at Westercon, July 4-7 this year in Los Angeles. He is the FanGOH. What with Ross Chamberlain being the ArtistGOH for that con, it looks like there may be a good turnout of fanzine fans. Even I will be there during part of the con...

Unless I missed something, you did not include Alexei Panshin's Rite Of Passage in your article about children in SF. I think this is one of the finer novels in SF which deals with children, starting with the protagonist as a very young girl and following her into adolescence.

Now we get to something a bit more, er, major. This is about something you continue to get backwards, that being your statement in mention of my No Award. You write, "NA is the intrepid, if often incongruous offspring of Plokta-ish smartass humorous editorial tone..." Sir! You have it backwards! Not that I think Plokta was in any way inspired by me, as I doubt that the Cabal ever saw any copies of my first genzine, Holier Than Thou, before they started pubbing... But I was smartassing all over the place in the APA zines where I started my career in 1975, and I certainly put smartassery into HIT (first issue 1979). The Cabal are Johnnie-come-latelies when it comes to zinish smartassery... My smartassery certainly predates that of the Cabal.

Not that they do not do it well -- they do. Indeed, Plokta is one of my favorite zines. (And my writing that should make Alison have nightmares.)

[[A question of the difference between review and criticism. Reviews are intended to help the reader decide if that's something she might want to try. Thus we compared NA's tone to that of another current zine so the reader would have a current benchmark. Our use of "offspring", though intended metaphorically, was misleading, and we apologize for that.]]

JOHN HERTZ
236 S. Coronado Street #409
Los Angeles CA 90057

I think there are few kids in SF because

writers write about what they think they understand, and find kids hard to understand. I remember believing in some Zenna Henderson kids but haven't re-read in long.

Turkey is hard to find wine for, but I recently have been managing with young pinot noir.

[[Good choice. Merlot with duck. The old cliché "white wine with poultry or fish" is a guideline, not a law.]]

You certainly have put yourself under your own advice in writing LOC's and contributions to others, as well as pubbing on your own...

[[Not being one of the "maybe six or seven" fanzines worth reading, we, like the car rental company of yore, have to try harder.]]

BRAD FOSTER
P.O. Box 165246
Irving TX 75016

Thanks for sending me the copy of Twink #24... The note you added indicated that you "probably would not have sent my zine to you for fear that it was not up to the standards you expect." Ah, but there is no "standard" to expect for a fanzine you've never seen. And now having gotten and enjoyed my first copy, I can't see where you would have to worry about being up to any standards save your own.

[[Not being one of the "maybe six or seven" fanzines worth reading... No, we mentioned that already, didn't we? No sense flagellating a deceased equine...]]

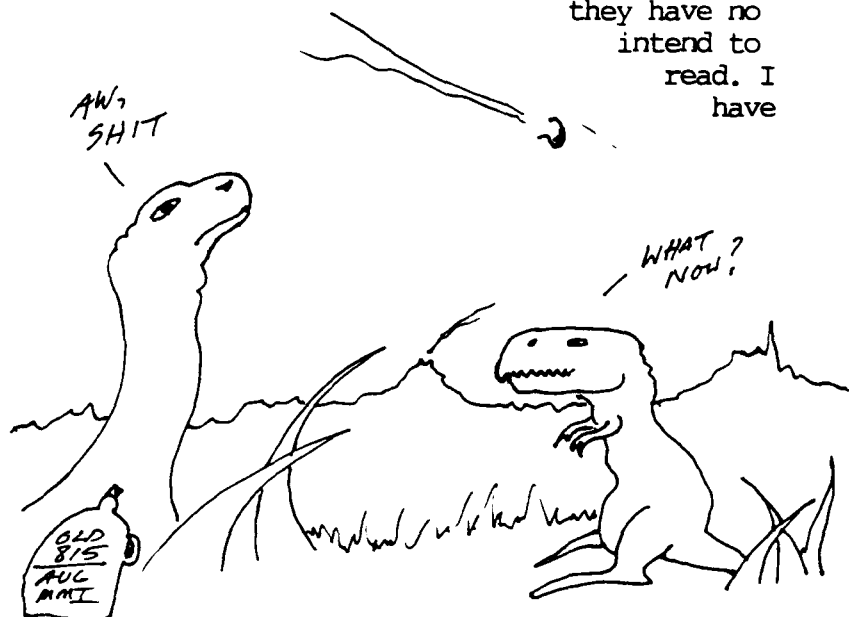
Speaking of covers, I hadn't planned to take you up on your offer to get even more free issues out of your back issue stock. But after reading the LOC's this issue commenting on the Julia Morgan-Scott cover for #23, if you would feel so inclined to send one of those this way, I'd love to see it. I'm a big fan of her work: incredible detail and imagination, plus it is so rare these days to see anyone working in scratchboard. We're all lucky she is spreading the wealth in fanzines for us to enjoy.

Oh, and glad you liked the Mimosa cover Teddy and I did. He moved closer to me

this past year, and we've done a couple of collaborations that turned out well, and I hope to do more, I think the combination of his clean line work and design, with my tendency to get into the little detail bits, comes together well.

Sue's article on "Who Washes the Dishes in Rivendell" was fun, though I've never been bothered by such things... I've read some stories where the author does indeed constantly go into long descriptions of food preparation, or other things, that I find myself wondering if they are just exercising a personal fetish.

And I agree with your comments in the LOC column about not understanding the folks who buy books they have no intent to read. I have



friends who are book collectors, and thus seek out specific editions of books they already have read. But to buy a book you have not read, and have no intent to, is kind of odd. Of course, this is from a guy who mostly buys books that are discounted down from the usual halfprice at the local used book store, so every book is precious!

HARRY WARNER JR.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown MD 21740

I don't know if you had me in mind when you began Twink #24 with a plea for articles from LOC writers. Regardless, I should point out that I write a lot of

articles for fanzines, at least one or two in every LOC. They consist of the pared down, miniaturized contents of the articles I might write on those topics, free from all preliminaries, ramblings, paddings, and repetitions that can be found in most fanzine articles. I think this procedure is beneficial... It takes me only a few minutes to write an article condensed to a single paragraph. The fanzine editor is spared the time and trouble of copying several pages... Readers can enjoy jumping on me for failing to provide the background information and the yes-but side remarks... And there's always the chance that a particularly beautiful branch of a tree somewhere was spared...

...Until I was 10 or 11 years old, I hated stories set in far-off places or with characters of other nations. I remember the Christmas when my aunt in San Diego sent me as a gift a book entitled Way Out West, about children in California. I tried repeatedly to read it and never got past the first few pages because it was all so different from my surroundings. What happened in that summer of 1933 when I read my first prozines and went wild over science fiction, which featured more wildly different characters and circumstances than I'd ever before encountered? I even began to read mundane fiction set in the past or in distant climes at that point...

...I had a faint hope that it was you rather than me who typed, "Was the man in the boat before he fell out?" I meant to write "when he fell out" because that was the whole point of that famous question. It's important because it might be a clue to the existence of rapidly alternating universes. Perhaps we switch between this one and another 60 times each second, too rapidly to notice the difference.

[[We tried to look up the reference without success, but on past performance, it's safe to guess it was our transcription error. Pity we can't move to that other universe, we might like it better.]]

Harriet Kolchak is still a vivid memory to me, too. I met her at a convention in Philadelphia and I remember her very fine help for many fans who ran out of money. She had a procedure to lend them enough money to get home and she found that almost all of the funds she advanced were eventually repaid by the rescued fans.

Maybe other people who buy books and don't read them have different motivations than mine... I do this from time to time because I can obtain inexpensively a used book which is in some way aligned with my interests but not enough so that I want to start reading it as soon as I get it home... I can always tell myself that I might be fated to become an all-out invalid, unable to do much more than read. If that happens I'll have a backlog of unread books on hand large enough to make it improbable that I'll ever run out...

MILT STEVENS
6325 Keystone Street
Simi Valley CA 93063

You ask is there some reason why letterhacks should not try thier hand at articles or con reports? As a matter of fact, there is. To do such a thing might disrupt the ecology of all fandom.

All fans do as much fanac as they can do or are willing to do. This may be limited to one form of activity or spread across several. In my own case, I write a fari number of letters, hit every mailing in two APAs, write two or three articles per year... What if I were suddenly writing a dozen articles per year. Would I send them to various fanzines? No. I would have enough material to publish my own personalzine... Once I did that, I would be able to trade for fanzines rather than write letters. Since I no longer had to write letters, I probably wouldn't... You can see how this violates the law of conservation of egoboo...

[[That explains a lot. There's only so much ego_boo to go around, and after deducting out Langford's share, there isn't much left over for the rest of fandom.]]

Your article on children in SF reminded me of William Tenn's 1953 anthology Children Of Wonder. It was also published in paperback as The Outsiders. I remember about half of the stories which is a pretty good batting average after so many years. Some stories dealt with adolescents such as "In Hiding" (later the first chapter of Children Of The Atom) by Wilmar Shiras. Some are fantasies or borderline such as "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D.H. Lawrence...

As to other short stories, there is an immortal girl who never ages as long as she

never reaches puberty in P.J. Plauger's 1976 Hugo nominee "Child Of All Ages". In Harlan Ellison's 1978 Hugo winner "Jeffty Is Five", Jeffty is indeed five years of age. He has been five years of age for 30 or 40 years...

[[The early Trek episode "Miri", and the obvious ur-text of all such stories, Peter Pan.]]

The situation Sue Bursztynski describes regarding fantasy worlds is quite easy to explain. All of these fantasy worlds have very liberal government subsidy programs for not producing things. Since the described characters in these worlds don't produce anything at all, they qualify for at least 50 different programs and become very rich... As to who washes the dishes, it is the secret scandal of Middle Earth that they have been importing illegal house elves from the Harry Potter universe for years.

LLOYD PENNEY

1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke,
Ontario, M9C 2B2, Canada

I don't write many articles, because real life has a habit of intruding and trimming your free time down to a minimum. LOCs fill these little gaps of time at work and home, and allow me to make the best use of my time...

Washing the dishes in Rivendell: Whether it's Middle Earth or on a starship, the story being told can't go into detail as to who does the scutwork in the background. Would there be lesser elves or other beings employed by the senior elves...? These things do happen, but those acts and those who perform them do not advance the story. ...As always, too much aristocracy, and not enough proletariat.

[[McCaffrey, for one, manages to work such details into the story without loss of narrative pace.]]

As I read about your adventures with CapClave, it's obvious to see what you get out of your trip -- a reunion with old friends. It's been a long time since I decided to go to a convention because of the guests or panels promised. I'm there for the prople. If there are interesting guests and panels, beautiful art and some thing of interest to buy in the dealers' room, it's a bonus...

[[We still need the interesting guests and panels to attract new people who do not already have friends in fandom.]]

My concerns about how fans tick, as Harry Warner puts it, stem from trying to figure out why some fans act the way they do... The memorization of some arcane knowledge to the point of being anal retentive, the snotty angry reaction if your facts are anything less than 100% right, the supercilious attitudes you receive if someone feels they are better read or more experienced than you, I could go on and on. Sometimes, gafiation sounds good.

[[The subtle charm of being defined, to your face, as "not one of Us"...]]

I spoke recently with Michael Lennick, the screenwriter for Rob Sawyer's Illegal Alien, and he said the "Dr. Penney" character is back in the current version of the screenplay. I reminded Mike that I work cheap, and provide my own tacky Hawaiian...

Catherine Mintz: I might be persuaded to take fewer clothes with me if I found that the Worldcon hotel I was staying at had a laundromat in it. We did a load of laundry at the Worldcon in New Orleans, and Winnipeg. In fact, so many of us gathered to do laundry at the Louis Reil in Winnipeg, we dubbed the get-together Laundrycon...

E.B., the lavender gown wouldn't kill me, the corset underneath would. Fanzine fandom needs more British fandom moments.

Bring on another Banana Wings, Mark -- we wait with breathe bait. I could always report on the brand new IKEA in our neighbourhood. Or has that been done?

I must send in some membership money to Murray Moore for Ditto.

ALISON SCOTT

24 St Mary Road, Walthamstow,
London E17 9RG, Great Britain

I'm sorry to hear that you think the Fan Hugos are a lost cause. Fanzine articles such as your regular nomination articles are influential and help open debate on what constitutes a good fanzine, fan writer, and fan artist. I believe awards, nominations, and open discussion of quality help improve the general standard of fanzines, even though few of us

are always happy with the winners.

[[The debate does not appear to affect the results. We prefer to confine our efforts to realms in which our action may have some meaningful impact.]]

On fanzine contributions, we have never found lying back and waiting for contributions to roll in to be effective. We actively solicit specific articles and art from specific people. And then we sometimes get lovely surprises too. But my guess is that if you hope your readers will send you stuff unasked for, you will mostly be disappointed. Many people seek the least-hassle version of "the usual"; one reason why Plokta is not normally available for mere money.

Your article on child protagonists in SF and fantasy fell neatly between two camps; neither considering the specific characters in enough detail to be considered criticism, nor being complete if taken as a list. Neal Stephenson's two major SF works, The Diamond Age and Snow Crash, both have major child characters (Nell & YT respectively). In Vernor Vinge's A Fire Upon The Deep, two of the major characters are young children... and the spider children are full characters in their own right in A Deepness In The Sky. These four books, written for adults, are amongst the most important SF novels of the last decade. Whether your overview articles aim to survey the field, or add depth to our critical understanding, omissions of this kind make the entire endeavour look suspect. And this is not the first time I've had this precise reaction to work in Twink.

ALAN SULLIVAN
26 Thornford Road, Lewisham,
London, SE13 6SG, Great Britain

Hello once again and many thanks for the Twink 24 (or should that be 23 + 1, frond?). I shall try to refrain from inserting any extremely obvious jokes at this point... Flower power? Yep, sounds good to me. Plant two for every one picked and away you go. As long as they're not the sort of plants the cops have trouble with...

"Who Washes..."/Sue Bursztynski: Well, in The Hobbit, it was the Dwarves who washed up Bilbo's crockery -- as any polite guest would at least offer to do after a good party. I think what a lot of

these stories are trying to do is gloss over the existence of an underclass who actually do the work. After all, Elves are meant to be all things light and wonderful -- having slaves and sub-Elven servants doesn't really go with that sort of image...In fact the nearest we get to servants on the side of good in Tolkien, so far as I can remember, is Sam Gamgee, loyal family retainer to Frodo. I also can't think of any fantasy story involving mundane matters such as working for a living, or bodily functions (other than for low humour). That's escapism for you.

[[Your use of the word "underclass" caused us to flash on Cordwainer Smith and his Underpeople, which treat the subject with a lot more irony -- see "The Dead Lady of Clown Town".]]

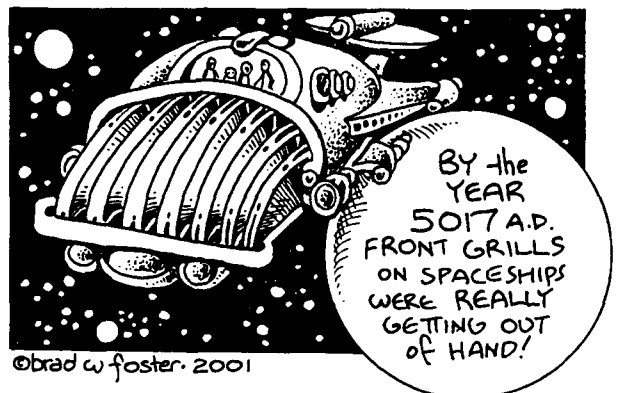
"The Half...": Good stuff, here. Thanks for the writeup, by the way. The Jird is a very self-referential item, but light hearted... The Beany Chicks are James Bacon's fault. A stalwart of Irish fandom, James is a bit of a ladies man, and when sending an e-mail enquiring if there would "be any chicks" at a particular event, left out a significant space, and the term "Beany Chicks" entered the Britfan lexicon.

[[Oh. We were wondering if it had something to do with cassoulet -- of which we make a respectable pot, by the way.]]

* * * *

WAHF: Guy Lillian III, Mark Plummer, Tom Feller, Garth Spencer, Mike Deckinger, Henry Welch, Sue Thomason, Mark Proskey, Judith Hanna

Unfortunately for late-arriving LOC's, we just ran out of space.



MISCELLANY

The assumption that there are lots of witty titles for letter columns is not supported by the evidence. The straight-forward "Letter of Comment" (Reluctant Famulus, SFC Bulletin), or the slightly more dignified "Mimosa Letters" or "Epistles" (Challenger); most of the rest are variants on LOC: "Lokta Plokta", "LOC 'n Load" (No Award), "LOCsmiths" (FOSFAX), "InterLOCutions" (Knarley Knews). Others include "Halcyon Days" (Visions of Paradise), "Impenetrability" (Wabe) and the punny "Is_h Mail" (Quasiquote). For comparison, a few random selections at the library revealed "Letters" (Architectural Digest, Discovery) or simple variants "You Tell Us" (Cosmopolitan), "Readers Say" (Forbes). A few use feeble jokes on their subject matter: "Your Serve" (Tennis) or "Checking In" (Chess Life). Modern Maturity uses "ZIP 20049", from the Washington DC address of their editorial offices.

Garth Spencer proposes "a new ethnic group you can join voluntarily", the Frong. Garth says he is "open to suggestions about dress, language, and cuisine".

Speaking of which, we really should not use this space to plug commercial products, but we've acquired a taste for Desert Pepper Trading Co.'s corn, black bean, and roasted red pepper salsa.

For those who retain an interest in such things, Teddy Harvia advises of his web site concerning the Fan Hggos at: web2.-airmail.net/tharvia/fan_hugo.html. (The hyphen was not part of the original.)

The University of Maryland awarded posthumous degrees to two naval officers who were on active duty at the Pentagon September 11th. Both had been taking night classes at the University toward MBA degrees.

If another piece or two on religious themes in SF were forthcoming, we might consider combining them with the three articles published so far, and some as yet incomplete material, as a limited run special theme fanzine along the lines of We're All African Anyway.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I have a terrible headache."
-- last words of Franklin D. Roosevelt, seconds before he slumped over and died from a massive cerebral hemorrhage.

Received: From Paul DiFilippo, a "Marge Simpson" 4 of Clubs... From Steve Sneyd, newspaper clippings on the development of non-lethal weapons... From Sharon Lee, an order form for I Dare, the new Liaden novel (review to follow later, we're a little backlogged at the moment)...

The construction crews rebuilding the Pentagon work 7 days a week: they were forced, against their own protests, to take Christmas and New Year off. Their motto: "Let's roll!" -- the last known words of Flight 93 hero Todd Beamer.

Trivia: What is the largest library in the United States? (Hint: not the Library of Congress. That would have been our first guess too, but not correct.)

At what point did it become proper to end a business conversation with, "Bye-bye"?

Winter issue of the feminist magazine Bitch had an article, "Lost In Space (looking for black women in sci-fi)". Of course it was about media sci-fi, films, with a token nod to Octavia Butler.

Friday, April 26 is Arbor Day. Express your gratitude to a tree.

There's a town, Bree, in western Belgium. No, really. (Tennis star Kim Clijsters has a home there. At 5'9", she's obviously not a hobbit!)

World Fantasy Con 2002: October 31 - November 3, Minneapolis, contact: c/o Dream Haven Books, 912 W. Lake Street, Minneapolis MN 55408. WFC 2003: October 30 - November 2, reportedly Washington DC. If anyone in that area has contact info, send it and we'll put it here nextish.

Local newspaper article: spring is mating season -- for skunks! They are nearsighted and generally not afraid of humans; if you leave them alone, skunks will normally leave you alone.