Steam Engine Time

PRIEST'S 'THE SEPARATION'
MEMOS FROM NORSTRILIA
CENSORSHIP IN AUSTRALIA
POLITICS AND SF

Harry Hennessey Buerkett
James Doig
Paul Kincaid
Gillian Polack
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Steam Engine Time 5

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Graphics
Ditmar (Dick Jenssen) (front cover).

Photographs
Covers of various books and magazines discussed in this issue; plus photos of (p. 5) Christopher Priest, by Ian Maule; (p. 24) Roger Dard, supplied by Kim Huett; (p. 25) Roger Dard fanzine contributions, supplied by Kim Huett; (p. 32) Nigel Burwood, Martin Stone and Bill Blackbeard, by John Baxter; (p. 39) David Boutland.

Editorial by Jan Stinson

'Dream your dreams': A meditation on *Babylon 5*

I should start by saying that there are plot elements revealed here (called spoilers on the Internet) which some readers may not want to know ahead of time if they haven't seen all the episodes.

Before you read the rest of this editorial, if you've never seen any episodes of the show under discussion, you might want to stop reading this and go watch some if you can. Those without any interest whatsoever in the show are welcome to read something else in this issue. The rest of you, come on over this way . . .

When I chose this topic for my first full-length *SET* editorial, I did a little research in order to get the facts straight. I was surprised to be reminded that *Babylon 5* (*B5*) premiered on 26 January 1994 and ended on 25 November 1998; having recently finished watching all the episodes in order via Netflix, it felt like the show had ended only last year. I also realised that its characters had been living in my head a lot longer than I expected; the show's staying power can largely be credited to its creator's vision and its cast and crew, perhaps the hardest-working bunch of TV people ever to commit to a 'sci-fi' series until the latest *Battlestar Galactica* premiere.

Having mentioned it, let me define my usage of 'sci-fi' here. It's still often used as a pejorative, and with some justification, for any nominally science-fictional product coming out of Hollywood or independent studios for film and/or TV. My use of 'sci-fi' is limited to noting any science-fictional product made in the form of films or TV shows. Now that I've defined my usage, I have to say that *B5* fits it, but also exceeds it, in that it is a superior example of an SF story delivered via film or TV when compared to other examples in its area.

The central question I want to discuss here is: why is the universe of B5 so attractive to me and, apparently, so many other people?

It was, in essence, written and produced as one story, a novel, if you will, and that is a rarity in American television. Long-running, American-produced shows like *M*A*S*H*, *Friends*, *Everybody Loves Raymond* and others started out with a premise, and, as the shows were renewed, the writers kept the characters essentially the same. In *M*A*S*H*, there was some character growth, and there were changes (an actor left or died; another replaced him) in the ensemble, but the situations didn't change that much until later in its run, when the story lines became more serious than comical. Of course, *M*A*S*H* ran a very long time, comparatively speaking, and *B5* only ran for five years. But it was designed to be done, from start to finish, in five years, and the other shows referenced here (and many like them) were not. *B5* has the feel and the look of a novel, only it's television, and that was what enthralled me. The episodic nature of the series is very much like that of *ER*, in that one should see all the episodes in order to keep up with character and story arc changes, and I nearly got hooked on *ER* at one point for this reason. I stopped watching it when I cried more than I thought was good for me at the time; this is an indicator of my emotional state, of course, but it's also an indicator of how well that show was written, acted and produced.

Within that novel-as-TV-show was an 11-member ensemble cast representing a wide range of characters, several of them aliens. One, the Vorlon called Kosh, was the most nonhuman of all the aliens who lived and worked on *B5*; Kosh was, essentially, noncorporeal. The encounter suit hid a being who had no physical form as humans experience it. But the skills of the *B5* creative team (Joe Straczynski and the writers, all the actors, the directors, and the SFX crew) brought Kosh into being as a character, as someone viewers could care about. The phrase 'They killed Kosh! Bastards!' (paraphrased from a *South Park* episode's character comment on Kenny) made its way from the Internet to T-shirts being worn in mourning, no doubt. The mystery of Kosh fed not only the curiosity of the characters on the show, but of the show's fans as well. Even after that mystery was partially revealed, Kosh was still a major player in the story line, because the next Vorlon to show up was also called Kosh, but Kosh 2 was not the same as the original Kosh, and the viewers knew it before Lyta Alexander explained it.

Most of the time, Straczynski treated his viewers as intelligent adults with at least some SF reading history and a working knowledge of the fictional elements (such as FTL, aliens and jump gates) as well as some of the major themes (aliens and humans living and working together, space stations, certainly space opera in all its most positive connotations, and the biggie, good vs evil) that SF has used in its written form. But JMS, as he's often called, also knew that his potential viewers needed a break once in a while from the serious business of empire building and Great War Fighting, so he gave us humour (the episode where Delenn asks Susan Ivanova for hair advice is hysterical), and touchstones (Walter Koenig as Alfred Bester, the PsiCorps honcho, was not only an inspired bit of casting but Straczynski's way of showing the doubters that he Knew His SF).

Because of all that, *B5* was space opera with dimension, emotion, guts. It wasn't all space battles and the heroic captain and crew emerge victorious, the hooks upon which a lot of poorly written SF of the genre's early years were hung.

I suppose one might gauge the popularity of a television show by how much depth it has in *Wikipedia*, in terms of number of articles and the amount of detail contained in them. The *Wikipedia* entries for *B5* would occupy a person's time for at least a week of 12-hour reading days (followed by 12 hours of sleep necessary to stave off Bleeding Eye Syndrome), if not more. Since *Wikipedia* is a 'free encyclopedia' written by those who choose to write for it (and moderated by those who choose to attempt to keep the facts straight where possible), one might deduce that there are a lot of people still interested in *B5*. The first entry (or 'stub', as *Wikipedia* creators call it) for the Talk section (where corrections are discussed and incorrect data is noted) is dated in 2001; the most recent was 4 August 2006. Clearly, there are at least a few people interested in consigning the most minute details of this series into cyberspace.

The Web isn't the only place where *B5* was discussed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn edited a collection of essays on *B5* called *The Parliament of Dreams: Conferring on Babylon 5*. Many of these essays were delivered as papers at the University College of Ripon and York St John, in the UK, on 13 and 14 December 1997. The book was published by the Science Fiction Foundation in August

1998 (reprint September 1999) as a trade paperback. If anyone knows how to get a copy of this, please tell me; I've tried to get one from Edward James and have had no luck (made contact, but unable to re-establish same).

If people are still talking about *B5* now, it must have had a lot of resonance for those who continue to engage in discourse about it. It certainly resonated for me, as I rewatched several episodes and watched several more for the first time. The depth of character development in *B5* hasn't been equalled before or since in 'sci-fi' (although the latest *Battlestar Galactica* comes very close); all members of the ensemble cast had their own growth arc, and that was certainly what kept the actors who portrayed them coming back every season (except for Claudia Christian, but that's another story). Most of the actors were unknowns. Bruce Boxleitner had done a lot of TV work before *B5*; Jeff Conaway was probably most notable for his role in the film version of the musical *Grease*; Bill Mumy had played the youngest Robinson child on the 1960s 'sci-fi' series *Lost In Space*. But they all had the necessary chops to flesh out their characters and make them memorable.

Apart from cast and crew, the technical accomplishments of the show's CGI team are outstanding as well. *B5* was one of, if not the, first TV show to use as many CGI special effects as it did, and to use them in scientifically plausible ways. They weren't perfect, of course (sound in space being the biggie, but let's be honest, wouldn't we miss the sound of the explosions if they weren't included?), but they were much more advanced than anything TV had seen up to that point.

I'd be entirely remiss if I didn't mention Christopher Franke's musical scores. They are simply amazing; have to be heard to be believed. JMS has said that he was so grateful to have someone so well attuned to the show and its creator's mindset that giving him direction for individual episodes was so easy.

The basic element in *B5* that made it work so well was its sense of wonder. It was in every element of the show: in the characters, in the stories in every episode, in the special effects, in the meticulous production of every episode (even given the gaffes, such as Delenn's hair in the last episode). What shows throughout the five seasons that *B5* aired was the love that went into it from everyone involved. They must have all cared a lot about the show and wanted it to be popular, and the consistent comment from the DVD commentaries is how surprised, and grateful, many of the actors were at the fan response to the show.

Part of me wishes *B5* was still on the air; part of me realises that every book, and every TV show, has to end somewhere, and I ought to respect JMS's decision to end it where he did, with Sheridan's death (predicted by the First One called Lorien, when Sheridan died the first time on Z'ha'dum). I do respect that decision, even though it was the most difficult two hours (the last two episodes) of TV I've ever watched in my life. Knowing that Sheridan had only 20 human years left after Lorien resurrected him, it was still wrenching to watch Bruce Boxleitner portray a man who knows he's going to die, and wants to do so not in the loving arms of his wife, but aboard a spacecraft, heading somewhere. I cried a lot.

There will probably never be a *B5* reunion show; two of the principal actors have died (Andreas Katsulas and Richard Biggs) and, let's face it, the story really is over. But with DVD technology, we can go back and revisit that station, those people, their lives, and, as JMS said in his sign-off to the last DVD episode, dream our dreams.

— Janine Stinson, August 2006

The other editorial by Bruce Gillespie

This editorial is mainly about the business end of publishing *Steam Engine Time*. It hasn't happened for awhile — I ran out of money. That's because I had not much Paying Work (freelance book editing) between September 2004 and August 2005, and it's been fairly spotty since then. Jan Stinson, my co-editor, says 'Publish electronically. Publish on efanzines.com.' The only trouble with doing that is that it would mean dropping a lot of our favourite people from the mailing list. Believe it or not, there are still many readers who don't have a computer, or don't receive email, or cannot download PDF files easily. Besides, I like to *send* fanzines to people, rather than hope they will stumble into efanzines.com and happen to pick up a copy.

But publishing another issue of *SET* would be impossible without the help offered by **Bill Burns** and his wonderful website **efanzines.com**. Check it today.

Money remains a problem, since even the most modest edition costs a fortune in printing and postage — so we will be asking you to read your copy electronically if you don't have a subscription or are not on the essential mailing list.

As **Jan Stinson** lives in Michigan, it's an interesting experience attempting to edit a magazine by swapping emails and PDF files. Not impossible, but more time consuming that either of us had expected. One result of the joint editorship of *SET* is that the magazine's scope is broadening. In her editorial (above), Jan looks at media SF, about which I know little. Also, Jan spied and roped in the **Eric Raymond** article. I'd be the first to say that I disagree with most of it, but it should lead to as much discussion as any other article we've run.

It's entirely accidental that the cover art, by **Ditmar (Dick Jenssen)**, bears some resemblance to the John Berkey cover illustration for the NESFA Press edition of Cordwainer Smith's *Norstrilia*. However, Dick suggests that the astute reader will note the many differences between the two pieces of cover art.

Paul Kincaid, who begins this issue, is of course one of our Editors Emeritus (along with Maureen Kincaid Speller). You can see a photo of him on the cover of *Foundation* 97, Summer 2006. As well as winning the SFRA's Clareson Award for 2006, he has also just picked up a special award for his 11 years as Administrator of the Arthur C. Clarke Award.

I don't know a lot about **Harry Buerkett**, **Eric S. Raymond**, **James Doig**, or **Milan Smiljkovic**, apart from what they tell us in their article introductions.

However, I have chatted to **Gillian Polack** at both the 2005 and 2006 Continuums. Continuum is Melbourne's annual winter convention. I hope Gillian can travel from Canberra to Melbourne again in 2007 for ConVergence 2.

— Bruce Gillespie, August 2006

10/10 May/May: Singling out the duplications in *The Separation*

Paul Kincaid

Paul Kincaid has written about Christopher Priest's work too many times already. His essay 'Blank Pages: Islands and Identity in theFiction of Christopher Priest' from *Christopher Priest: The Interaction* was included in the Recommended Reading for the BSFA Non-Fiction Prize 2006. He is the most recent recipient of the Thomas D. Clareson Award from the Science Fiction Research Association. He is co-editor of *The Arthur C. Clarke Award: A Critical Anthology* (2006), and Borgo Press keep threatening to bring out his collection of essays and reviews, *What It Is We Do When We Read Science Fiction*. '10/10 May/May' was originally delivered as a paper on the academic track at the 2006 Worldcon in Glasgow. *The Separation* is dedicated to Paul Kincaid.

Christopher Priest, 2005. (Photo: Ian Maule.)

When you read any of the later novels of Christopher Priest you are never entirely confident that you trust what is going on. Traditionally this would be because the narrators were unreliable, but I don't believe that (with the exception of Gordon Sinclair in *The Quiet Woman*, who is probably mad) Priest has written a single unreliable narrator. It is not the narrators who are unreliable, but the worlds that they narrate.

One of the consistent ways by which Priest has undermined our confidence in his worlds is the presentation of alternatives, worlds operating in parallel but with the membranes between them porous at best. Wessex and the present day in *A Dream of Wessex*, the dream archipelago and contemporary London in *The Affirmation*, the realm of the glamorous and mundane reality in *The Glamour*, the world as seen by Borden and the world as seen by Angier in *The Prestige*, virtual reality and consensus reality in *The Extremes* all operate this way. The viewpoint characters move between these worlds with increasing fluidity, but the more easily they penetrate the parallel world the less easy it is for them, and for us, to tell exactly when one world ends and the next one starts.

The Separation seems on one level to fit this paradigm precisely. You have the twins, J. L. Sawyer (Jack) and J. L. Sawyer (Joe); and when we follow Jack's story the Second World War follows much the course we know from our history books, but when we follow Joe's story, the war ends in 1941. But although there is this very obvious pairing of worlds, in another sense the novel does not seem to fit the paradigm because the worlds do not seem to be porous; there is no overt movement from one world into the next.

What I want to suggest is that there is in fact movement between the worlds, and it is not just two worlds. This is, I think, Priest's most complex novel to date, and there are at least four parallel worlds, probably more, and the membranes are so porous that we are moving between them constantly throughout the novel. Indeed, I would further suggest that it is this movement that explains what is perhaps the most problematic aspect of the whole novel, the ending in which Joe apparently relates his own death.

We begin with popular historian Stuart Grattan being handed a manuscript by Angela Chipperton. This is the first indication of how porous the membranes are, because Stuart and Angela cannot exist in the same world. When Stuart has 'a fleeting illusory sense that he had seen her before' (p. 5) it is understandable: they are effectively the same person. Angela is Jack's child by Birgit in a world in which Joe was killed; Stuart is Joe's child by Birgit in a world in which Jack was killed. Throughout *The Separation* there are doublings: Joe and Jack, Birgit and the twins' mother who are both German, the real Churchill and the actor with whom Jack tours bomb-damaged London, Hess and his doppelgänger who flies to Britain on 10 May 1941 on a mission of peace. These suggest a duality in the novel, but it is the hidden duplications, such as the identity of Stuart and Angela, which is never made explicit, that are far more significant in suggesting a multiplicity of worlds and signalling the movement between them.

The manuscript Stuart is given is Jack's memoir. In part this is an account of Jack and Joe winning a bronze medal for rowing in the Berlin Olympics. During the course of this they meet Hess, who is fascinated by their likeness — 'We never try to deceive anyone' (p. 93) Jack tells him, a hostage to fortune — and who also seems to be sexually attracted to Jack. At the same time, Joe is arranging to smuggle the daughter of their Jewish hosts out of Germany; this is Birgit, whom Joe will marry but both will love. This part of the story is unproblematic. Joe's accounts also will look back to the same events. The split in history must occur later than this, but, unlike most authors of alternate histories, Priest never specifies a moment when the split occurs. By the time we pick up the war-

time portion of the narrative the split has already happened.

Jack's account of the Olympics is punctuated by memories of the moment he crashed his Wellington bomber, following a raid on Hamburg on 10 May 1941. (This is a pivotal date: it is the date, among other things, when Hess flew to Britain, when Stuart dates the end of the war, when Stuart was born and when Joe witnesses the signing of the peace treaty.) Jack repeatedly breaks into his memoir with accounts of this moment, which always begin 'Five years later' (p. 40). The uncertainty that surrounds this event is curious, marked by phrases such as 'a fog of amnesia' (p. 40, repeated p. 50) or 'like fragments of a dream' (p. 50). The sense that Jack is actually creating the memory rather than reliving the experience is suggested when he says, for example, 'I worked backwards to find the memories I needed, learning as I went' (p. 41), or later: 'I must have been in shock. I was confused then, I was confused when I tried to remember it later, I am still confused all these years on' (p. 48). He returns to this moment four times in all, each time starting the memory a little earlier and continuing a little longer, before, on the fourth iteration, which begins much more precisely: 'At the end of June 1941, nearly five years after' (p. 76), it eventually acquires enough substance to move the story forward. But the repetitions are interesting, because of the small discrepancies that creep in. In one version the crew definitely bail out, in another he can't remember if they jumped; in one version the shrapnel seems to hit behind Jack, in another it hits forward of him throwing him backwards; in one version it is Kris who reports that Levy has been wounded, in another Lofty does so. This is not enough to suggest that we are not witnessing the one central event, but it suggests the unreliability of memory and sets us up for the far more radical discontinuities in Joe's accounts later.

Another thing that these recurring memories do is cut us loose from time. Jack's subsequent account will wander achronologically backwards to his affair with Birgit, and forwards to his time as an aide to Churchill and his meeting with Hess's doppelgänger, the fluidity of this movement making it not always clear when these events are taking place. At the core of his account, however, is the raid on Hamburg, and in particular a strange scene recounted only during the fourth iteration. As Jack and his crew approach the German coast they see an ME-110 being shot down by four ME-109s, then, moments later, another lone ME-110 is attacked by four more ME-109s, but this time the lone plane escapes and the four attackers head back in the direction of Denmark. It is Hess's flight to Britain, and that of his doppelgänger, a duplication that signals a split in time.

When Jack's account is concluded, there is a brief interlude during which Stuart discovers that Angela does not exist in his world, then we get another account of that raid on Hamburg, this time from the navigator, Levy. Although the account matches Jack's in broad outline, in detail it is significantly different. In this world Jack and Birgit are married and expecting the child who is presumably Angela. When they spot the duplicate Messerschmitt attacks, the details are identical, except that it is the first group of four raiders who return to Denmark. And when the plane crashes, Jack is killed.

This is the third distinct timeline in the novel. Because he belongs to Angela's world, this cannot be congruent with Stuart's, and it clearly differs from Jack's. It also differs from Joe's world. But the membranes are most permeable to documents, because Levy provides Stuart with a body of print-outs, mostly taken from the internet, that constitute the final portion of the novel. Central to this portion is Joe's own account, or rather, accounts: as I will show, there is a curious discontinuity in what follows.

The account begins straightforwardly enough: we see Joe register as a conscientious objector, start to work for the Red Cross in Manchester, and then go to London to help in the Blitz. This is where things start to go awry. In Jack's world, Joe is killed during the Blitz when his ambulance is hit by a bomb; here Joe isn't even in the ambulance at the time, but goes missing and is found some days later suffering concussion. Up to this point we have been reading extracts from the diaries of J. L. Sawyer held at the Collection Britannique, Le Musée de Paix, Genève; now we start to read extracts from the holograph notebooks of J. L. Sawyer, University of Manchester, Department of Vernacular History. We have shifted, unheralded, into yet another timeline, and it is marked by one of the most significant passages in the book, which occurs when Joe is being taken by ambulance back to Manchester:

> I was inside a Red Cross ambulance, shocked into reality when the vehicle jolted over an uneven patch of road. I braced myself defensively against the knocks and bumps I was receiving, but my waist and legs were held gently in place with restraining straps. I was alone in the compartment with an orderly, a young Red Cross worker I knew was called Ken Wilson. It was difficult to talk in the noisy, unventilated compartment. Ken braced his arms against the overhead shelves as the vehicle swung about. He said we were well on our way in the journey, not to worry. But I was worried. Where were we going? (p. 303)

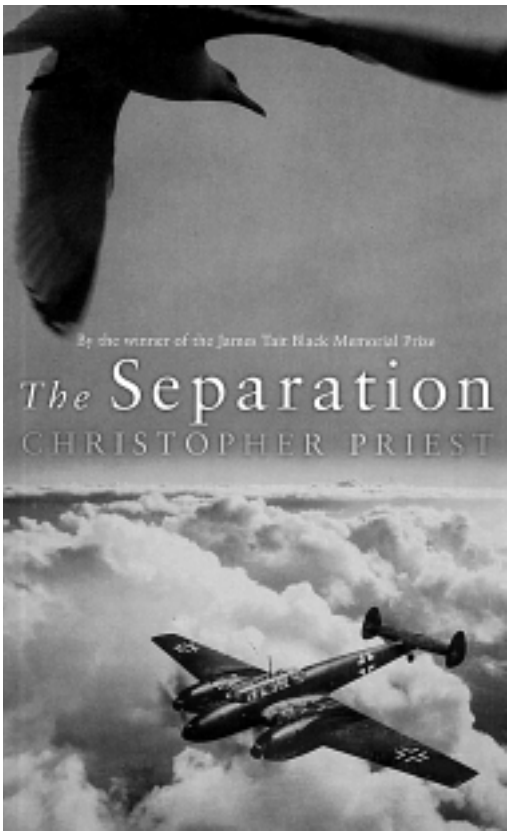
Why is that passage significant? Because almost 300 pages earlier this passage is used, word for word, by Jack when he is being taken from hospital to the rehabilitation centre after the Hamburg raid. It is a point of very deliberate duplication. There are others through the novel, though none so long or so far apart, and I think it is worth looking at in some detail.

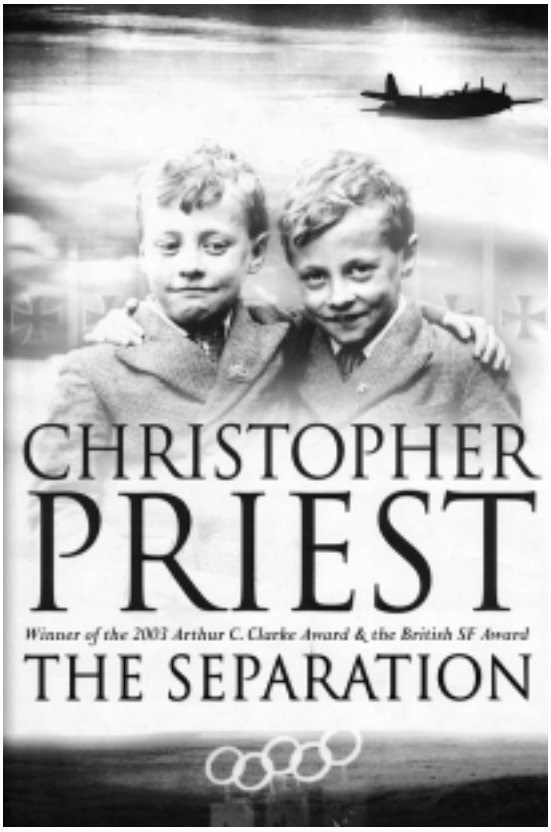
For a start it contains the notion of being 'shocked into reality', and Priest is careful to stress the idea that reality is something to wake into, or something to be recreated the way Jack recreated his memories of the crash. Within pages of this scene Joe goes on to say 'the world was suddenly in focus' (p. 303) and 'Concussion creates a sense of unfilled blankness behind you unreachable by memory. Discovering what is there in your memory, and what might not be, is a painful process' (p. 304). He concludes: 'My conscious life began again, there and then' (p. 305). This heavy emphasis on the reality of the world he wakes up to in the ambulance actually serves to undermine that reality, and, as we discover in the following pages, this reality is a very fragile and uncertain thing.

There is the importance also of being in an ambulance. In Jack's reality Joe was killed in the ambulance he was driving in the Blitz. In the earlier version of Joe's reality there is an enigmatic letter to the driver of the ambulance Joe is travelling in, a letter that talks of a serious crash though it contains no details. That crash does not feature in Joe's notebook, another clue to the fact that time shifts part way through Joe's portion of the book. The ambulance itself, therefore, is a symbol of death within Joe's narrative.

As a duplication, the passage itself signals a time shift. It is, after all, practically the first thing we read in Joe's notebook, and elsewhere in the book duplication of incidents or of phrasings are used as signals that reality has moved slightly.

And because it duplicates an experience of Jack's, it is indicative of a growing identity of Jack and Joe. When the twins are together at the Olympics, they are fiercely defensive of their separate identity; as Jack says: 'What you want, what you crave, is to be treated as a separate human being. You want an independent life' (p. 44). But once they are separated, during the war, they more and more come to take on each other's identity. Jack tells how, during his affair with Birgit, he allows himself to appear as Joe. Joe tells how he finds an Air Force uniform in his





The two 'first editions' of *The Separation*: The first edition (left), a trade paperback, one of the last books bought by John Jarrold at Simon & Schuster, was almost unreleased in Britain and Australia (although Justin Ackroyd at Slow Glass Books managed to get a few copies for his customers). The book kept winning awards, so Malcolm Edwards picked up the book for Gollancz — the first hardback edition (right) . A paperback edition should be out about now.

wardrobe, and when he puts it on seems for a moment to become Jack. These are just cosmetic instances of a developing cross-identity; in a very important sense this is not a novel about separation but about unification.

From this moment in the ambulance onwards, time fractures into so many shards that it is difficult to keep track of what is going on. As Jack repeatedly revisits variant experiences of the Hamburg raid until it coheres into one story that makes sense, so Joe seems to be persistently trying on alternative futures to find the one that works for him. He returns home to find Jack and Birgit together; then wakes back in the ambulance once more. 'It was as if I had slipped suddenly back in time, out of one reality into another, but which reality, now, was the one I should believe in?' (p. 310) This is presented as a metaphor; in fact it is a concrete representation of what is going on in *The Separation*.

All of these 'lucid imaginings', as Joe terms them, keep bringing Joe and Jack together like colliding atoms: finding Jack with Birgit, finding Jack's uniform and trying it on, discovering that Jack is the pilot of the plane taking him to the Red Cross peace negotiations, the testy inconclusive meeting between the brothers at the airfield. This last is another instance of Priest's use of repeated passages. Each time the meeting is replayed we are told: 'as soon as I saw him I felt a familiar surge of many of the old feelings about him: love, envy, resentment, admiration, irritation. He was still my brother' (p. 383, repeated p. 390). That these repetitions indicate a shift in the substance of reality is indicated when we are told twice: 'We kept drawing on our cigarettes, using them like punctuation, for emphasis' (p. 387, repeated p. 393), yet when Joe emerges from the second of these lucid dreams and finds himself back in the pub bedroom, 'I felt stray tobacco strands sticking to my lips' (p. 394). The supposed fancy of the lucid imagining has had a measurable effect upon reality.

Throughout these fractured realities, Joe the pacifist is working towards an end to the war, which he eventually achieves. But on his return home he finds that Birgit has already had their baby, a boy named Stuart that neighbour Henry Gratton is taking a possessive and fatherly interest in. And then Jack, supposedly seriously injured but not killed in a raid on Hamburg, suddenly appears. In that moment Joe falls, cracks his head on the floor, and finds himself back in the ambulance. This is something he has already foreseen. As he became aware of the lucid imagining he had wondered: 'Was everything I thought of as real in fact another more subtle and extended delusion, a lucid imagining of forked alternatives, while in reality, real reality, I lay in the back of the noisy Red Cross ambulance, still being driven slowly across benighted England?' (p. 330) It is a return, therefore, for which we have been prepared. Perhaps in this world that crash which so mysteriously never happened, will occur. After all, there is a doom-laden quality to Joe's final words: 'ahead of me lay that life which was obscurely rejecting me' (463).

But if Joe is indeed recounting his own death, how could he do that? And how can he die at this moment before the peace that he is instrumental in bringing about, and that earns him the measure of fame which will get historian Stuart Gratton interested in him in the first place, and so set this entire novel in motion? Because the worlds are porous and the multiverse of the novel has resolved itself into the history we know; Joe has disappeared from a reality rejecting him, to receive the death scheduled for him in Jack's world, which somehow allows Jack to survive.

— Paul Kincaid, 2005

A political history of SF

by Eric S. Raymond

[Eric S. Raymond, who lives in Malvern, Pennsylvania, supports a number of libertarian causes, including open access software, and the removal of censorship. He is a musician, and a participant in LARPS (live-action role-playing games). This article was originally prepared for *Penguicon* I (first version, November 2002). A shorter version appeared on Eric's weblog *Armed And Dangerous*. He has written elsewhere on SF worlds and prototype worlds.]

The history of modern SF is one of five attempted revolutions — one success and four enriching failures. I'm going to offer you a look at them from an unusual angle, a political one. This turns out to be a useful perspective because more of the history of SF than one might expect is intertwined with political questions, and SF had an important role in giving birth to at least one distinct political ideology that is alive and important today.

The first and greatest of the revolutions came out of the minds of John Wood Campbell and Robert Heinlein, the editor and the author who invented modern science fiction. The pivotal year was 1937, when John Campbell took over the editorship of *Astounding Science Fiction*. He published Robert Heinlein's first story a little over a year later.

Pre-Campbellian science fiction bubbled up from the American pulp magazines of the 1910s and 1920s, inspired by pioneers like Jules Verne and H. G. Wells but mostly recycling an endless series of cardboard clichés: mad scientists, lost races, menacing bug-eyed monsters, coruscating death rays, and screaming blondes in brass underwear. With a very few exceptions (like E. E. 'Doc' Smith's *Skylark of Space* and sequels), the stuff was teeth-jarringly bad; unless you have a specialist interest in the history of the genre I don't recommend seeking it out.

John Campbell had been one of the leading writers of space opera from 1930, second only to E. E. 'Doc' Smith in inventiveness. When he took over *Astounding*, he did so with a vision: one that demanded higher standards of both scientific plausibility and story-crafting skill than the field had ever seen before. He discovered and trained a group of young writers who would dominate the field for most of the next 50 years. Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Poul Anderson, and Hal Clement were among them.

Heinlein was the first of Campbell's discoveries and, in the end, the greatest. It was Heinlein who invented the technique of description by indirection — the art of describing his future worlds not through lumps of exposition but by presenting it through the eyes of his characters, subtly leading the reader to fill in by deduction large swathes of background that a lesser author would have drawn in detail.

From World War II into the 1950s Campbell's writers — many of them working scientists and engineers who knew leading-edge technology from the inside — created the Golden Age of science fiction. Other SF pulpzines competing with *Astounding* raised their standards and new ones were founded. The field took the form of an extended conversation, a kind of proto-futurology worked out through stories that often implicitly commented on each other.

While space operas and easy adventure stories continued to be written, the centre of the Campbellian revolution was 'hard SF', a form that made particularly stringent demands on both author and reader. Hard SF demanded that the science be consistent both internally and with known science about the real world, permitting only a bare minimum of McGuffins such as faster-than-light star drives. Hard SF stories could be, and were, mercilessly slammed because the author had calculated an orbit or gotten a detail of physics or biology wrong. Readers, on the other hand, needed to be scientifically literate to appreciate the full beauty of what the authors were doing.

There was also a political aura that went with the hard-SF style, one exemplified by Campbell and right-hand man Robert Heinlein. That tradition was of ornery and insistent individualism, veneration of the competent man, an instinctive distrust of coercive social engineering and a rock-ribbed objectivism that that valued knowing how things work and treated all political ideologising with suspicion. Exceptions like Asimov's 'Foundation' novels only threw the implicit politics of most other Campbellian SF into sharper relief. At the time, this very American position was generally thought of by both allies and opponents as a conservative or right-wing one. But the SF community's version was never conservative in the strict sense of venerating past social norms — how could it be, when SF literature cheerfully contemplated radical changes in social arrangements and even human nature itself? SF's insistent individualism also led it to reject racism and feature strong female characters decades before the rise of political correctness ritualised these behaviours in other forms of art.

Nevertheless, some writers found the confines of the field too narrow, or rejected Campbellian orthodoxy for other reasons. The first revolt against hard SF came in the early 1950s from a group of young writers centred around Frederik Pohl and the Futurians fan club in New York. The Futurians invented a kind of SF in which science was not at the centre, and the transformative change motivating the story was not technological but political or social. Much of their output was sharply satirical in tone, and tended to de-emphasise individual heroism. The Futurian masterpiece was the Frederik Pohl/Cyril Kornbluth collaboration *The Space Merchants*.

The Futurian revolt was political as well as aesthetic. Not until the mid 1990s did the participants admit that many of the key Futurians had histories as ideological Communists or fellow travellers. As with later revolts against the Campbellian tradition, part of the motivation was a desire to escape the 'conservative' politics that went with it. While the Futurians' work was well understood at the time to be a poke at the consumer capitalism and smugness of the postwar years, only in retrospect is it clear how much they owed to the Frankfurt school of Marxist critical theory.

But the Futurian revolt was half-hearted, semi-covert and easily absorbed by the Campbellian mainstream of the SF field; by the mid 1960s, sociological extrapolation had become a standard part of the toolkit even for the old-school Golden Agers, and it never challenged the centrality of hard SF. The Futurians' Marxist underpinnings lay buried and undiscussed for forty years after the fact. Perception of Campbellian SF as a 'right-wing' phenomenon lingered, however, and helped motivate the next revolt in the mid 1960s, around the time I started reading the stuff. The field was in bad shape then, though I lacked the perspective to see so at the time. The death of the pulpzines in the 1950s had pretty much killed off the SF short-fiction market, and

the post-*Star Wars* boom that would make SF the second most successful genre after romance fiction was still a decade in the future.

The early Golden Agers were hitting the 30-year mark in their writing careers, and, although some would find a second wind in later decades, many were beginning to get a bit stale. Heinlein reached his peak as a writer with 1967's *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* and, plagued by health problems, began a long decline.

These objective problems combined with, or perhaps led to, an insurgency within the field — the New Wave, an attempt to import the techniques and imagery of literary fiction into SF. As with that of the Futurians, the New Wave was both a stylistic revolt and a political one.

The New Wave's inventors (notably Michael Moorcock, J. G. Ballard and Brian Aldiss) were British socialists and Marxists who rejected individualism, linear exposition, happy endings, scientific rigour and the US's cultural hegemony over the SF field in one fell swoop. The New Wave's later American exponents were strongly associated with the New Left and opposition to the Vietnam War, leading to some rancorous public disputes in which politics was tangled together with definitional questions about the nature of SF and the direction of the field.

But the New Wave, after 1965, was not so easily dismissed or assimilated as the Futurians had been. Amidst a great deal of self-indulgent crap and drug-fuelled psychedelicising, there shone a few jewels — Philip José Farmer's 'Riders of the Purple Wage,' some of Harlan Ellison's work, Brian Aldiss's 'Hothouse' stories, and Langdon Jones's 'The Great Clock' stand out as examples.

As with the Futurians, the larger SF field rapidly absorbed some New Wave techniques and concerns. Notably, the New Wavers broke the SF taboo on writing about sex in any but the most cryptically coded ways, a stricture previously so rigid that only Heinlein himself had had the stature to really break it, in his 1961 *Stranger In A Strange Land* — a book that helped shape the hippie counterculture of the later 1960s.

But the New Wave also exacerbated longstanding critical arguments about the definition and scope of science fiction, and briefly threatened to displace hard SF from the centre of the field. Brian Aldiss's 1969 dismissal of space exploration as 'an old-fashioned diversion conducted with infertile phallic symbols' was typical New Wave rhetoric, and looked like it might have some legs at the time.

As a politico-cultural revolt against the American vision of SF, however, the New Wave eventually failed just as completely as the Futurians had. Its writers were already running out of steam in 1977 when *Star Wars* (rather obviously patterned on Edmond Hamilton's *The Star Kings* from 1949) took the imagery of pre-Campbellian space opera to the mainstream culture. The half-decade following (my college years, as it happened) was a period of drift and confusion only ended by the publication of David Brin's *Startide Rising* in 1982.

Brin, and his colleagues, in the group that came to be known as the 'Killer Bs' (Greg Bear and Gregory Benford), reasserted the primacy of hard SF done in the grand Campbellian manner. Campbell himself had died in 1971 right at the high-water mark of the New Wave, but Heinlein and Anderson and the other surviving luminaries of the Campbellian era had no trouble recognising their inheritors. To everyone's surprise, the New Old Wave proved to be not just artistically successful but commercially popular as well, with its writers becoming the first new stars of the post-1980 boom in SF publishing.

Before getting back to the Killer Bs and their Campbellian revival, I need to point out an important bit of background. Besides helping spawn the New Wave, the Vietnam War broke open a longstanding fissure in the right wing of American politics. One kind of right-winger was the cultural conservative, frequently with both religious and militarist beliefs. The other kind was the 'classical liberal' or small-government conservative. These two very different tendencies had been forced into alliance in both the US and Great Britain by the rise of the socialist Left after 1910.

The aftermath of Barry Goldwater's failed presidential campaign in 1964 had strained the alliance between these factions almost to the breaking point. The Vietnam War broke it, at least for some. A mixed group of dissident classical liberals and antiwar radicals formed the Libertarian Party in 1971, repudiating both the right's cultural conservatism and the left's redistributionist statism. This is worth noticing in a history of SF because the platform of the Libertarian Party read like a reinvented, radicalised and intellectualised form of the implicit politics of Campbellian hard SF. This was not a coincidence; many of the founding libertarians were science fiction fans. They drew inspiration not merely from the polemical political science fiction of Ayn Rand (*The Fountainhead*, 1943; *Atlas Shrugged*, 1957), but from the whole canon of Campbellian SF.

Something rather similar had happened in the late nineteenth century, when various now-forgotten works of utopian fiction had helped shape the thinking of early Socialists. But this time the connection was more two-way and intimate; novels like Heinlein's *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress*, H. Beam Piper's *Lone Star Planet*, and Poul Anderson's *No Truce With Kings* (among many others) came to be seen retrospectively as proto-libertarian arguments, not just by their readers but by the authors of the novels themselves.

The new hard SF of the 1980s returned to Golden Age themes and images, if not quite with the linear simplicity of Golden Age technique. It also reverted to the anti-political/individualist values traditional in the field. This time around, with explicit libertarianism a feature of the political landscape, the split between order-worshiping conservatism and the individualist impulse was more explicit. At one extreme, some SF (such as that of L. Neil Smith) assumed the character of radical libertarian propaganda. At the other extreme, a subgenre of SF that could fairly be described as conservative/militarist power fantasies emerged, notably in the writing of Jerry Pournelle and David Drake.

Tension between these groups sometimes flared into public animosity. Both laid claims to Robert Heinlein's legacy. Heinlein himself (increasingly erratic as a writer but still the Grand Old Man of the field, immensely respected by fans and even more by other authors) maintained friendly relationships with conservatives, but described himself a libertarian for more than a decade before his death in 1988.

Symbolically, Heinlein was the first among equals in a study commission of SF authors formed by Ronald Reagan to consider the feasibility of an anti-ballistic missile defense. Commission member Gregory Benford later described President Reagan as 'a science fiction fan', and the vision that emerged as the Strategic Defense Initiative was startlingly SFnal. Reagan's threat to build SDI at the Reykjavik summit with Gorbachev in 1986 triggered the collapse of Soviet strategic ambitions as Mikhail Gorbachev realised that the Soviet Union could not match the US's raise in the geopolitical poker game. The Berlin Wall fell three years later; science fiction saved the world. Somewhere, Campbell and Heinlein were probably smiling.

Heinlein's personal evolution from Goldwater conservative to antistatist radical both led and reflected larger trends. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed, depictions of explicitly anarcho-libertarian future societies had begun to filter into nonpolitical SF works such as Vernor Vinge's 'Realtime' sequence and Joe Haldeman's *Buying Time*. Haldeman's Conch Republic and Novysibirsk were all the more convincing for not being subjects of polemic.

Cyberpunk was the third failed revolution against Campbellian SF. William Gibson, who is generally credited with launching this subgenre in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer*, was not a political writer. But Bruce Sterling, who promoted Gibson and became the chief ideologue of anti-Campbellianism in the late 1980s, called it 'the Movement' in a self-conscious reference to the heady era of 1960s student radicalism. The cyberpunks positioned themselves particularly against the carnographic conservative military SF of David Drake, Jerry Pournelle, and lower-rent imitators — not exactly a hard target.

Despite such posturing, the cyberpunks were neither as stylistically innovative nor as politically challenging as the New Wave had been. Gibson's prose has aptly been described as Raymond Chandler in mirror-shades. Cyberpunk themes (virtual reality, pervasive computing, cyborging and biosculpture, corporate feudalism) had been anticipated in earlier works like Vernor Vinge's 1978 hard-SF classic *True Names*, and even further back in *The Space Merchants*.

Cyberpunk imagery (decayed urban landscapes, buzzcuts, chrome and black leather) quickly became a cliché replicated in dozens of computer games. Neal Stephenson wrote a satirical finis to the cyberpunk genre in 1992's *Snow Crash*, which (with Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix* and Walter John Williams's *Hardwired*) was very close to being the only work to meet the standard set by *Neuromancer*. While most cyberpunk took for granted a background in which capitalism had decayed into an oppressive corporate feudalism under which most individuals could be nothing but alienated and powerless, the future of *Snow Crash* was a tellingly libertarian one. The bedrock individualism of classical SF reasserted itself with a smartass grin.

By the time cyberpunk fizzled out, most fans had been enjoying the hard-SF renaissance for a decade; the New Wave was long gone, and cyberpunk had attracted more notice outside the SF field than within it. The leaders of SF's tiny in-house critical establishment, however (figures like Samuel Delany and David Hartwell), remained fascinated by New Wave relics such as Thomas Disch and Philip K. Dick, or anti-Campbellian fringe figures such as Suzette Haden Elgin and Octavia E. Butler.

While this was going on, the readers voted with their Hugo ballots largely for writers who were squarely within the Campbellian tradition: Golden Age survivors, the killer Bs, and newer writers like Lois McMaster Bujold and Greg Egan (whose 1997 work *Diaspora* may just be the single most audacious and brilliant hard-SF novel in the entire history of the field).

In 1994, critical thinking within the SF field belatedly caught up with reality. Credit for this goes to David Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer, whose analysis in the anthology *The Ascent of Wonder* finally acknowledged what should have been obvious all along. Hard SF is the vital heart of the field, the radiant core from which ideas and prototype worlds diffuse outwards to be appropriated by writers of lesser world-building skill but perhaps greater stylistic and literary sophistication. While there are other modes of SF that have their place, they remain essentially derivations of or reactions against hard SF, and cannot even be properly understood without reference to its tropes, conventions and imagery.

Furthermore, Gregory Benford's essay in *The Ascent of Wonder* on the meaning of SF offered a characterisation of the genre that may well prove final. He located the core of SF in the experience of 'sense of wonder' not merely as a thalamic thrill but as the affirmation that the universe has a knowable order that is discoverable through reason and science.

I think I can go further than Hartwell or Kramer or Benford in defining the relationship between hard SF and the rest of the field. To do this, I need to introduce the concept linguist George Lakoff calls 'radial category,' one that is not defined by any one logical predicate, but by a central prototype and a set of permissible or customary variations. As a simple example, in English the category 'fruit' does not correspond to any uniformity of structure that a botanist could recognise. Rather, the category has a prototype 'apple,' and things are recognised as fruits to the extent that they are either (a) like an apple, or (b) like something that has already been sorted into the 'like an apple' category.

Radial categories have central members ('apple,' 'pear,' 'orange') whose membership is certain, and peripheral members ('coconut,' 'avocado') whose membership is tenuous. Membership is graded by the distance from the central prototype — roughly, the number of traits that have to mutate to get one from being like the prototype to like the instance in question. Some traits are important and tend to be conserved across the entire radial category (strong flavour including sweetness) while some are only weakly bound (colour).

In most radial categories, it is possible to point out members that are counter examples to any single intensional ('logical') definition, but traits that are common to most of the core prototypes nevertheless tend to be strongly bound. Thus, 'coconut' is a counterexample to the strongly bound trait that fruits have soft skins, but it is sorted as 'fruit' because (like the prototype members) it has an easily chewable interior with a sweet flavour.

SF is a radial category in which the prototypes are certain classics of hard SF. This is true whether you are mapping individual works by affinity or subgenres like space opera, technology-of-magic story, utopian–dystopian extrapolation, etc. So in discussing the traits of SF as a whole, the relevant question is not 'which traits are universal' but 'which traits are strongly bound' — or, almost equivalently, 'what are the shared traits of most of the core (hard-SF) prototypes'.

The strong binding between hard SF and libertarian politics continues to be a fact of life in the field. It is telling that the only form of politically inspired award presented annually at the World Science Fiction Convention is the Libertarian Futurist Society's Prometheus Award. There is no socialist, liberal, moderate, conservative or fascist equivalent of the class of libertarian SF writers including L. Neil Smith, F. Paul Wilson, Brad Linaweaver, or J. Neil Schulman; their books, even when they are shrill and indifferently written polemical tracts, actually sell — and sell astonishingly well — to SF fans.

Of course, there are people in the SF field who find this deeply uncomfortable. Since the centrality of hard SF has become inescapable, resistance now takes the form of attempts to divorce hard SF from libertarianism — to preserve the methods and conceptual apparatus of hard SF while repudiating its political aura. Hartwell and Kramer's 2002 followup to *The Ascent of Wonder*, *The Hard SF Renaissance*, takes up this argument in its introduction and explanatory notes.

The Hard SF Renaissance presents itself as a dialogue between old-school Campbellian hard SF and an attempt to construct a 'Radical Hard SF' that is not in thrall to right-wing tendencies. It is clear that the editors' sympathies lie with the 'Radicals,' not least from the very fact

that they identify libertarianism as a right-wing phenomenon. This is an error characteristic of left-leaning thinkers, who tend to assume that anything not 'left' is 'right' and that approving of free markets somehow implies social conservatism.

Is the 'Radical Hard SF' program possible? Partly this is a matter of definition. I have already argued that the SF genre cannot be culturally conservative; by nature it must be prepared to contemplate radical change. So either the partisans of 'Radical Hard SF' are just terminally confused, pushing against an open door, or what they really object to is hard SF's libertarian connection.

It's worth asking, then: is the intimate historical relationship between libertarian political thought and SF a mere accident, or is there an intrinsic connection? And not worth asking merely as a question about politics, either; we'll understand SF and its history better if we know the answer.

I think I know what John Campbell's answer would be, if he had not died the year that the founders of libertarianism broke with conservatism. I know what Robert Heinlein's was. They're the same as mine, a resounding yes — that there is a connection, and that the connection is indeed deep and intrinsic. But cultural history is littered with the corpses of zealots who attempted to yoke art to ideology with shallow arguments, only to be exposed as fools when the art became obsolete before the ideology or (more often) vice-versa.

In the remainder of this essay I will nevertheless attempt to prove this point. My argument will centre around the implications of a concept best known from First Amendment law: the 'marketplace of ideas'. I am going to argue specifically from the characteristics of hard SF, the prototypes of the radial category of SF. I'll use this argument to try to illuminate the central values of SF as a literature, and to explain the large historical pattern of failed revolutions against the Campbellian model.

Science fiction, as a literature, embraces the possibility of radical transformations of the human condition brought about through knowledge. Technological immortality, star drives, cyborging — characteristic SFnal tropes such as these are situated within a knowable universe, one in which scientific inquiry is both the precondition and the principal instrument of creating new futures.

SF is, broadly, optimistic about these futures. This is so for the simple reason that SF is fiction bought with peoples' entertainment budgets and people, in general, prefer happy endings to sad ones. But even when SF is not optimistic, its dystopias and cautionary tales tend to affirm the power of reasoned choices made in a knowable universe; they tell us that it is not through chance or the whim of angry gods that we fail, but through our failure to be intelligent, our failure to use the power of reason and science and engineering prudently.

At bottom, the central assumption of SF is that applied science is our best hope of transcending the major tragedies and minor irritants to which we are all heir. Even when scientists and engineers are not the visible heroes of the story, they are the invisible heroes that make the story notionally possible in the first place, the creators of possibility, the people who liberate the future to become a different place than the present.

SF both satisfies and stimulates a sort of lust for possibility compounded of simple escapism and a complex intellectual delight in anticipating the future. SF readers and writers want to believe that the future not only can be different but can be different in many, many weird and wonderful ways, all of which are worth exploring.

All the traits (embrace of radical transformation, optimism, applied science as our best hope, the lust for possibilities) are weakly characteristic of SF in general — but they are powerfully characteristic of hard SF. Strongly bound, in the terminology of radial categories.

Therefore, hard SF has a bias towards valuing the human traits and social conditions that best support scientific inquiry and permit it to result in transformative changes to both individuals and societies. Also, of social equilibria which allow individuals the greatest scope for choice, for satisfying that lust for possibilities. And it is here that we begin to get the first hints that the strongly bound traits of SF imply a political stance — because not all political conditions are equally favourable to scientific inquiry and the changes it may bring. Nor to individual choice.

The power to suppress free inquiry, to limit the choices and thwart the disruptive creativity of individuals, is the power to strangle the bright transcendent futures of optimistic SF. Tyrants, static societies, and power élites fear change above all else — their natural tendency is to suppress science, or seek to distort it for ideological ends (as, for example, Stalin did with Lysenkoism). In the narratives at the center of SF, political power is the natural enemy of the future.

SF fans and writers have always instinctively understood this. Thus the genre's long celebration of individualist anti-politics; thus its fondness for voluntarism and markets over state action, and for storylines in which (as in Heinlein's archetypal 'The Man Who Sold The Moon') scientific breakthrough and free-enterprise economics blend into a seamless whole. These stances are not historical accidents, they are structural imperatives that follow from the lust for possibility. Ideological fashions come and go, and the field inevitably rediscovers itself afterwards as a literature of freedom.

This analysis should put permanently to rest the notion that hard SF is a conservative literature in any sense. It is, in fact, deeply and fundamentally radical — the literature that celebrates not merely science but science as a permanent revolution, as the final and most inexorable foe of all fixed power relationships everywhere.

Earlier, I cited the following traits of SF's libertarian tradition: ornery and insistent individualism, veneration of the competent man, instinctive distrust of coercive social engineering and a rock-ribbed objectivism that values knowing how things work and treats all political ideologising with suspicion. All should now be readily explicable. These are the traits that mark the enemies of the enemies of the future.

The partisans of 'Radical Hard SF,' like those of the earlier failed revolutions, are thus victims of a category error, an inability to see beyond their own political maps. By jamming SF's native libertarianism into a box labeled 'right wing' or 'conservative,' they doom themselves to misunderstanding the deepest imperatives of the genre.

By understanding these imperatives, on the other hand, we can explain the series of failed revolutions against the Campbellian model that is the largest pattern in the history of modern SF. We can also predict two important things about the future of the SF genre itself.

One: people whose basic political philosophy is flatly incompatible with libertarianism will continue to find the SF mainstream an uncomfortable place to be. Therefore, sporadic ideological revolts against the Campbellian model of SF will continue, probably at about the established rate of one per decade. The Futurians, the New Wave, the cyberpunks, and 'Radical Hard SF' were not the end of that story, because the larger political questions that motivated those insurrections are not yet resolved.

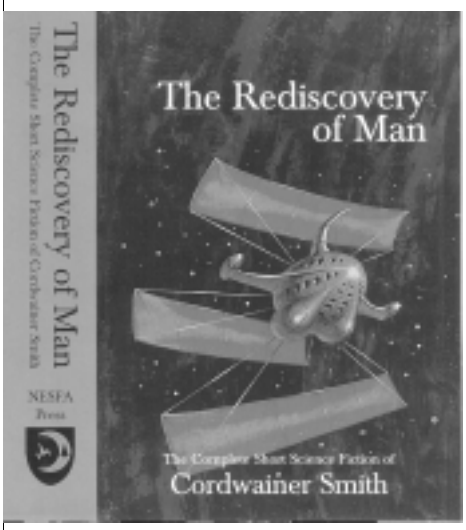
Two: all these revolts will fail in pretty much the same way. The genre will absorb or routinise their literary features and discard their political agendas. And SF will continue to puzzle observers who mistake its anti-political DNA for conservatism while missing its underlying radicalism.

— Eric S. Raymond 2002

Cordwainer Smith: Reflections on some of his themes

Gillian Polack

Gillian Polack has written several books. *Illuminations* (described by one critic as 'fantasy with footnotes') was published in 2002. Everything else is either forthcoming or controversial, including 'The Art of Effective Dreaming' where Morris dancers die dreadful deaths. Occasionally she writes short stories. The most recent is in *Subterranean Magazine* 4. One of her short stories won a rather minor literary award and another was listed as recommended in Ellen Datlow's *Year's Best*. She writes a great deal of short non-fiction, especially material about the Middle Ages for enthusiasts and novelists. Currently she is working on a couple of larger projects. The most interesting concerns bringing together and sharing the types of information writers need to get a solid medieval backdrop for their fiction. She teaches components of the project through the Australian National University and through writers' centres. Gillian has received two Varuna Fellowships.



1 Canberra and Norstrilia

Canberra in the 1960s was a mere kernel of the Canberra of 2005. It was small and green, mostly buildings and public parkland, surrounded by the enormous brown of rural Australia. This was the Canberra that Cordwainer Smith knew. Not the small internationalist city of today, with its sprawl of suburbs and its café culture, but an overgrown country town that just happened to be the seat of government for a whole country. You can see a sense of this Canberra in Smith's work, the idea that Norstrilian government is more a set of social compacts than a formal hierarchy, the idea that family and inheritance counts (the earliest settlers in the area still farmed sheep on what are today mere suburbs; Kambah for instance was farmed by the Beattie family) and the ideal that the country is vast and brown and far diminishes the civilisation it nurtures.

There are other reflections of Australian life of the time in Smith's work. Immigration, for instance.

While policies were much more open than it had been, the inheritance of the White Australia policy was still very apparent in the people of this country. Much of Australia was still white, still Anglo, and still very conservative. In many places, of which Canberra was one, walking down the street one could very easily assume that the only non-Anglos were diplomats, that Australia didn't let any strangers cross the border unless they had proven their credentials.

This was not the reality. Cordwainer Smith came to Australia at the crucial moment when White Australia was being broken down — indigenous Australians were finally given voting rights; migrants came from places other than the United Kingdom. The effects of this change were not yet apparent, however, outside Melbourne and Sydney and places such as the Queensland canefields. The reality of Canberra in the 1960s was that the hydroelectric scheme and more open immigration policies were bringing more and more people from other parts of Europe into the region — but walking down a Canberra street, the feeling was still very much of the dominant ancestry being British.

The Australia Smith saw was very much the cultural blueprint for Norstilia, with its responsibility towards remembering the British Empire and preserving certain cultural values.

At that time, Australia had a very restrictive economic policy. This included a barrage of tariffs and customs restrictions that have since been phased out. It was openly admitted that these restrictions were to develop the local economy and to protect important elements of it — the Melbourne clothes industry was of particular importance, for instance.

The effect of these import restrictions on everyday life was very marked; Australia was wealthy, but not quite first world. We took a long time to adopt innovations from outside, and luxury goods were particularly highly taxed. At the same time, because food and accommodation were much cheaper than in many other countries and Australian workers worked shorter days, even the poorest person was said to be richer than wealthy people elsewhere, in terms of lifestyle.

Add this to an important religious factor: the default religion people wrote on their census data as Church of England, and the Queen was both head of the Church and head of State. The political crises of the 1970s that disputed and lessened the impact of the royal family had not yet happened, and the most important Prime Minister of the 1960s, Sir Robert Menzies, was a keen royalist. A keen royalist and rather autocratic leader — the exact mix that Cordwainer Smith struggles to describe from a slightly bemused outsider viewpoint in his depiction of Norstrilia.

To the surprised outsider, we could easily have looked like a country that practised old-fashioned Church of England values. Very High Church — abstemious and full of self-restraint.

Internally, Australia was not really self-restrained. The slow adoption of new technologies such as television were largely because of the distance of Australia from the rest of the world combined

with the tariff system. Smith was interpreting this from a High Church view, however, and would be astonished by the current Australia, where abstemiousness and low technology levels are rather absent.

What Smith saw was an Australia ruled by an innocent nobility with power that was mostly inexpressed. This is the source of the apparent abstemiousness as he described it. It showed more in Canberra than elsewhere. There were only two major industries in Canberra at that time: the public service (all national) and the university. Canberra fully understood the outside world, but its lifestyle in no way reflected it. There were secure incomes and workplaces, safe jobs, but not much in the way of luxury. Canberra was a hard place to get to, for a capital city, with only a local airport and only one train station, and it had an extraordinarily suburban lifestyle. It also had (and still has), like Norstrilia, an unexpectedly large awareness of the outside world and a sophisticated understanding of how the trade barriers operated.

It is very hard not to see the Canberra of the time in Norstrilia: a place with a sophisticated understanding of the external world, cut off from it and surrounded by bleak but rich countryside dominated by some of the best sheep territory n the world. It is ironic that, well after Paul Linebarger died, Goulburn built its Giant Merino — an enormous grey tribute to the traditional source of wealth in the Canberra region.

2 The importance of Abba-dingo

Abba-dingo is particularly important in understanding Cordwainer Smith's constructed universe. It appears in his short story 'Alpha Ralpha Boulevard'. Abba-dingo was a carnival head that took coins or tokens and gave prophecies.

Writers looking for the origins of Smith's odd names suggest that Abba comes from the words 'Abba' for father from Hebrew or Aramaic, and the Australian native dog, 'dingo'. While this appeals to me because it calls forth an Australian phrase 'Old Man Dingo', I have to admit that I have large problems with this etymology. I suspect that Abba-dingo comes from a word much closer to home for Paul Linebarger, and gives strong indications as to how his religious views shape decision in his universe: it comes from the Book of Daniel.

In the Book of Daniel the king of Babylon visits Jerusalem. He finds several royal Jewish children both beautiful and wise, and he proposes to teach these children the lore of the Chaldeans. He had the children renamed. Azariah was renamed Abednego. Naturally Daniel was the hero of this tale, which is all about true prophecy, but Abednego is linked to the true prophecy and survives his stint in a furnace.

Cordwainer Smith makes the link between Abba-dingo and Abednego quite obvious, as Abednego by using the notion of the fiery furnace and in 'Alpha Ralpha Bulevard' the making the imprint of the prophecy by fire. To make sure we don't miss the point, in the King James Bible Abednego is always spelled Abednego, and Smith divides Abba-dingo in the same way.

Abba-dingo then, is a closet reference to the Old Strong Religion. The head is an indication that the universe is planned, even when it looks like a game from a penny arcade. It refers back to the innocents and the holy being, able to be given and to live the truth, even when they have no understanding of what is happening.

Cordwainer Smith has devised a predetermined universe based very much on a very High Church reading of the Bible. More than that, he writes a belief in the Select (chosen almost before their birth and with predestined accomplishments), such as D'Joan.

Much of his belief is not modern Church of England at all — it is, to me, very nineteenth century and fundamentalist. This is reflected in the nature of most of his short stories. They are Bunyanesque in feel. He emphasises this feel by the style he uses for the stories where the religion is an important component. He works with carefully built-up introductions, and focuses on the inner meaning of lives rather than the individuality and personality of the people involved. This implies that these people are more important for the role they play than as game pieces to catch a reader's eye.

The track of history and the meaning it all leads to is more important than the tale itself. Each story is, in fact, part of the monumental progress of humankind and animalkinds towards a future that Cordwainer Smith only hints at. Just like Moses, we don't see Smith's Holy Land except from a distance — the voyage to it is more important.

What is important about the Bunyanesque progression is not the end of it. The aim is not to provide a guide to holy living or to a perfect future. Cordwainer Smith is not C. S. Lewis — his fiction does not preach.

What it provides is a mythical background to his novels. If you read all his short fiction, then you read *Norstrilia*, you have the perfect structure for the assumptions that are made in the novel. He provides a legendary past and important indications of the future. This makes him look extraordinarily innovative, as his stories often use an allegorical or fairytale format rather than one more typical of the SF conventions of his time. Understanding those allegorical and fairytale formats and that legendary past and mythic background are important to understanding how to read the universe he created.

For instance, those indications give us important clues to certain characters (such as C'mell) and enable us to read far more into their behaviour and attribute more to their personalities than would otherwise be possible. Without the background, C'mell looks simply obedient and maybe a bit boring, regardless of her physical beauty, and her reward is the reward of dull virtue. When the reader understands that the Norstrilia section is only a small segment of her life, her reactions take on a much greater complexity.

The skill he brings to his more conventional writing highlights that these departures from convention are quite intentional. Cordwainer Smith was not writing a single novel: he was writing an allegorical universe with a complex history, and he was peopling it with real people (of various species) whose personalities and capacities to determine their own lives were heavily affected by the allegorical nature of his universe.

Abba-dingo points to this. Cordwainer Smith uses the Abadnego joke both to indicate the religious allegory and to mock at it. Abba-dingo is, after all, only a fairground toy — how do we know that it is God speaking through a fairground mechanical or whether the author is using it as a cheap plot device?

This is the brilliance of Cordwainer Smith. He refers to his Old Strong Religion. He uses his Old Strong Religion. He shapes the whole story of D'Joan and the quest of Casher O'Neil around a particularly archaic version of Protestant belief. All the traditional allegory and the Biblical and religious knowledge that was commonplace in his youth appears in his writing, from the land of Mizraim (Misr) to the need to forego the quest in order to achieve the true goal.

Yet all the while he uses these patterns, he mocks them. He makes it clear that his is an invented universe. He has his heroes play with space and time like gods, while indicating that they can't possibly be gods. He creates his Vomact family in such a way that the ambivalence between good and evil is perennially pointed out: we don't know until we read a given story whether the Vomact will be hero or villain. In showing the hand of the creator so very, very clearly, Cordwainer Smith casts doubt on his own allegories. He leaves it to the reader to think it through.

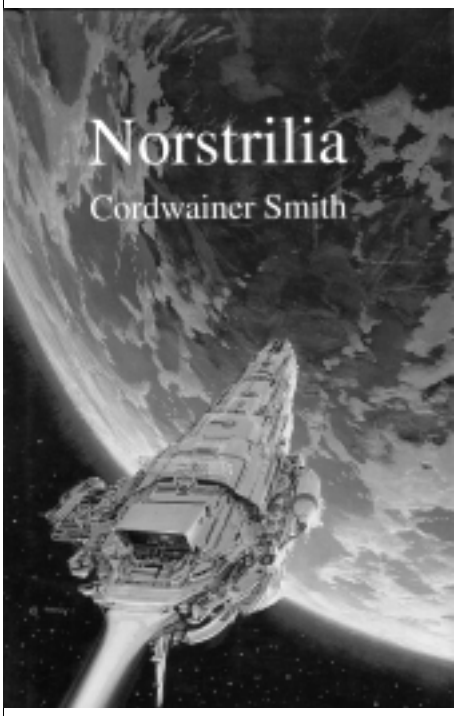
— Gillian Polack, 2005

Extraordinary evidence: The search for the common precursor of *Norstrilia* and *Dune*

by Harry Hennessey Buerkett

Introduction

Harry Hennessey Buerkett is an independent science fiction scholar, and has degrees in Anthropology (Archaeology) and Rhetoric from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. He has ghost-written articles for *Magill's Guide to Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature*, and is currently working on a science fiction novel and a collection of short stories.



Two thoughts struck me when, in about 1982, I first read Cordwainer Smith's *Norstrilia*: (1) that it was wonderfully witty and imaginative (what I had come to expect from the author of 'Scanners Live in Vain' and 'The Game of Rat and Dragon'), and (2) that I had read this story before. A moment's thought brought to mind a book I had read some five or six years before: Frank Herbert's *Dune*.

I mentioned the similarities to my older brother, Fred. He read *Norstrilia*, came back, threw the book down on my desk and said, 'Yeah? So?'

There I let the matter lie.

In 1992, having just got my first PC, I broached the subject again on several listservs and chatrooms, excited by the prospect of reaching so many science fiction readers across the world. I was mystified, as I got not one response. In 1998, having just moved house, and switching to a Mac, I scoured the Internet again for mention of *Norstrilia* and *Dune*: much to my surprise, I found several references, dating back to 1992, that roundly disparaged the similarities as superficial. Yet no one ever bothered to correspond with the originator of the hypothesis.

Why did readers dismiss the similarities as superficial? I found it was because they did not share my familiarity with the texts. To say that *Norstrilia* is Christian allegory, and *Dune* Machiavellian, is a gross simplification and misses the political machinations of both the Instrumentality and the Norstrilians (let alone the Rediscovery and Holy Insurgency), and discounts the central position religion plays in *Dune* in driving the plot from deep-set character and societal motivations. To dismiss 'ornithopters' as an inessential clue to text identity suggests that flapping-wing aircraft were as common a trope in science fiction as 'rocket ships' or 'flying cars' or 'jets', and the Wright Brothers had been grievously mistaken in their assertions regarding fixed-wing craft.

Such statements struck me as ludicrous, almost absurd in their oversimplification. One would expect by this type of analysis to find that the Gospels share only a superficial similarity.

I saw my task before me, and sat down to a close reading and intertextual analysis of the works. I came up with a detailed outline enumerating the close congruences of setting, plot and poetics — even nearly identical dialogue, imagery and allusion within cognate episodes of the plot(s). I searched world literature for the precursor to these two novels. I sent emails to those who had commented online on my hypothesis: I got not one response.

In 2002, I contacted Cordwainer Smith's daughter, Rosana Hart, through the website devoted to her father. I asked if anyone had found a common precursor to the two novels, they being so similar. To my great relief, she responded. She had noticed the similarities before, herself, but only in a very general way. She would forward my question to Dr Alan Elms, who had written some articles on 'Cordwainer Smith', and was working on a biography. He responded immediately, and I sent him a goodly list of several of the parallels between the works. He was very impressed, and enthusiastic about pressing ahead with an article for publication.

On the Internet, the question garnered more mild flames; no responses to myself, though. But one dissenter left a current email address on a listserv, referencing my question to Rosana. I duly sent him the detailed outline. He was my first triumph: his response was a Jungian enantiodromia, a complete 180 degrees distant from his previously held views. As he lives in Beijing, I enlisted him to

help me with whatever Chinese texts might have influenced Cordwainer Smith, which points up how very little real work has been done on this fundamental issue.

In fact, having read Johan Heje, Alan Elms, Carol McGuirk and Gary K. Wolfe, I had fairly compassed the scholarly field of Cordwainer Smith studies. Karen Hellekson's book gathers together the rest of what little scholarship exists on the man we call 'Cordwainer Smith', Paul M. A. Linebarger, and his science fiction works. Among the scant scholarship there is very little cohesive thought or theory, and I think the Smith field is small exactly because of the difficulties his work presents. His erudition is daunting. His sensibilities are primarily Oriental — and few SF readers and scholars have read Chinese literature even in translation — and yet his deeper structure admits of a Christian interpretation.

James B. Jordan, in his article 'Christianity in the Science Fiction of "Cordwainer Smith"' (*Contra Mundum*, no 2, Winter 1992), gives a general overview of the Christian iconography in Smith's work (Jordan was one of my early flamers, from whom I have never received a response; but I agree with his Christian reading of Smith).

Others have found reasons for comparing Smith with J. R. R. Tolkien, which may seem puzzling at first — there being very little ostensible common ground between the two authors — but the comparison is, I think, in reference to their (crypto-) Christianity. For years, many missed (or misinterpreted) Tolkien's Christian iconography, not realising what a devout Catholic he was (peculiar in an Oxford don, but there it is). *Mythlore*, a journal on the Oxford dons Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams, routinely explicated the Christian mythopoeia infused into their works. There's quite a vast literature on it. With Smith, the misinterpretation is the same, except he's High Church Anglican. In science fiction scholarship, we can trace this penchant for willful atheism to Darko Suvin, the man who disallowed transcendence in SF (and by extension any 'metaphysical orientation of mythology and religion' (*Metamorphoses*, p. 26)).

Alan Elms' long-awaited biography of the man Paul Linebarger and the work of 'Cordwainer Smith' is well begun in his various papers but has yet to appear in whole. Beyond Elms' suggestion that *Norstrilia* derives in part from the classic Chinese Buddhist epic *Journey to the West*, almost no work has been done as to the origins or influences on Paul Linebarger's science fiction. Other scholars' efforts in the same vein give us a spotty and fragmentary view of the man and his work.

The same could be said for Frank Herbert's *Dune*: much of the work is fannish, and what instances we have of Frank Herbert's influences — in Tim O'Reilly, Willis McNelly, in son Brian Herbert — can best be described as hearsay, with very little firm evidence from primary sources. Even Herbert's letters are vague on the topic.

It's perfectly reasonable to search an author's 'library' for his sources, his inspiration; but both Paul Linebarger and Frank Herbert are said to have worked largely without notes, reading voraciously, working the first drafts through in their heads, and either writing or dictating a final draft verbatim. So, we have only the finalised texts from which to adumbrate a precursor.

Since both authors abandoned around 1960 texts in favour of reworking the theme into 1963 final forms, it seems some text in the public domain for the first time after 1960, perhaps, might provide an answer to the riddle. 'Star-Craving Mad' and 'Spice Planet' share little resemblance; *Norstrilia* and *Dune* bear an uncanny resemblance: ergo, some source text that became available after 1960 supplied the plot and particulars, if not the narrative frame and setting, for the subsequent works (that is *loq.*: an abandoned text regained vitalisation when given an adequate plot structure not inherent in its genesis but amenable to adaptation).

In 'Of Haggis and Hagiography' I point up the two works' remarkable resemblance. My experience has been that generally readers tend to disbelieve the thesis unless given all the cognate material and comparisons. There is a general propensity to say, 'Oh, no, it can't be so!' I wrote the paper to give as detailed and closely read an analysis and comparison of the salient features of the two texts as can be presented in a readily accessible form, so that a knowledgeable reader will be persuaded that the two novels do in fact tell the same story (essentially). That revelation represents only the first half of the battle: convincing the reader that it is so.

And an extrordinary claim requires extraordinary evidence.

As to finding a source or *quelle*, a common precursor, that must be left to others more versed in the literatures of the world, as the resolution to the problem is exponentially more involved than its statement. My own twelve-year search of mythology, medieval tales and fables, Middle Eastern and Indian national epic, Chinese literature in translation, science fiction from the nineteenth century on, has uncovered many resonances and diverse instances of detail, but no template.

The question now is how to get the idea across so that more study can be done. Thus, in the dark, we advance by shuffles and stubs.

Of haggis and hagiography: The uncanny provenance of *Norstrilia* and *Dune*

Abstract
The texts of Cordwainer Smith's *Norstrilia* and Frank Herbert's *Dune*, composed and published concurrently, show a marked similarity of structure, setting and plot — to such a degree that one can demonstrate, through a close intertextual reading, an extraordinary positive correlation between the works. Parallels in plot elements, details of poetics and imagery, and nearly identical dialogue strongly suggest a common precursor.

Cordwainer Smith's *Norstrilia* and Frank Herbert's *Dune*, composed and published simultaneously, depict a single story, twice told. In details of structure, setting and plot, the two novels show a striking similarity, to such an extent that one can claim an extraordinary positive correlation between the works, in fact, a near identity of texts. The synchronicity of genesis, production and publication

would argue against plagiarism, and the absence of a written correspondence between the authors would preclude collaboration or collusion.[1] And yet, from intertextual evidence alone, a close reading with the juxtaposition of episodes in their detailed development uncovers a marked correlation — an uncanny concurrence of both structure and detail. That no one has yet found a common precursor that answers to all the commonalities presents us with a very real mystery.

Norstrilia and *Dune* share a narrative frame as told from the far future, looking back on events that have since become legendary, as evoked in song and poetry. The cultural milieux rather incongruously combine a millennial feudalism with a space-faring galactic empire; the incongruity stems from a reaction against technology that had occurred centuries before the action of the novels takes place, necessitating modification and enhancement of human abilities, including telepathic abilities, through eugenics. A desert world holds the key to sociopolitical and economic stability in the form of giant fauna that extrude a substance refined into a consciousness-altering drug that imparts near-immortality as well. The preferred conveyance on-planet is the ornithopter — a literal *rara avis* in twentieth-century science fiction before these two works.[2]

Given a number of these aspects in any two novels, nothing else being equal, one could claim for them no significance. For example, our novels share a galactic empire, telepathy and (in the case of *Dune*) body shields to some extent with the pre-World War II science fiction of E. E. Smith, in particular 'Galactic Patrol' and successors (Moskowitz. p. 17ff). They pick up on the medievalism of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoom novels (Hellekson, p. 7; O'Reilly, ch. 3). Further comparison between these outside texts and our texts will yield no more concurrences, however; the texts develop along different lines, both in setting and in plot. That is to say, the texts diverge.

The texts of *Norstrilia* and *Dune* do not diverge after the narrative sets the common frame and background story. They parallel one another to an uncommon degree from the first episode,[3] the Ordeal of the Green Box, for which each teenaged protagonist is dressed up by his female relatives, to the Attack of the Sharp Flying Death, when he takes possession of the planet in dispute, warned beforehand in an oblique fashion by the inquisitor's colleague from the rose-garden. *Norstrilia*'s 'Quarrel at the Dinner Table' and *Dune*'s banquet scene employ all but identical progressions, emotional imagery and descriptive language, and even allusion, as does the subsequent long episode, 'Cast Down from a Great Height to a Great Depth', after which the protagonist, seen as a messiah, comes to an epiphany in the 'Cave of Birds, Far Underground', taking up the mantle and the cause of the underpeople. In the Coda, set decades later, the protagonist has fathered twins and become a living legend.

The Attack episode occurs earlier in *Dune* than in *Norstrilia*; but curiously, Herbert places a marker later in the text that iterates the 'attack sparrows' of *Norstrilia*'s episode.

Synchronicity

To belay suspicion that one author borrowed liberally from the other, we must briefly examine the sychronicity of composition and the simultaneous publication, first in magazine, then in book form, of *Norstrilia* and *Dune*. This must be distinctly understood to fully appreciate the astonishing number of textual concurrences to follow.

In February of 1957, Paul Linebarger ('Cordwainer Smith') took a visiting professorship at the Australian National University in Canberra, and his experiences there inspired him to begin constructing the novel *Norstrilia* (Elms, Canberra, pp. 47–9; Heje, p. 147). Meanwhile, Frank Herbert had begun research in Florence, Oregon on control of sand dunes for a never-published newspaper article that nevertheless inspired the setting of *Dune* (O'Reilly, ch. 03; B. Herbert, pp. 136ff). Both authors produced early versions of their novels, about 1958, that they then reworked extensively after having recognised the limitations of their approach: a hero assuming leadership of the disenfranchised for political purposes (Heje, pp. 146ff, esp. p. 150; O'Reilly, ch. 3). Ostensibly, final drafts of what we would today recognise as *Norstrilia* and *Dune* appeared in 1962 (Elms, Canberra, p. 51; O'Reilly, ch. 5).

The manuscript of *Norstrilia*, received by Smith's agent in April 1963, found publication as 'The Boy Who Bought Old Earth' in *Galaxy* for April 1964, and 'The Store of Heart's Desire' in *Worlds of If* the following month (Heje, p. 147, n. 2). Pyramid Books would also print *Norstrilia* in two parts, publishing the first half as *The Planet Buyer* (PB) in October 1964, and the second half as *The Underpeople* (UP) in November 1968.

Analog serialised *Dune* (DN) as *Dune World* from December 1963 through February 1964, and as *The Prophet of Dune* from January through May of 1965 (B. Herbert, pp. 540, 544). Twenty-two publishers had rejected *Dune* before Chilton of Philadelphia published it in 1965; in 1969, Putnam published *Dune Messiah* (DM) (*Galaxy*, July–November 1969, under this title), which must be seen as 'Book IV' of *Dune*, the culmination of the narrative of Paul Atreides (U. M. Kaufmann, p. 270a; O'Reilly, ch. 4).

Even given this necessarily cursory account of the composition and publication of the texts under consideration, one can ascertain the simultaneity, the Jungian synchronicity, of occurrence. Now let us consider the truly astounding concurrences between the texts themselves, in narrative framing, in their poetics, in scene and setting, and in plot sequence and specifics.

The narrative

An omniscient voice frames the narratives as legend from the far future — which writers on *Norstrilia* (set in the 151st century) claim for 'Oriental [. . .] technique' (Hellekson, pp. 5, 17) and 'Chinese [. . .] devices' (Clute, p. 1122a), and writers on *Dune* (102nd century) describe as 'hagiographic' (U. M. Kaufmann, p. 270b) and 'heroic' (O'Reilly, ch. 5). Both texts include songs and poetry, more common to fantasy epic than science fiction; both authors consciously play with poetic form in prose (O'Reilly, ch. 4; Clute, p. 1122b).

Although science fiction has often employed outrageously distant futures — Asimov's *Foundation* series comes to mind — one would have to look back to Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1930) and *Star Maker* (1937), or H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), to find such futures that consciously progress from and reference our own true history. And while the poetic inclusions certainly follow both Chinese epic (for example, *A Dream of Red Mansions* or *The Journey to the West* (Elms, Intro., p. x)) and Western heroic epic (as does Tolkien's Middle Earth (U. M. Kaufmann, p. 270b)), parallels to epic form in science fiction, before or since, remain rare — something our texts share more with one another than with science fiction as a genre. More oddly still, several songs and poems in each appear to cross-reference the two texts.[4]

Scene and setting

A 'medieval' galactic empire with millennial hereditary titles and eugenics programs blends intricate politics and emphatic religion. Technology has been legally limited, necessitating human modification and amplification, with emphasis on telepathic communication and control. And both works employ ornithopters, an outlandish inclusion that apparently beggars explanation. The Instrumentality of Man, with hereditary titles millennia old (Rod McBan CLI, whose great^{32}-grandfather established the Station of Doom on Planet Norstrilia (PB, p. 11)) and a noble class of Lords and Ladies, closely parallels the Padishah

Empire and hereditary titles and holdings millennia old (Castle Caladan in the Atreides Family for twenty-six generations (DN, p. 9)) with a noble class of Lords and Ladies. Both novels explore the ecology/economy and psychosociopolitical aspects of the desert world. Technology has been legally limited in both universes: the Clean Sweep (PB, pp. 17, 50, 54) of *Norstrilia* outlaws computers and luxuries, institutes eugenics and genetic manipulation, with the effect that telepathy becomes prevalent; in *Dune*, the Butlerian Jihad (DN, pp. 18, 513, 530) prohibits computers and limits technology, which necessitates eugenics programs and human modifications; telepathy becomes prevalent among human populations. Despite this prohibition, in each book the protagonist's family has atomic weapons (PB, p. 82; DN, pp. 25, 50).

Locale

The narratives take place on a desert world,[5] with grey skies and giant 'sick' fauna that produce a geriatric and mind-altering drug vital to the galactic system. The Norstrilians, primarily blue-eyed Australian stock, shepherd giant, virus-infected sheep, that must be 'turned' occasionally (PB, p. 37), and produce 'the santaclara drug' *stroon*, through exhudation and regurgitation; the drug cannot be synthesised, and has a form that, when mixed with Paradise VII honey, allows visions, and can never be exported — it's only for the initiated (PB, p. 11; UP, p. 26). Likewise, the blue-within-blue-eyed Fremen of Arrakis 'roll and turn' the giant sandworms in their riding (DN, p. 401) and harvest 'melange,' the *Spice* produced by the fungus-infected larval form of the sandworm. The Fremen use spice in its raw form in the Ritual of Kan — a form of the Water of Life that can never be exported or shared outside the sietch communities of Dune (DN, pp. 279ff).

All of the elements identified above would indicate these texts derive from a common source — a *quelle*. The authors' idiosyncrasies may certainly skew particular detail, but the essentials remain. Had the concurrences ended there, one might speculate on the intellectual climate of a given time in history. As it stands, a rather complex plot furthers the concurrences.

The Ordeal of the Green Box

Both *Norstrilia* (PB, pp. 12–22; 25–33) and *Dune* (DN, pp. 9–19; 28–34) open with an initiation rite,[6] an ordeal involving a green box into which the 15-year-old protagonist — who has special telepathic abilities — 'enters' without assurance of emerging unscathed. A poisoned point threatens his life upon failure. The Inquisitor has come on order from the central government to administer the test, for which each protagonist's female relatives have prepared him, literally 'dressed him up' in both. Much bustle and excitement follow, with the promise of the newly fêted protagonist's first off-world travel.

In *Norstrilia*, the green box takes the form of a cloaked traveling van, the Garden of Death, which flashes a green light at Rod to indicate he should enter.[7] His sixteenth birthday marks the time of the trial: therefore, he remains fifteen until passed. His 'kinswomen [. . .] barber and groom him', and 'prepared to dress him up for his trial', for which he has unusually heightened perception but still retains 'a little tiny fear [like] a midget pet in a miniature cage'. Rod meets Lord Redlady, the Inquisitor sent from the central government — the Instrumentality of Man — to test him; Rod notes Redlady's especially inflected voice. Shortly before, Rod's computer had made a point of the inflected speech of *hiering* and *spieking* — telepathic communication sharpened on Norstrilia, and used in the Ordeal. His computer had also touched on the subject of underpeople: animals engineered to look like humans. A green snake-soldier with a weapon and a hypodermic of poison guards Rod, 'hiss[ing]' menacingly when Redlady, with hand upraised, instructs him to 'Cover us' — which makes 'the hair on the back of [Rod's] neck rise'. The snake-soldier gives Rod an off-world pass to 'Manhome' — Earth — at the end of the Ordeal (failure would have resulted in the 'Giggle Room').

Three days of rambunctious revelry ensue; only when the week has passed will Rod remember the snake-man's gift, the day before his exodus, when Redlady asks him, 'What on Earth do you want?' to which Rod responds, '[a] genuine Cape Triangle,' a very rare and unusual 'stamp' (PB, p. 101).

In *Dune*, the green box of Paul's ordeal is literally a green box, with one end open. The Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam, the Inquisitor sent by the Padishah Emperor, travels with it in her cloak; during Paul's trial she holds a sharp, poisoned point at Paul's neck — the *gom jabbar* — 'the high-handed death'. The 'old crone', with 'hissing' robes, and 'birdbright eyes [. . .] predatory' 'like glittering jewels' (who is later described as 'curiously reptilian' (DM, p. 15)), tests whether Paul is animal or human: '"You've heard of animals chewing off a leg to escape a trap?"' she asks — accentuating the difference between real humans and subhumans — using 'the Voice' on him, a conditioned control. Paul conquers his fear with the Litany his mother had taught him, '"Fear is the little death [. . .];"' she also has dressed him up for the ordeal, picking out his clothing, and taught him the weirding ways to prepare him for the trial. Paul passes the Ordeal — he is 'already fifteen' — and much bustle and excitement ensues as he prepares for his 'first time off-planet' (DN, p. 52), 'a week' later [DN, pp. 36, 37).[8]

After the Ordeal, Paul asks Mohiam, 'What do you want?' and remarks on 'the stamp of strangeness' that she has put on him (DN p. 31). Paul longs to see the pilots of the 'Heighliners' (DN, p. 53), fish-like Guildsmen capable of folding space, of which he says much later 'I'll pull their fangs presently' (DN, p. 483) — which identifies them with the snake-men pilots of the 'automatic planoform ships' of Rod's experience in *Norstrilia*, who also fold space in a trance-state (UP, p. 137).

The Sharp Flying Attack

The second plot point occurs earlier in *Dune* (DN. pp. 72ff) than in *Norstrilia* (PB, pp. 75ff); but both occur directly after the protagonist takes possession of the planet wherein his main adventures lie: Earth for Rod, Arrakis for Paul. *Dune* reiterates the episode later in the narrative with the epigraph to the chapter of Liet-Kynes' death in the desert (DN, p. 279), which realigns *Dune*'s plot with that of *Norstrilia*. The internal elements of the episode still bear strong concordance, however. The protagonists are both said to be the nexus of their families' heritage. Both protagonists find themselves attacked and defenceless, without either weapon or shield, by a flying razor-sharp instrument of death remote controlled by a familiar rival. Both had been warned beforehand by a confederate of the Inquisitor, from the rose garden.

Roderick Frederick Ronald Arnold William MacArthur McBan CLI, 'the last surviving heir' in the vaunted line of McBans (PB, p. 18), has been up all night acquiring Old Earth through his computer. On a walkabout of the Station of Doom, his family holdings, he feels like 'sleeping right there' near the old MacArthur Oak (a non-native transplant from Old Earth).[9] His assailant, a close childhood rival, makes an assassination attempt through a remote-controlled 'razor-winged spear-beaked mad sparrow killbird'. Rod first becomes aware of the danger through the hysterical laughing call of the 'kookaburra', the Australian kingfisher,[10] heard in the oak. The mad sparrow killbird lacerates Rod's arm with its 'rhachis' and 'hyporhachis,' and he wonders how his arm could have gotten 'wet': the 'vane' of the killbird's wing has sliced open a vein. Rod finds himself with only a cannister to shield him, and only a belt-light as a weapon — an inadequate defence as the bird circles

the tree slowly, after stabbing Rod in the shoulder, its 'sword-beak gleam[ing] evilly in the weak sunshine'. 'The red sword-beak [. . .] probed abstract dimensions for a way to his brain or heart.' Lavinia's javelin pierces the bird's skull, through its beak; its 'eyes [. . .] looked blank'. (Rod notes Lavinia's 'deep, strange blue' eyes.) He had been warned that the Hon. Sec. [Honorary Secretary] Houghton Syme might try to attack him, by Mister and Owner Beasley (PB, pp. 39ff), one of the Inquisitor Redlady's compatriots in the rose garden van of Rod's ordeal — wherein Rod had remarked on '*roses*' (PB, p. 25).

On Arrakis, Jessica looks in on Paul in his bedchamber, and notes how his features represent a 'nexus' of his heritage (DN, p. 67). Paul's imported wooden headboard has a carving of a 'leaping fish' (attacking, spawning), whose 'one visible eye' controls the suspensor lights of the room. Paul, who had been 'feigning sleep', decides to explore his new surroundings. As he begins to do so, the headboard flips down and a flying 'suspensor hunter-seeker', a 'ravening sliver of metal', emerges. Paul has left his shield on the bed, and cannot use a lasgun near a field generator for fear of an explosive reaction. The remote-controlled assassin circles the bedroom. Paul knows someone must control it from nearby, and that the transmitter eye senses motion best in 'the dim light'. 'It could burrow into moving flesh and chew its way up nerve channels to the nearest vital organ.' The hunter-seeker 'arrow[s]' past Paul when the Shadout Mapes (he notes her strange 'blue-on-blue eyes') enters the room; he smashes its 'nose eye' and it '[goes] dead'.

Paul rushes the device to the conservatory — wherein Jessica remarks upon, among other plants, '*Even roses!*' — where his mother instructs him to submerse it in a pool (making Paul's arm wet). Jessica probes the drowned hunter-seeker with a leaf stem (*rachis*) — the veined fanleaf of a palm — upon which Lady Fenring, a Bene Gesserit sister and direct subordinate of the Inquisitor, had left her a coded message warning of an attack on Paul by a Harkonnen agent in the Atreides household.

Herbert places this episode earlier in *Dune*, as the Atreides have just been awarded Arrakis, but curiously placed a marker later in the plot sequence — thus realigned to *Norstrilia*'s plot sequence — in the epigraph to the chapter in which Liet-Kynes dies in the desert — a poem that strangely echoes Rod's experience:

> And I saw the sparrows swiftly approach,
> Bolder than the onrushing wolf.
> They spread in the tree of my youth.
> I heard the flock in my branches
> And was caught on their beaks and claws! (DN, p. 279)[11]

The Quarrel at the Dinner Table

The Quarrel at the Dinner Table episode occurs in each novel after a conference involving small projected figures and before an angry meeting involving an oblique reference to the Flying Dutchman Legend. The dinner itself contains a reference to the tragedy of a lost progenitor; a look inside the thoughts of those present by the protagonist; anger that tightens the stomach into a knot; and a hostile member of the financial institution challenging the protagonist in his new estate. The protagonist had wished to avoid the dinner, but his new status as heir apparent obligates him to attend.

In *Norstrilia* (PB, pp. 57–62), Rod has consulted his drama-cubes, looking for answers in the wisdom of the ancient artifacts; the 'drama-cubes' project 3D images above them, like 'a little stage' (PB, p. 50). He heads home, where dinner awaits him; beforehand, he had dreaded facing his household at dinner, but as Mister he is expected (PB, pp. 47, 55). At the dinner, his aunt/cousin Doris thanks 'the absent Queen', and later pines for the lost Rod McBan CL — Rod's father, who met a tragic end in space. Rod's telepathic block clears momentarily, and he sees 'rage', 'annoyance' and 'worry' in the thoughts of those present at the dinner. Bill, a sheep hand at the Station of Doom, has challenged Rod (which Rod provoked), claiming to be worth more on the 'Sydney 'Change' than Rod or all his land. Rod 'felt his stomach knot with anger'. Bill apologises presently. Rod departs to the Palace of the Governor of Night, an impregnable Daimoni building, where he will spend the night (PB, p. 62).

A short time after, in a conference of arguments, Rod is asked what he most wants on Earth: 'Cape Triangles' (PB, p. 101) is his response — postage stamps from the Cape of Good Hope, around which the Flying Dutchman forever plies the waters.

In *Dune*'s cognate episode (DN, pp. 134–53), Paul sits in on a security meeting with his father, the Duke Leto, and his advisers. They learn of the spice mining operation through 'solido tri-D projection(s)' (DN, p. 94), which produce small 3D images above the conference table. At a banquet arranged for that night by the Lady Jessica, the Duke remembers his father, tragically gored by a bull. Paul perceives the 'festering thoughts' of the people present, and 'hadn't wanted to attend [. . .], but his father had been firm'. The whole affair angers the Duke, he 'feeling rage tighten his stomach'. A representative of the Guild Bank on Arrakis insults Paul (which Paul provoked); the banker is made to apologise. Because of a perceived threat from the Harkonnens, the Ducal House will spend the night far below ground in protected bunkers.

In the chapter following, Jessica contends with the Duke's men, likening them to 'the men of the lost star-searcher, Ampoliros' (DN, p. 162), which Dune's glossary defines as 'the legendary "Flying Dutchman" of space' (DN, p. 523).

Cast Down from a Great Height to a Great Depth

The fourth plot correlation holds a central place in importance, so precisely detailed and deep as to be unmistakably part of the same tale, twice told. The episode covers several chapters, spanning the two volumes of *Norstrilia* (PB, pp. 115–56; UP, pp. 5–56), and comprising almost in its entirety Book II, 'Muad'Dib', in *Dune* (DN, pp. 237–395).

The long string of correlative details to this episode begins with cyclonic storms, the high place and the descent, prescience and the honey of Paradise, and our protagonist at the centre of it all. His companion throughout is a close female he shares physical characteristics with, a woman of red hair, green eyes and feline attributes, bred as a concubine for the nobility; she carries a child who has powerful telepathic gifts and is associated with 'the knife'; she speaks for the protagonist, and feints a faint to gain advantage over their captors. In these encounters, the protagonist's eye-colour changes — in a cross-referential, complementary way. Seafaring imagery abounds. A smell of spice engenders visions of riders on the backs of the giant fauna. An attack by giant fauna excites lysergic sensory confusion. Cross-referential songs are sung, the Song of Solomon evoked. Trust is engendered in a friendship without sex. And our protagonist — the hope of the downtrodden — takes a disguise as one of the underclass. The long episode ends with a meal, and the mention of fish.

This episode encompasses so much space in the texts, and so much time in the events, that a point-by-point identification and analysis of the correspondences would better illustrate the concurrences in their sequence than a paragraph devoted to each separate narrative.[12]

As this episode begins, Rod has gone into exile for a year on Mars,[13] and has come through it physically changed; Paul is just beginning his 40 days and 40 nights in the desert, and will go underground for two years, coming out a changed man emotionally and psychically, as well as physically. While Smith (curiously) never mentions Rod's eye colour before Dr Vomact changes them to

green for his Australian cat-man disguise, he is a 'pretty boy' (PB, p. 22) and has 'thick, yellow hair' (PB, p. 21; UP, p. 17, 'yellow-haired', twice). The two people he is closest to on Norstrilia — Beasley and Lavinia — have blue eyes (PB, p. 45), Lavinia's 'deep [and] strange' (PB, p. 86); and Rod and his family, to which Lavinia belongs, can all see in the 'ultraviolet' (PB, pp. 67–8). Herbert does mention Paul's eye colour: it is green, like his mother's (DN, pp. 13, 67); and they change to the blue-within-blue of the Ibad after a steady diet saturated with melange (DN, p. 393), in his Fremen disguise as Muad'Dib, the kangaroo rat (DN, p. 316).

Rod, on Mars, recalls the unique experience of hurricanes on Norstrilia when the weather machines had once failed (PB, p. 115); even as Paul and Jessica escape in their ornithopter through a coriolus storm to the Arrakeen desert (DN, pp. 237–8; 249–50). Both Rod and Paul are assumed dead at this point, which they used as means for their protection (PB, p. 94; DN, p. 423). In *Norstrilia*, C'mell sings Rod 'The Tower Song' (PB, p. 137) on their way from Mars to Earth: very evocative of the coriolus ordeal in *Dune*. In the corresponding section of *Dune*, Gurney Halleck sings a song called 'My Woman' (DN, p. 269), very reminiscent and descriptive of Rod's view of C'mell looking out the window of the planoship (PB, pp. 135–7). At Spaceport Tower (PB, pp. 138–43), Rod smells salt, 'something strange [. . .] sweet-clear to the nostrils'; shortly thereafter, when a giant spider, 'like a mowing machine', attacks one of Rod's doubles, Rod 'shriek[s] [. . .] a fierce red roar', which stuns, then kills, the spider (PB, pp. 141–3).[14] Paul and Jessica, under attack by a giant sandworm, smell cinnamon, which 'yell[s] in their nostrils' (DN, p. 275). After the spider attack, Rod has the unlikely vision of 'C'mell directing a mowing machine as she walk[s] across a giant sheep, shearing it' (PB, p. 149). Likewise, Jessica sees a 'mirage' of 'Fremen riding on the back of a giant worm' (DN, p. 300). Paul has 'prescience' of himself as history's 'nexus' (DN, pp. 305ff); Rod is said by the Abba-dingo 'prediction machine' to be 'at the center of it all' (PB, p. 156).

The travelling party is captured, and the red-haired, green- eyed, feline concubine speaks for them all (PB, p. 143; DN, p. 287). C'mell speaks of men whose 'skin was lightly tinged with blue' (PB, p. 144), who are expert fighters and can make themselves invisible (Rod finds this humorous, as it is a Norstrilian defence subterfuge); Jessica and Paul encounter parties of Fremen — blue-within-blue eyes, saturated in spice — who move like 'ghostly feluccas' (DN, p. 296) cognate to Rod's view of sea-going ships from Spaceport (PB p. 138)) over the dunes (dunes earlier described in oceanic terminology: 'riptide', 'trough of a wave', 'cresting sand' (DN, pp. 274–6)), 'with only the sounds natural' to the desert (DN, p. 296; also, before, p. 278; and again, DN, p. 350) (that is, *invisible*). As she is held, C'mell 'faints' in order to better receive telepathic instructions from her superiors (PB, p. 148); Jessica 'feints' a faint to catch her captors off guard (DN, pp. 289–90). C'mell is 'mothering and tender' towards Rod, and carries A'gentur (an 'ape-like monkey', or gibbon) everywhere (UP, pp. 7–8; 41, 44, 47) like a baby (UP, p. 56) — he is a surgeon and the son of a prophet of the underpeople, with great psychic powers (UP, pp. 22, 36); Jessica is with child, carrying Alia-of-the-Knife, which Paul perceives (DN, p. 255); Alia is Paul's full-blood sister, and due to Jessica's ingestion of raw Spice, will become strangely gifted psychically, prenatally (DN, p. 365). Rod is to be taken to the Down-deep-downdeep of the Underpeople (PB, p. 150); Paul is taken to the sietches — the underground caverns of the Fremen (DN, pp. 293ff).

In the tubes of Spaceport pillar, C'mell suddenly bares her breasts to Rod, and asks if he would like to take her (UP, p. 40). In *Dune*, a passage redolent of the Song of Solomon occurs, the first meeting of Paul and Chani: Chani 'moved like a gazelle, dancing over the rocks' — Paul and Jessica had come up stairs cut into the rock cliff face (DN, pp. 277ff) to a secret place of the Fremen, under 'the hoop-wheel face of the second moon' (DN p. 286) — and Paul recalls the dream of Chani's face back on Caladan', as he meets her 'above his concealing cleft' (DN, p. 294).[15]

C'mell follows up with a question: 'Do you trust me, Rod?' (UP, p. 41) and speaks of a 'friendliness [. . .] more than sex' (UP 43). After some sexual tension between Jessica and Stilgar of the Sietch Tabr (described here, respectively, as having 'feline prudence' and as 'cat-stalking'), Stilgar proposes a 'friendship (. . .] without demand for the huddlings of sex', and asks 'Do you trust me?' (DN, pp. 302, 306).

Rod is 'the hope of the Underpeople', says Lord Jestocost (UP, p. 40); he has ten doubles (see PB, p. 136), and is reported by Jestocost to be many places at one time (UP, p. 83). Paul is the Lisan al Gaib, the 'hope of the Fremen', says Stilgar (DN, p. 299); he is also the Kwisatz Haderach, 'one who can be many places at once' (DN, p. 519).

Lavinia, Rod's future wife back on Norstrilia, fears Rod is dead; aunt/cousin Doris gives her a 'small spoon' of 'Paradise VII honey' mixed with Stroon to give her clearer extra-sensory perception (UP, p. 26); 'half-refined stroon [. . .] never sold off-planet' (PB, p. 11). Chani, Paul's future mate (to whom he inadvertently proposes here), gives him his water marker rings, measured in 'drachms', down in the sietch with the 'dark honeycomb lattice' (DN, pp. 324–6). In recalling this night somewhat later (DN p. 394), Paul remembers the song Chani sang for him, including the line: 'Have no taste for Paradise this night' — under the influence of the 'smell of the pre-Spice mass' (DN, p. 395).

Rod, awaiting his revelatory meeting with the Catmaster C'william in Hate Hall, a sort of theatre-in-the-round, has a sudden craving for 'fish' (UP, pp. 50, 67).

Paul, before his awakening in the amphitheatre, his 'theater of processes' (DN, p. 390), feels the Fremen 'fishing for him' (DN, p. 356). 'Get the food', Paul says. 'I'm hungry'; and Harah — the wife he inherited — 'brings food' (DN, p. 357).

The Cave of Birds, Far Underground

This plot sequence involves two fights — one minor, one major (involving poison) — which in *Norstrilia* come in between Rod's visit to Hate Hall and E'telekeli's cavern in 'Birds, Far Underground', and which in *Dune* bracket Paul's journey deep into the Cave of Birds. Each is the only man ever to survive a visit to the depths. Each has abandonment issues with his parents. Each weds an underclass woman who bears children — a non-legal marriage to a concubine. The protagonists end by empowering the underpeople, but somewhat reluctantly; they cannot control their own destinies, but must direct them to less harmful ends. The E'telekeli (entelechy) and the Kwisatz Haderach each represent the end result of a special breeding program, premature and more powerful than anticipated.

Rod's experiences in Hate Hall, a 'circular' space with a 'high ceiling' (UP, pp. 68–74) — a sort of theatre-in-the-round wherein sound thunders and bright images appear — closely resembles Jessica and Paul's first experiences with the Water of Life, 'Kan', in the 'acoustical horn' of the Sietch (DN, pp. 359–453), a 'dome-ceilinged space' (DN, p. 430) that can produce '[a] deafening roar'.[16] In *Dune*, 'hate' appears four times in this sequence (DN, pp. 353, 390), reiterated by Paul twice later when he describes his feelings of abandonment regarding his parents (DN, p. 445). In *Norstrilia*, Rod repeats the verb 'hate' six times in referring to his abandonment by his parents. He recalls the 'artificial drownings' of his rebirths, and comes to see '[h]is own naked life [lying] before him like a freshly dissected cadaver' at the end of the experience; Jessica, with Paul present,

becomes aware of the worm drowning process in the making of 'Kan'; late in this sequence, as Paul changes the Water of Life, '[h]e appears dead to the untrained eye', his 'skin [looks] waxen, rigid', his 'features so peaceful in this rigid repose'.

Jessica experiences an ancestral regression of the Fremen, even before their immigration to Dune, as does Rod of his Norstrilian ancestors. He 'felt blind [in the beginning] as though he had never seen'; staring 'onto the nothing which was bleaker than blindness' — even as Jessica falls into a 'pit of blackness'. Rod sees, in the human regression, the 'rainmen of Amazonas Triste', one of whom — Tostig Amaral — is to attack him later on; similarly, lost in the Spice reverie, Paul sees the future, sees Feyd-Rautha '[flash] toward him like a deadly blade'. Both Rod and Paul end their first encounters in the depths in tears.

Later, Rod and Paul will go deeper into the Cave of Birds — Rod to E'telekeli the Eagle-man's realm in 'Birds, Far Underground' — but first we'll examine the protagonists' fight scenes, which share astonishing parallels.

A reiteration of Rod's earlier fish dinner is closely followed by a knife-fight in the 'Upshaft' tube (UP, pp. 95–7), wherein the combatants are harnessed in close quarters by 'magnet-belt[s]' around their waists; 'Red-cloak',[17] Rod's 'arrogant' assailant, dies with 'his head at an odd angle'; a companion 'float[s] upside down, his [. . .] limp legs swinging out at odd angles'. This sequence closely matches Paul's knife-fight in a 'ring' with the 'sneer[ing]' Jamis, they wearing only, respectively, 'fighting trunks' and a 'loincloth' (DN, pp. 309–14), wherein Paul kills his opponent with a 'thrust upward'. Jamis falls 'like a limp rag, face down, gasp[s] once and turn[s] his face toward Paul'.

The second fight stages nearly identically in the two novels. *Dune* separates the outcome and the presence of poison from the main staging with the antagonist from the 'theatre' vision, but otherwise the incidents play out identically.

Rod finds C'mell held hostage in Room 9 of the Hostel of Singing Birds (which both evokes *Dune*'s Cave of Birds and Rod's imminent journey to the Caverns of E'telekeli far underground) by Tostig Amaral, a rainman from Amazonas Triste, who looks like 'a bundle of wet rags' (UP, p. 87) from a police surveillance camera. He has a knife. C'mell stands immobilised, unable to speak or use her psychic talents (UP, pp. 101–8). 'Rod spoke with deliberate calm'; he gives Tostig Amaral one warning: 'I hereby put you in danger'. 'Amaral stared at him, the evil knife point flickering in his hand like the flame atop a candle' (UP, p. 104). Rod encounters (in fact, later cannot rid himself of) the 'sticky sweet rotten smell' of Amaral, when Amaral 'quivers' and 'tenses' his skin of mucus membrane.

Rod cuts Tostig Amaral 'from clavicle to clavicle' with Amaral's own knife. Amaral just stands there, and does not act. 'The "wet black suit" collapsed as Amaral died on the floor.'

Gurney Halleck, a 'rolling', 'ugly lump of a man', a man of '*humors*' (DN, pp. 39–40), holds Jessica hostage, with a knife, in a room of 'hangings' and '[d]raperies' (DN, pp. 442–5) — the 'rags' of Tostig Amaral (who has his own 'humors'). She is immobilised and unable to use her special talents — the Voice, prana-bindu muscular control — on threat of sudden death. '[Paul] spoke in deadly quiet [. . .] the monotone stillness of his words [. . .]: "If you harm my mother [. . .] I'll have your blood".' Paul continues to argue with Gurney, both their knives drawn: '"You have not seen her eyes stab flame [. . .]"' (DN, p. 444). '"[Y]ou could tell a Harkonnen trick by the stink they left on it" [. . .],' he reasons, as Gurney's 'arm tighten[s] against [Jessica's] throat', 'trembles' and 'cease[s] its trembling'.

Gurney capitulates: he 'stood in the same spot [. . .] pulled the robe away from his breast to expose the slick grayness of an issue stillsuit [. . .]: "Put your knife right here in my breast,"' says he, '"I've besmirched my name."'

In *Dune*, the major fight culminates in the encounter with Feyd-Rautha, who has poisoned Paul (à la *Hamlet*) with a blade from the Emperor's armory. Gurney calls Feyd '"a beast [. . .] contaminated".' Paul counters '"But this being has human shape, Gurney."' Paul 'catfooted' forward during the fight, and a knife thrust upward under Feyd's chin ends it all. Paul had become aware of humankind, at this moment in history, 'experiencing a kind of sexual heat that could over-ride any barrier' (DN, pp. 492–4).

In *Norstrilia*, Rod 'could sense the kinds of pleasure and cruelty which Amaral had experienced [. . .] — this monster from the stars, man though he might be, of the old true human stock'. Rod feels a 'fury rising in him', 'hot', 'quick' and 'greedy as [. . .] love'. He breaks free of Tostig's toxic paralysis when he sees C'mell blanch. 'Is this what people call love?' he wonders (UP, pp. 103–5).

An intoxicating water imbues the Cave of Birds, Far Underground at the culmination of this episode (UP, pp. 116–37; DN, pp. 358–458), a water that makes one 'stumble' and 'stagger'. Both protagonists take foolhardy and precipitous actions that render them unconscious, in a suicidal attempt to reach depths that no *man* has ever achieved. A marriage of youth and the revelation of the underpeople as the real government and power of the known political landscape also play a part. The messiah controls the wealth of the universe.

In *Norstrilia*, Rod travels with C'mell through cavernous storerooms on his way to the Aitch Eye, the E'telekeli in the depths of the earth, 'close to the Moho'.[18] C'mell tells him that '[a]ll men die here'; and yet, Rod is 'the first human ever to get into the depths'. At Rod's request, the E'telekeli shuts out worshippers' chants by drawing a mathematical formula in the air. Rod 'stumble[s] to his feet', and 'on his feet', and takes several drinks from 'a beaker of very cold water' — which (oddly) becomes 'a carafe' in subsequent iterations. After his second drink, Rod will '"have [C'mell], in a linked dream, her mind to [his], for [. . .] about a thousand years",' says E'telekeli, who explains to Rod the '"immensity of time before we all pour into a common destiny"'. During this sequence in the sacred underground, a winged canopy covers Rod, the wings of E'telekeli, following a poem fragment from Swinburne:

> Here now in his triumph where all
> things falter,
> Stretched out on the spoils that his
> own hand spread,
> As a god self-slain on his own
> strange altar, [. . .]'

The poem closely mimics Paul's experience in *Dune* as he 'lay alone in the Cave of Birds beneath the kiswa hangings of an inner cell' (DN, p. 449, epigram) as one dead 'beneath heavy draperies' — most likely like the ones in the outer room, '[w]oven hangings with the red figure of a hawk', the heraldic emblem of the Atreides. To arrive here, 'Paul [had] pressed [. . .] toward the depths of the cavern' into a 'storeroom' off the old Sayyadina's alcove in the Cave of Birds. Paul takes unrefined Spice, and falls unconscious. As the Reverend Mother Ramallo reminds Jessica in the first encounter with the Water of Life,[19] having discovered the life force of Alia inside Jessica: 'This would have killed a male fetus.' Very early on, Paul had discussed the Kwisatz Haderach — the male Bene Gesserit — with the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam and Jessica. '"She said those who tried for it died"' (see DN, pp. 19, 33). And yet, Paul has changed the Water of Life and survived — 'the raw Water of the Maker', 'the sacred water'. '"He is a man, yet he sees through the Water of Life."' After Paul's first encoun-

ter with the water, '[h]is legs [are] remote and rubbery [and he] stumble[s]', due to a gush of the sacred water from a 'horn-spout of a watersack'. As the beaker of Rod's experience becomes a carafe, so the watersack of Paul's earlier experience becomes 'the ewer' from which he 'drank the sacred water' and transformed its poison. He 'dip[s] his hand into the ewer' again and in his reverie forces 'a rapport: a sense- sharing of the entire being' upon Jessica — after which Jessica 'stagger[s] up and back'. Like the rapport of the Reverend Mother 'pour[ed] out through [Jessica's] memories [. . .] the memory-mind encapsulated within her', so Paul and Jessica share the history of all humankind.

At the beginning of the protagonists' descent into the Cave of Birds, both feel used by their red-haired, green-eyed cohorts: Rod 'can't believe' C'mell is using him for the Insurgency, 'the secret government of the Underpeople;' that the 'underpeople are [. . .] getting to be the master of men!' They give humans back their past, through the Archives of the Musée de Mali, and the Rediscovery of Man. Similarly, Paul comes to the realisation that 'My mother is my enemy' (DN, p. 330) — as she later admits, 'I've used you and twisted you and manipulated you to set you on a course of my choosing . . . [sic].' The epigraph 'Muad' Dib's Secret Message to the Landsraad' in part asks: '"Who are the rabble and who are the ruled?"'; the Fremen, at Paul's behest, study 'shigawire orbs' of ancient history from 'the Golden Age of Earth' (DM, p. 106). Paul notes later, when he is Emperor, 'My Government is the economy' (DM, p. 173) — the Spice Trade that he can destroy, thereby effectively controlling it. The Fremen rule the universe.

Which brings us to the 'E'telekeli' of *Norstrilia* and the 'Kwisatz Haderach' of *Dune*: E'telekeli is a bird-man, an eagle, who is the divine, whose name cannot be said aloud; the name suggests 'entelechy', 'the final achievement', 'the end result' or 'full realization' — just as the Kwisatz Haderach represents the end product of Bene Gesserit eugenics, and is an Atreides, whose heraldic emblem is the red hawk, who (in the person of Paul) has aquiline features, who is a prophet, and a god. The Greek roots of 'entelechy' — *tele* and *ekhion* — come from the Indo-European roots *k*^{w}*el* and *segh*, respectively,[20] which very well could give us 'Kwisatz'.

Coda: The profits of doom and the prophet of Dune

As is characteristic of the *Dune* saga, it treats through 'lengthy narrative' (U. M. Kaufmann) what *Norstrilia* covers with brevity. *Dune/Dune Messiah* as one novel (in four 'Books'), following Paul Atreides from youth to death (U. M. Kaufmann), is two-and-a-half times as long as *Norstrilia*. So it should come as no surprise to see elements of the last two chapters of *Norstrilia*, 35 pages, strewn across 250 pages of *Dune Messiah*, as we do.

Paul gives a short oath to 'Gods below!'[21] (DM, p. 27), The Maker, Shaihulud; E'telekeli is that god [Lewis], 'the bird beneath the ground,' 'the Holy Insurgency' itself (UP, p. 120), the 'master of the underworld' (UP, p. 142) — who is the embodiment of the Tleilaxu Theorem that heads the second chapter of *Dune Messiah*, the 'unconscious force which can block, betray or countermand almost any conscious intention' (DM, p. 27).

In 'His Own Strange Altar', as Rod sees E-ikasus (L: 'He who is cast down'),[22] 'stark naked and completely unembarrased' in close proximity, and does not recognise him as the transformed A'gentur (L: '*secret police* under the Empire') of his earlier adventures (UP, p. 127), so Paul sees his sister Alia (L: 'from a different way') in her own temple, the Fane of the Oracle, 'naked' (DM, pp. 89, 91), and 'conscious of her nudity, [she] found the idea amusing' (DM, p. 92); but Paul 'found it odd that he could look at a person who was this close to him and no longer recognize her in the identity framework which had seemed so fixed and familiar' (DM, 92).

As E'telekeli speaks to his daughter, E-lamelanie, who laments Rod's absence, about 'the world of the sign of the Fish, which none of us controls' (UP, p. 150), so Duncan remembers the words of Paul, 'remembering a day when he'd taken the child Paul to the sea market on Caladan' and 'recalled Paul's words' — '"There are problems in this universe for which there are no answers"' — when '[m]emory music faded', 'Gurney Halleck playing music of the baliset' (DM, p. 250). Before E- lamelanie plays her 'ancient' 'stringed instrument' (UP, pp. 150–1), she speaks of 'the Promised One' that 'the robot, the rat and the Copt all agreed [. . .] would come' (UP, p. 150): Duncan had been reconfigured as a Ghola (read: golem) mentat, with metal Tleilaxu (Ixtian) eyes: a robot, in all but name; Paul Muad'Dib was named for the 'kangaroo rat', the desert rat; and Stilgar was of the people of the Misr (DN, p. 360, says the Rev. Mother Ramallo), which is Egypt, wherein live the Copts (DM, pp. 250–2).[23]

In *Norstrilia*, as they approach the Garden of Death to see how their twins fared, Rod warns Lavinia — who had a 'mad lost father' (PB, p. 85) — not to run, that 'McBans never run — from nothing, and to nothing!' (UP, pp. 145, 159). In *Dune*, Paul's mate Chani — whose father Liet-Kynes died mad in the desert (DN, p. 285) — has just died bearing their twins (DM, pp. 236, 238ff; 'she carried twins,' DM, p. 192); and Duncan Idaho warns Paul, as they stand outside in the garden of Sietch Tabr, to run from imminent danger (his own conditioning as Hayt to kill Paul): '"We will not run [says Paul]. We'll move with dignity. We'll do what must be done"' (DM, p. 237; see DM, p. 249 for more of the garden). Rod and Lavinia have lost a son, as had Paul and Chani at the end of *Dune* (DN, p. 467), but have their daughter Casheba who passed the test before (UP, pp. 158–9); Paul is left with twins Leto II and Ghanima, a boy and a girl (DM, p. 246).

Rod's Stroon wealth controls the Instrumentality, and has set up 'the One Hundred and Fifty fund', a foundation administered by E'telekeli and his son and daughter, E-ikasus and E- lamelanie (UP, p. 130). Paul's Spice wealth and Quizarate control the Empire, for which Alia becomes regent until the majority of Leto II and Ghanima (DM, p. 253).

Conclusions

It seems no two texts could have such close identity of setting, structure and detail and have come together simultaneously by chance. Though I argue for a common precursor, it seems to me now — given the synchronous composition and the sheer number of concurrences of plot and detail — that were there in fact extant a common source, a *quelle*; both authors by necessity must have lifted it whole from the source, for so many truly idiosyncratic details of narrative setting and plot to concur.

One might say, given a particular intellectual climate, that two intelligent authors interested in the politics and the sociology of oppressed groups, or the political economics of a scarce resource, might write similarly themed narratives at a given point in history. For those two narratives to follow a similar prehistory and narrative frame, set in a desert world, and include such marvellous and outré elements as ornithopters and giant regurgitant fauna that produce a geriatric and consciousness-altering drug economically vital to a space-faring feudal society, would strongly suggest a common genesis. Now add to this common setting a protagonist who endures an ordeal of venom from the central government's telepathic inquisitor — involving a green box and an oblique warning from a secret rose-garden — only to be attacked by a mad, ravening killsparrow upon possession of a new planet, and who cavorts about the desert and the underworld with a red-haired, green-eyed feline concubine; a protagonist whose eyes change colour when he takes up the disguise of the underpeople — and their cause; a protagonist thought to be the Promised One from the Outer

World, who mates in the underworld, but legally marries in his own fief of Doom/Dune, has twins, has lost a son, and ends up with a girl and a boy; a protagonist whose wealth and cunning control the known universe at the end of the narrative.

To invoke Lord Raglan or Joseph Campbell, given all the close congruences, nearly identical phrases, and unique (though shared) details, would seem disingenuous at this point, even given the authors' own assertions. The similarities argue for a common template, to be sure; but the Hero Myth paints with too broad a stroke. The similar details of these narratives share an idiosyncrasy, and yet a near-identity. The differences must be laid at the feet of the individual authors.

It is conceivable that, as Paul Linebarger had converted Arthur Rimbaud's poem 'Le bateau ivre' into the short story 'Drunkboat', with 'Artyr Rambo' as protagonist (C. Smith, Prol., p. 10; Elms, Intro., p. x; Suvin, p. 207), and as Frank Herbert, according to his son, author Brian Herbert, once demonstrated how *Dune* had emerged from Japanese verse forms (B. Herbert, p. 208), the authors could have adapted a long poem, whose phrases or words suggested the many details common to both novels. Their use of poem and song in the texts would support such a premise, and may provide a promising lead. As *The Underpeople* contains a Swinburne fragment, and that poet admired Baudelaire and the Symbolists, as well as the Pre-Raphaelites, this direction may provide the better lead in determining a possible precursor to *Norstrilia* and *Dune* in the annals of poetry, rather than prose narrative or mythology.

Failing that, we must accept the uncanny in the phenomenal world to explain such a synchronous coincidence of texts.

— Harry Hennessey Buerkett 2006

Notes

1 'Yes, I knew both Frank Herbert and Paul Linebarger (aka Cordwainer Smith) pretty well, and truthfully I cannot think of much they had in common — other, that is, than the great gift for writing they shared [. . .]. I'm pretty sure they never met. Paul wouldn't have allowed it' (Pohl).

2 'Ornithopter' has been attested since 1908 in the *OED*. And though examples of flapping-wing craft appear in nineteenth century SF (for example, George Griffith (1857–1906)), I have yet to find any called 'ornithopters'. Samuel Delany (p. 286) attributes them to Cordwainer Smith (which might surprise the fanatical Fedaykin of *Dune*).

3 The 'episodes' (in caps) represent subheadings of this paper, which will be examined in detail below — used here for ease of reference.

4 Other cross-fertilisation incidentals include: multiples of 18 at the inception of each novel (in *Norstrilia*, an '1800 ton sheep' that is near a 'little town eighteen kilometers away' (PB, p. 22); beer boosted to 108 proof (PB, p. 34); 18 kinds of Norstrilian knowledge (PB, p. 77); in *Dune*, Paul was 'born in the 57th year of the Padishah Emperor, Shaddam IV' and is 15 when the narrative begins: 57 + 15 = 72 18 = 4; the Orange Catholic Bible given to Paul by Dr Yueh has 1800 pages (DN, p. 46 — a cognate to Rod's McBan computer, his mentor, which is 'red' (PB, p. 14) and has '66 panels' (PB, p. 70) — the Holy Bible has 66 Books); *Dune Messiah* brings in the tarot (DM, p. 11), and in the Chinese tarot, the Moon is the XVIIIth Major Arcana and represents deception, obscurity, intuition, disillusionment, danger, bad influence, ulterior motive and false friends (Kaplan, p. 9); Yueh [*yue*) in Chinese means 'moon' (Eberhard, p. 193)); while Norstrilia has an Australian shepherd society, *Dune* has two characters caught in contemplative 'woolgathering' (DN, pp. 37, 65), 'sheep-faced' members of the Houses Minor (DN, p. 338), 'cloud fleece' on Dune's horizon (DN, p. 447), and 'the wolf among the sheep' (DM, p. 29), who is Paul; the Padishah Emperor hails from the House of Corrino: a conflation of the names of the world's two most popular sheep breeds: the Corriedale and the Merino ('Merino cross breeds'); a 'Duncan' would be at home with 'MacArthurs' and 'McBans'; Wellington Yueh's given name is the capital of New Zealand; going the other way, *Norstrilia* evokes the middle-eastern milieu of *Dune* in the 'Palace of Khufu (Cheops)' (PB, p. 61), 'the Copt' and 'ziggurats' (UP, pp. 84–5), and a 'harem' and 'turban' (UP, p. 88), C'mell's hair 'tied [. . .] up in a turban' (UP, p. 118); the Palace of Khufu had been modeled on 'the great temple of Diana of the Ephesians' (PB, p. 63); Gurney Halleck sings 'Galacian Girls' to Paul early on (DN, p. 40): Ephesians is the tenth Epistle of the Apostle Paul; Galatians is the ninth.

5 Herbert based his desert world in part on the Gobi, the Kalahari and the Australian Outback (B. Herbert, p. 181; O'Reilly, ch. 3); '*Norstrilia*, however, like all of Paul's [Cordwainer Smith's] work, was a sort of political satire, [. . .] largely Egyptian or general Middle Eastern [. . .]' (Pohl).

6 The number 15 also plays a rôle: both protagonists are 15; Norstrilia's Queen has been gone for 15,000 years (PB, p. 14); the 'green metal cube' of Paul's ordeal is 'fifteen centimeters on a side' (DN, p. 13). The XVth Major Arcana of the Chinese tarot is the Devil (Kaplan, p. 8).

7 '[A] green light flash' passes Rod into 'a garden [of] bright green plants [. . .] green plants [that] were *roses*' (PB, p. 25), guarded by a snake-man with a 'green complexion' (PB, p. 33).

8 We first encounter 'St. Alia-of-the-Knife' (DN, p. 28 epigraph) before we even know Jessica carries her, just before the Atreides exodus to Arrakis; we first encounter her cognate in *Norstrilia*, A'gentur the surgeon, just before Rod's exodus to Earth (PB, pp. 102–3).

9 A 'glassy worm of a river-cover' courses through the Station of Doom, 'the humped long barrel-like line which kept the precious water from evaporating' (PB, p. 76).

10 The Kingfisher, which the Chinese call *fei-cui*, a bird associated with the felicities of the bed-chamber (Eberhard, p. 155): a symbol Linebarger would have known from his years in China and his study of Chinese language under Madame Sun (Elms, Creation, p. 266). See also 'Kingfishers'.

11 I hardly need point out that 'attack sparrows' do not, in ornithological fact, exist. 'Would you be afraid of a hawk with a sparrow's beak and claws?' (A. Kaufmann).

12 This allows for a closer examination than I feel warranted for the previous three (shorter) episodes, or the following two episodes — a technique that could prove overwhelming if overused.

13 See Brian Herbert on Dune as Mars — of course, Arrakis = Ares (L. borrowed word) = *aresco*, 'to become dry' (W. Smith).

14 Earlier, when they had just arrived on Arrakis, Jessica sees 'spice silos [. . .] with stilt-legged watchtowers [. . .] like so many startled spiders' (DN, p. 83).

15 Compare: Song of Solomon (KJV) 2:8–9: 'The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe [most versions have 'gazelle'] or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice' (DN, pp. 294, 298, 326); 2:14: 'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice [. . .]' (DN, p. 277, 294); 4:5: 'Thy

breasts are like two young roes [gazelles] that are twins [. . .]'; see also 7:3. The 'hoop-wheel moon' of this passage (DN, p. 286; (you will not find the adjective in any dictionary) suggests the hoopoe of Solomon and Sheba's amours, the bird that carried their secret messages — and like the kookaburra is a near-relative of the kingfisher ('Hoop'; 'Hoop Wheel'; 'Kingfishers').

16 Both novels curiously pair deadly danger with 'milky': *Norstrilia* with 'Bright-eyed robots [. . .] their milky eyes glowing' (UP, p. 54), repeated later in a vigilance robot's 'dreadful, milky eyes, always ready for disorder and death', watching Rod (UP, p. 92); in Hate Hall, Rod had watched his parents die, 'gone milky', vaporised in the vastnesses of space (UP, p. 73): *Dune* has the 'milky blade' of the crysknife (DN, p. 440) and the frightful 'tumescent white shapes flow[ing]' which Jessica sees in her vision of the place where only the Kwisatz Haderach may go (DN, p. 456); earlier, '[a] predatory bird [. . .] brought a stillness [. . .] so unuttered that the blue-milk moonlight could almost be heard flowing [. . .]' (DN, p. 278); and earlier still, Duke Leto, knowing his days are numbered, 'look[s] out the windows [. . .]. Milky light picked out a boiling of dust clouds that spilled over the blind canyons [. . .]' (DN, p. 110).

17 Red-coat = British soldier, during English Civil War caused by the arrogance of James I = 'Jamis' ('English Civil War').

18 The Mohorovicic discontinuity, about 20 miles down, separating the Earth's crust from its mantle ('Moho').

19 Wherein '[w]hirling silence settled around Jessica. "*Why is time suspended?*" An entire chain of molecules confronted her, and she' performs a complex chemical equation (DN, pp. 364–5).

20 *American Heritage Dictionary* ('Entelechy').

21 'Gods below!' In *Norstrilia* (PB, p. 41), Rod swears '"For sheep's sake, sir [. . .]!"' Beasley admonishes him: '"Never use the Lord's name unless you are talking to the Lord."' Beasley is the Guan-di of Chinese folklore and theater, 'portrayed [. . .] on horseback' (PB, p. 44) and 'instantly recognisable [*sic*] by his red face' (PB, p. 43) (Eberhard, p. 135).

22 E-ikasus: *eicio* — 'to cast out' + *casus* — 'fall; downfall' (W. Smith, *Latin–English Dictionary*, for this and subsequent Latin derivations). Any errors of interpretation are mine.

23 The rat, the Copt and the robot also appear as a textual cross-reference in the Fremen leaders 'Chatt, Korba and Otheym' (DN, p. 441), in that 'chatte' is French for 'cat' (cross-referencing Rod's Australian 'cat-man' to Paul's 'kangaroo rat' again), 'korban' (Gk) refers to an ancient Hebrew Temple rite, and the Coptic Church retains certain Mosaic practices, and an 'Othman' is an Ottoman Turk = 'automan' = 'automaton' (*Am. Her. Dict.*).

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The curious case of Roger Dard: Fandom, censorship and sex in the 1950s*

James Doig and Milan Smiljkovic

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Milan Smiljkovic, has an Arts degree (Painting and Printmaking) and a diploma in book binding. He has always had a passionate interest in fantastic and detective/mystery fiction, and loves ferreting in old bookshops, markets, and all sorts of unlikely places, seeking out choice items. Apart from working on the Bibliography of Fantastic Literature in Australia with James Doig, he is collaborating with James on editing a few collections of weird stories by forgotten Australian authors which will also include his illustrations. He lives in Perth and divides his time on working as a bookbinder, artist and writer. His other interests include cinema, television and collecting jazz records.

Editors' note: Many thanks to Kim Huett for providing the illustrations for this article.

One of the most interesting periods of Australian fantasy fandom was the 1950s. It was a period of real activity and growth where science fiction and fantasy fans throughout the country regularly met each other, corresponded, and put out feelers to the well-developed fan networks in the United States and UK. Ironically, this period of development took place against a backdrop of stringent censorship, where the Department of Trade and Customs actively seized imports of fantasy pulps and books and maintained a blacklist of prohibited titles. It is also a period that is particularly well documented; a number of the young fans from the period have now become established figures in Australian science fiction and fantasy, or have gone on to academia or other professions, and have written about their early experiences in fandom, where they met like-minded people. Of course, many of these early fans are now completely forgotten, and their writings, interests and struggles are almost completely lost to us; one such person is the Perth-based collector and fantasy fan, Roger Dard.

We first came across the name Roger Dard in the seminal 1940s English fanzine, *Fantasy Review*. Edited by Walter Gillings, *Fantasy Review* was a well-produced, digest-sized fanzine that included articles and reviews on science fiction, fantasy and horror. The magazine also included a classifieds section where fans (including Forrest J. Ackerman) advertised wants and sales. Roger Dard regularly advertised there, seeking back issues of *Weird Tales* and early Arkham House titles. What was especially curious, apart from the unusual name, was that he was from Perth, which in the 1940s and '50s was a very small, extremely isolated place — it seemed almost perverse that a fantasy fan, at that time a rare breed, should be active there.

Soon afterwards, our interest grew when we came across the following entry in Briney and Wood's *SF Bibliographies*:[2]

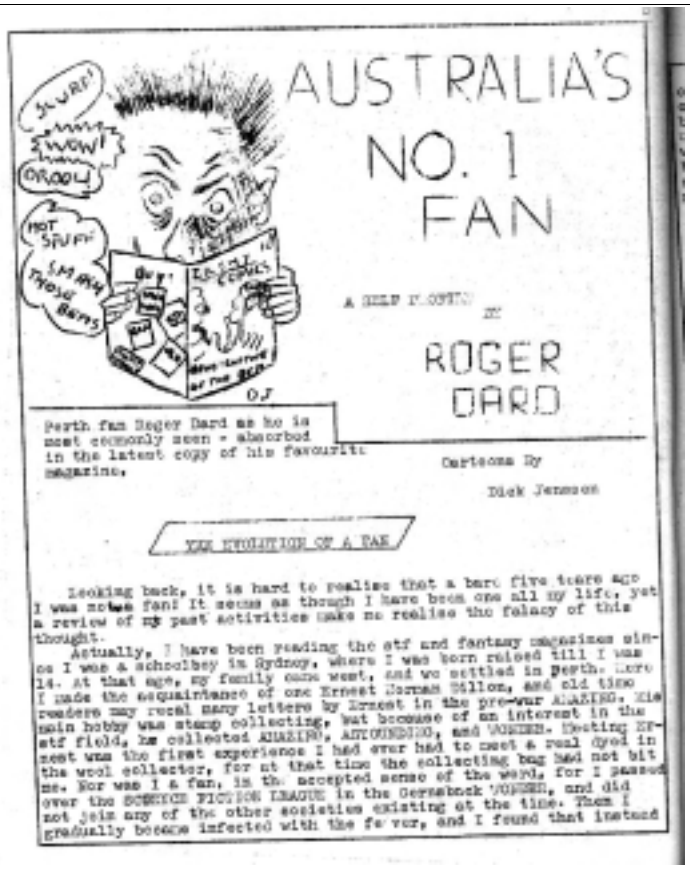
> FANTASTIC NOVELS: A CHECK LIST by Roger Dard, foreword by August Derleth (Dragon Press, Perth [Western Australia], 1957, printed booklet, price 2/6)

The only known photo of Roger Dard. (Supplied by Kim Huett.)

Just who was Roger Dard, and how did he manage to get the legendary co-founder of Arkham House to write the foreword to his booklet?

It turned out that Roger Dard was an active member of fantasy fandom in Australia and overseas, especially during the 1950s. Race Mathews mentions him in his article on Australian science fiction fandom, '*Whirlaway* to *Thrilling Wonder Stories*'.

> Roger turned out to be a fellow admirer of the Nelson Lee Library and also of the Aldine Press Dick Turpin Library, which had been a favourite of my grandfather's generation. I loaned him my Lees and was loaned in return pre- war issues of *Astounding* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. Roger was also my introduction to fanzines — magazines produced on an amateur basis by science fiction enthusiasts, and devoted to reviews, gossip and creative writing — through his sporadically published *Star Rover*. His interests as a collector included the American *Weird Tales*, which for some inscrutable reason the Customs authorities had classified as a prohibited import. Roger's efforts to reverse or circumvent the ban earned



AUSTRALIA'S NO. 1 FAN

ROGER DARD

Perth fan Roger Dard as he is most commonly seen - absorbed in the latest copy of his favourite magazine.

Cartoons By Dick Jenssen

THE EVOLUTION OF A FAN

Looking back, it is hard to realise that a bare five years ago I was not a fan! It seems as though I have been one all my life, yet a review of my past activities make me realise the fallacy of this thought.

Actually, I have been reading the stf and fantasy magazines since I was a schoolboy in Sydney, where I was born raised till I was 14. At that age, my family came west, and we settled in Perth. Here I made the acquaintance of one Ernest Norman Dillon, and old time readers may recal many letters by Ernest in the pre-war AMAZING. His main hobby was stamp collecting, but because of an interest in the stf field, he collected AMAZING, ASTOUNDING, and WONDER. Meeting Ernest was the first experience I had ever had to meet a real dyed in the wool collector, for at that time the collecting bug had not bit me. Nor was I a fan, in the accepted sense of the word, for I passed over the SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE in the Gernsback 'WONDER, and did not join any of the other societies existing at the time. Then I gradually became infected with the fever, and I found that instead

An autobiographical sketch by Roger Dard from the first issue of Lee Harding's fanzine *Perhaps*. Cartoon by Ditmar (Dick Jenssen). Image kindly supplied by Kim Huett.

> him a blacklisting on the part of officialdom, with the effect that his overseas parcels were routinely searched and items from them wherever possible confiscated. The persecution extended to the raiding of Roger's home and seizure of parts of his collection. The aim plainly was to cower him into submission. Observing his difficulties and frustrations was a significant contribution to my education in the need for constant vigilance against censorship and petty bureaucracy in all their forms.[2]

At that time, in the early 1950s, Dard was the Australian representative of Ken Slater's UK Operation Fantast network: one of the earliest attempts to link fans from across the world. In fact, the only Dard story we have been able to trace, 'The Undying One', a Lovecraft pastiche with references to Sax Rohmer and Thomas Burke, appeared in the December 1950 issue of *Operation Fantast*. Dard also wrote regularly for fanzines such as *Fantasy Times*, had correspondence published in contemporary pulps such as *Fantastic Adventures* and *Nebula*, and wrote a comprehensive 'Report From Australia' column in Robert Silverberg's fanzine, *Spaceship*.[3] The column makes interesting reading; in one of them he writes at length, and with humour, about the banning in Australia of Rosaleen Norton's book of weird art: '[t]o add to the tempest, word got around that the book portrayed sex with such abandon that an all-male staff of book binders had to be engaged'[4]. He also reveals that he has a framed copy of Norton's best-known picture, *Black Magic*, in his room, and observes tartly, 'while it has provoked a varied reaction, it has yet to cause anyone to faint or run screaming'.[5] Apart from his own fanzine *Star Rover*, which appeared occasionally in the early 1950s, Dard published an index, described above, of the pulp magazine *Fantastic Novels* in 1957. He also compiled an *Australia & New Zealand Fan Directory*, described in *Spaceship* as 'a listing of every known fan Down Under . . . Almost 200 names and addresses.' The directory was available in the United States but no copies appear to have survived.

As Dr Mathews indicates, Dard is best remembered for his ongoing run-in with Customs authorities in Perth. In his *Fancyclopedia*, Dick Eney writes in the entry on censorship, 'Roger Dard lost a set of pb's to this sort of conduct; he got some that were on the banned list, and the police and postal authorities rifled his home and confiscated some paperbacks by that noted subversive writer, A. Merritt'.[6] Harry Warner Jr, in his Hugo Award-winning *A Wealth of Fable*, writes, 'In 1952, Australian customs authorities mistook a British fan organization for something much wider in scope and intent than it really was. Dard resigned as Australian representative in the subsequent furore of rumours, mostly unfounded.'[7] Finally, in his draft history of fantasy fandom, Richard Lynch observes, 'Dard's main contribution to Australia fandom was his leading of the successful fight, in the early 1950s, to get the import ban lifted on *Weird Tales*, but the indifference from fandom he perceived for this left a sour taste in his mouth, and he was little heard from after that.'[8]

Literary censorship in Australia has a long and rich history that reaches far back into colonial times. For our purposes, the rules that had most impact on fantasy and horror literature were the *Customs (Literature Censorship) Regulations* 1937, and the Literature Censorship Board created under the regulations. Of special concern were the provisions that prohibited the importation of books and magazines that placed 'undue emphasis on horror' or which 'encouraged depravity' (whatever those phrases mean). Officials in the Department of Customs and Excise (or Customs and Trade before 1957) examined thousands of items that had been seized on suspicion of breaching the regulations and sent their recommendations to the Literature Censorship Board, which either released or banned the publications. A list of banned titles was maintained in each state and centrally in Canberra. Titles were added to the list, or subtracted from it, on being 'reviewed' in Canberra.

Records of the Department of Customs and Excise dealing with prohibited imports are now in the custody of the National Archives of Australia; among them is a file on Roger Dard that sheds some interesting light on his conflict with Customs and his claim to have single-handedly lifted the import ban on *Weird*

SEX and SCIENCE FICTION 17

BY ROGER DARD

A typical Dard article from Hal Shapiro's fanzine *Ice*, issue 2, probably published in 1952. Image kindly supplied by Kim Huett.

Tales.[9] The earliest document in the file is a four-page report on Dard, evidently requested by the Customs Collector. The report, dated 26 September 1961, was produced by a Customs Investigations Officer in Perth, and contains as much personal information as we are probably going to learn about Dard. He was born in Sydney on 8 August 1920 to Noor Dard (born in Pakistan) and Mary Dard (born in Dunedin, New Zealand). At the time of the report he was unmarried and living with his parents at 1 Money Street, Perth. He was a nightwatchman by occupation, a partner in Khan and Dard Night Watch Patrol Co. Pty. Ltd., 250 Beaufort Street, Perth.

The report indicates that since at least about 1950 Dard was more or less continually under the notice of Customs for importing prohibited publications, and his parcels were routinely checked. Between 1959 and 1961 Customs seized 38 separate items, including seven copies of the pulp magazine *Strange Stories*, a consignment of horror film magazines that included nos 2 and 3 of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, crime pulps such as *Startling Detective* and *Official Detective Stories*, a consignment of men's magazines (such as *The Cabaret Girls in 3-D*), twelve copies of *Mad* magazine, and several gramophone records and tape recordings 'of doubtful character'. The report concludes: 'It seems that Dard could fairly accurately be described merely as a "crank".'

Not surprisingly, Dard felt this treatment amounted to persecution, and he wrote several times to the Minister for Customs without result. He also wrote articles for Australian fanzines around this time, venting his feelings about the Department of Customs and Excise. Issue 3 of *Notes and Comment*, published by Ken Martin and Vol Molesworth, includes the following comment:

> From time to time, every prominent fan suffers a seizure. No, not a cardiac condition, but the seizure of a parcel of American magazines by the gentlemen (you name it) at the Customs Department. Some years ago, Vol Molesworth was the subject of a violent persecution, and Roger N. Dard in Perth was tearing his hair out in clumps. The Customs Dept. is again hot on Roger's scent. In the past three months they have seized and destroyed no less than ninety-eight (98) items. We do not object to the Customs seizing Weird Tales, Suspense, or any item actually on the banned list. But when they seize items like Astounding or Galaxy which are not banned but prohibited, we feel they are showing too much enthusiasm. Just how these gentlemen make their decisions is a question that arouses considerable interest. Among the items they seized from Dard was — a copy of Alice In Wonderland. Obscene? Seditious? Blasphemous?[10]

According to Lee Harding, Dard wrote an article, 'Witch Hunters of the Atomic Age', that appeared in the second issue of his fanzine *Perhaps* in 1953. The article generated a response from Walt Willis from Ireland and a rejoinder from Dard, both of which appeared in the third issue.

Early in 1962 Dard purchased an almost complete set of *Weird Tales* from a Canadian dealer (218 issues ranging from January 1925 to July 1953). In April he wrote to the Minister of Customs seeking clarification about the status of *Weird Tales* to determine whether he could import the set without fear of having it seized. Customs replied that only two issues of the magazine (July 1951 and March 1952) had been cleared in 1953, and that other issues would need to be individually reviewed. Consequently, when the magazines arrived in Perth, Customs officials sent the entire set to Canberra for review. The two reviews, by a clerk and his superior officer in the Department of Customs and Excise, make interesting reading:

> Magazine: 'Weird Tales'
> Published by: Popular Fiction Publishing Co. USA
> Eight packages submitted by Collector Western Australia on account of Mr Roger Dard.
>
> Administration Officer
> After an examination of the copies of Weird Tales, I found them to be very similar in type to the weird horror stories in previous copies of the magazine which were received.
>
> I don't think the magazine would appeal to very many people. Despite Mr Dard's notoriety with the Department in Western Australia he is obviously a keen collector of this type of publication and as these copies under review are not in general circulation and not readily available to the average reader I would recommend release of all copies.
>
> R.L Piemann
> Clerk 24.7.62
>
> Weird Tales
>
> First Asst. Comptroller General (Several)
>
> Please see folios 8 to 12.
>
> We prohibited some earlier editions of this publication. Subsequently the Minister released various editions to Dard because he was a collector. The Minister was not prepared to release the magazine for general distribution.
>
> On 28.9.52 Collections were advised of the release of a specific issue. Collections were also advised that future issues need not be submitted to this office for review.
>
> I have looked at quite a number of these publications. Over 200 have been submitted. By and large I would favour prohibition in terms of Item 22 on the grounds of undue emphasis on horror. A possibility of encouragement to depravity also exists.
>
> I agree with the view expressed by Mr Piemann and, having regard to our previous policy, I suggest release to Mr Dard. (The previously released samples seem no better or no worse than those previously under review.)
>
> C. S. Sheen
> 26/9/62
>
> RELEASE ALL COPIES
> [Signature] 26/9/62

Mr Piemann should be congratulated for exercising admirable restraint on this occasion, but this was not always the case.

What is perhaps surprising is that relatively low-level public servants within the Department of Customs and Excise were reviewing seized publications and recommending censorship action. It also appears that the Literature Censorship Board, if it had any role at all, merely rubber-stamped the recommendation of the officials.[11] No doubt the sheer volume of seized publications flowing in from the states meant that the Board could not review of them in detail, and delegated the more 'low-brow' publications to the Department. For this reason it was something of a lottery whether a publication was added to the banned list or released. For example, the third issue of *Shock* magazine (September 1960) was sent with Dard's collection of *Weird Tales* for review. *Shock* included reprints by celebrated authors such as Ray Bradbury ('Skeleton'), Roald Dahl ('Skin'), Ambrose Bierce ('A Bottomless Grave') and Jack London ('Moon-Face'), as well as original stories by Robert Bloch ('Final Performance'), Ralph E. Hayes ('The Witch') and Donald E. Westlake ('Cat Killers').[12] The Customs reviewer (not Piemann) wrote, 'The 15 stories which make up the magazine are written with varying competence, always with the accent, in many cases "undue empha-

sis", on horror'. The review is endorsed with the order 'Prohibit Item', and the issue was subsequently placed on the prohibited list. Given that *Weird Tales* frequently included stories, illustrations and cover art that must at the very least have been borderline, it is surprising that all of the issues were released. Dard's status as a serious collector appears to have helped sway the authorities.

However, Dard was wrong if he believed that he singlehandedly lifted the ban on *Weird Tales*. The review covered only the 218 issues that Dard imported (out of a total of 279 issues of *Weird Tales* that appeared between 1923 and 1954). More importantly, the decision to release those issues was always open to further review. When the well-known fantasy fan and collector R. E. Graham wanted to import a complete set of *Weird Tales* in 1964, four issues were sent to Canberra for review. A Customs official observed, 'Despite this action [i.e. the release of Dard's collection] the prohibition was not lifted generally and was judged to be still in force when Mr R. E. Graham's recent importation of 4 back numbers of the magazine took place. For this reason the review progressed and was followed by Mr Graham's reps. to the Collector NSW.' The four issues were released, and Graham was allowed to import a complete set of the magazine, but again only because he was a serious collector who would not be making the magazines generally available.

Following the release of his *Weird Tales* collection, Dard wrote to the Minister for Customs, Senator Henty, thanking him for releasing the ban on *Weird Tales*. Dard's comments on *Weird Tales* are revealing:

> Very few collections of this magazine exist anywhere in the world, and the destruction of the set I imported would have been a blow to posterity. (Undoubtedly you think I exaggerate, but I do not. I have insured the set during my lifetime, and willed them to the Fantasy Foundation in California, after my death). This magazine consistently published the cream of the world's fantasy fiction, and is regarded with awe by fantasy collectors all over the English-speaking world. I have approximately 2,000 fantasy magazine in my collection, but the set of Weird tales released by you, occupy an honoured spot in it.

Dard's collection of fantasy literature must have been one of the biggest in Australia. According to the report to the Comptroller-General, Customs officials interviewed Dard at his parents' house (1 Money St, Perth) in the mid 1950s. According to one of the interviewers, 'Dard had two rooms, one of which was almost completely lined with shelves containing several thousand books. They were apparently in the nature of an indexed library maintained by Dard. As at present, his taste varied between the horror type of literature, crime and detection, sex including sex psychology, science fantasy, futuristic fiction and "space" fantasy, interspersed with the works of such as Dickens, Shakespeare etc.' His collection, which included many early Arkham House volumes as well as rare pulps, would certainly be worth a princely sum today.

Dard died on the 23 February 1996, at the age of 75, evidently the result of surgical error – during a routine prostate operation the surgeon accidentally punctured his spleen. The obituary in the *West Australian*, published a couple of days later, mentions no children or immediate family members, only a few friends and some nieces and nephews. The obituary does not mention his role in Australian fandom or discuss his collection and his numerous run-ins with the authorities. Although his will survives, probate was granted to the Public Trustee, and it says nothing about the fate of his collection. Whether or not the bulk of his collection found its way to the Fantasy Foundation (evidently a large collection of horror memorabilia based on Forrest J. Ackerman's collection) or was broken up and sold is still an open question.

And what of the man himself? What sort of person was Roger Dard? There are people still living in Perth who knew Dard and who were able to provide some firsthand information about him. The neighbours at his last address in East Victoria Park, for example, knew him from the time he moved there in the early seventies, and remember a kind, generous man who made excellent curries, not surprising, given his Pakistani heritage. They also recall his large book collection, his strange pictures and objects, and the fact that he always seemed to be writing. One of them clearly recalls Dard showing him a completed novel, some short stories, and several articles; he vaguely remembers the novel being an adventure–fantasy story but could not recall any details about it.

Other acquaintances reveal another side to Dard. The well-known novelist and critic John Baxter corresponded with Dard as a young man, and found him suspicious and reticent, a difficult man to know well. According to Baxter, Dard's letters were frequently X-rated, divulging trips to Hong Kong and other places in Asia where he sought out films that had been banned or cut in Australia, and hinted that he sampled the fleshly delights on offer.[13] Baxter writes:

A typical *Weird Tales* cover — too depraved for Australian eyes in the 1940s.

> Interestingly, Roger made it his business on his foreign trips to track down films which had been banned or cut by the Australian censors. Among these was BUTTERFIELD 8, from the John O'Hara novel. In a key scene, Elizabeth Taylor, who plays a 'party girl', is recounting to Eddie Fisher how she first put her foot on the Primrose Path to Perdition. She was, she explains, seduced by a boyfriend of her mother, whom she regarded as a kind of uncle, but who one day took her on his knee and 'interfered with' her. Fisher looks suitably horrified. Taylor continues, 'But that's not the worst thing. The worst thing is . . .' at which point the Australian version was cut. Roger recounted with sarcastic glee that Taylor actually continued 'but the worst thing was, I enjoyed it'. It seemed to him symptomatic of Australian prudery that it allowed the sex but forbade the pleasure . . .
>
> He was very interested in a Swedish fanzine which published mainly erotic SF stories, and asked me to pass on any copies I received. We also discussed his taste in women, and I remember him specifying the Spanish actress named Sarita Montiel as close to his sexual ideal. Each time we met in Sydney, at his favourite hotel in Kings Cross, it was after his return from Asia, and he always had some erotica to show me. Given his high profile with the Customs, they were usually easily hidden, e.g. unmounted colour slides, murkily and cheaply reproduced, and pocket editions of books like FANNY HILL. The first example of Cleland's book I ever saw was brought in by Roger. Occasionally we were joined by a couple of his like-minded friends —

not SF fans, but obviously fellow porn enthusiasts. WEIRD TALES and Arkham House were certainly not among the topics of conversation.[14]

Similarly, David Kay, a long-time postcard and erotica collector, was closely linked with Dard in the late 1950s and 60s. Kay visited Dard many times at his house in Money Street (incidentally, a notorious red-light district in the first half of the twentieth century) and recalls a most impressive collection of erotic and pornographic publications, as well as 8 mm films. Kay also remembers that the Rosaleen Norton painting occupied a prominent place in his house, one amongst hundreds of SF–fantasy items that Dard had collected.

Like many others, David Kay lost contact with Dard in the mid sixties but still thinks of him with kindness. He talks of Dard as an erudite man, always leading conversations, and possessing a very generous nature. 'Even though he didn't look like Carey Grant, he had fantastic charm and charisma which really appealed to the ladies', recalls Kay; he adds, 'we had plenty of strange and wonderful encounters with beautiful women, and it was many a time Roger led me astray.'

It appears that Dard clearly separated his SF–fantasy interests on the one hand and his erotica collecting and sexual adventuring on the other; he compartmentalised his friends into one or other of these camps, and rarely did the twain meet. It was only natural that Dard was very careful in conducting his affairs and in revealing his interests; as David Kay observes, 'Perth in those days was incredibly conservative, and if you were into something different, whether it was science fiction or erotica, you almost had to operate in an underground capacity.'

Danny Brady, one of the beneficiaries of Dard's will, knew him intimately in the later part of his life, and was able to provide further information about him. Brady is the son of the late John Suda, a Perth bookbinder, who for many years worked for the publishing company of J. H. Pitman. Dard developed a close friendship with Danny and his siblings that lasted until the end of his life: Dard frequently brought them gifts (such as science fiction tin toys) from his many travels. According to Brady, Dard made a fortune at the track in the 1940s when he picked three winners in one day! The money was used to fund his frequent travels and to purchase choice items for his collection. Like Dard's neighbours, Brady was very surprised to learn of his interest in erotica and pornography; however, he does remember that Dard had a complete run of American *Playboy*, and when he was older Dard allowed him to 'borrow' a couple of issues from time to time.

Although Brady remembers Dard in later years still enjoying science fiction and fantasy, and maintaining contact with a few collectors (particularly with an unidentified man from the US), Dard very much kept to himself and seems to have trusted only a handful of people. Perhaps some of his negative experiences in fandom account for this reclusiveness. Another possible reason, alluded to by Mr Brady, was the racial discrimination Dard frequently suffered, a sad fact of life in small-town Australia at the time. Dard appears to have considered Perth a parochial, small-minded place; as Mr Brady recalls: 'I remember Roger warning me never to sell any of his books locally, referring to local book dealers as a "bunch of philistines" who wouldn't appreciate his books.'

Not surprisingly, Brady has clear memories of Dard's collection — the sheer number of SF books and magazines — and still owns three boxes containing odds and ends from Dard's collection that he and his mother collected soon after he died. There are no valuable early pulps or choice first editions, but there are a few issues of *Operation Fantast*, a complete set of *The Shadow* paperbacks, Dard's own *Fantastic Novels: A Check List*, some specialist small press books, a paperback set of Christine Campbell Thompson's *Not At Night* series, a large number of horror and SF digests from the 1960s, and several pristine A. A. Merritt novels, amongst other items. The only early magazines in the boxes were damaged issues of about a dozen 'shudder' pulps that Brady's father bound for Dard. He also gifted a complete set of Big Little Books to Brady's sister.

As to the fate of his collection, it seems plausible to suggest that it was broken up and sold in the years prior to his death, perhaps to one of the collectors with whom he corresponded. And what of the Rosaleen Norton painting, *Black Magic*? It appears that Mr Brady's mother did not care for the 'the weird and ugly thing' and put it out for rubbish collection four or five years ago. Whether or not it survives is anybody's guess.

Roger Dard was an active player in Australian fandom of the 1950s, and his career sheds some interesting light on the nature of fandom and the perils of book collecting. He was certainly an active fan and a prolific correspondent who travelled interstate and overseas to attend conventions and to visit other fans at a time when communications and the tyranny of distance were significant barriers. According to Vol Molesworth's *History of Australian Fandom 1935–1963* (1980), Dard visited Sydney in November 1952 and 'quickly became popular at Thursday night gatherings, now being held at the Moccador Café in Market St'. He also accumulated what must have been one of the finest fantasy collections in the country in the face of strict national censorship laws that were rigorously enforced. He must have been someone of real determination and stubbornness with a genuine love of the genre. On the other hand, he appears to have craved recognition within fantasy fandom and turned away from the movement when he felt he did not receive the accolades he thought he deserved.

A fascinating and original character, he is fondly remembered by those who knew him well. Perhaps his eventful and colourful life can best be summed up by his old friend David Kay as he reminisced about the old days in Perth: 'He appeared in my life like a bright light and quickly disappeared like a shooting star.'

— James Doig and Milan Smiljkovic, 2006

Notes

* Thanks to John Baxter, Race Mathews, Lee Harding, Kim Huett, David Kay, Danny Brady and Ken Slater for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

1 Robert E. Briney & Edward Wood, *SF Bibliographies* (Advent, Chicago, 1972).

2 http://home.vicnet.net.au/~msfc/Articles/history5.html

3 http://www.fanac.org/fanzines/Spaceship/

4 http://www.fanac.org/fanzines/Spaceship/Spaceship20-09.html

5 The picture is shown at http://www.sexmagick.com/aisha/art/rosaleen/_blackmagic.gif

6 http://www.sff.net/people/diccon/CHARLIE.HTM

7 Harry Warner Jr, *A Wealth of Fable* (1992), p. 277.

8 http://jophan.org/1960s/chapter4.htm

9 *A425 (Department of Trade and Customs, Central Office), 1962/10305*. All documents referred to are from this file unless otherwise specified.

10 The authors are grateful to Kim Huett for this quote.

11 This was not always the case. In 1938 a set of Christine Campbell Thomson's *Not at Night* series was seized. Department officials recommended prohibition, and sent their review to the Literature Censorship Board. The Board rejected the Department's recommendation and produced its own considered opinion: 'As regards the theme of horror, account must be taken of the fact that the mystery and terror of the Borderland have always fascinated the imagination. The great-

est writers have occupied themselves with such themes. In estimating such stories it is to be considered that the normally minded reader is willing to exercise what Coleridge calls "a willing suspension of disbelief". He understands that he is entering an imaginary world, enjoys the make-believe for the time being, and quickly forgets it. The question, therefore, becomes whether the stories contained in these books are so crude or barbarous in their delineation as to leave on the reader a permanent effect, or one, at least, of duration sufficient to cause depravity. It does not appear so.' See A425, 1939/5191.

12 *Shock* is indexed in Frank Parnell, *Monthly Terrors* (Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 184.

13 The Customs report on Dard says that no items of hardcore pornography was discovered in his parcels or at his house, although presumably Dark would have had the presence of mind to hide them.

14 Emailed correspondence.

Fantasy and literature censorship in the 1930s

James Doig

Australia has a long history of literary censorship dating back to at least the early nineteenth century, with the enactment in England of the *Blasphemous and Seditious Libel Act* 1819 and the *Obscene Publications Act* 1857 among others. Although the banning of important literary novels such as *Ulysses*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Norman Lindsay's *Redheap* have been well documented, less attention has been paid to popular genres of science fiction, horror and crime. Pulp magazines like *Weird Tales* were continually brought to the attention of the authorities, and titles were frequently placed on a blacklist of prohibited titles. The National Archives of Australia has a rich collection of records related to literary censorship, particularly from the late 1930s, when the Department of Trade and Customs and the Literature Censorship Board regularly considered the status of seized imports of magazines and books.

The Literature Censorship Board (which replaced the Book Censorship Board) was established by the *Customs (Literature Censorship) Regulations* 1937. The function of the Board was to determine whether any imported literature sent to it by the Minister or the Comptroller-General of Customs was blasphemous, indecent or obscene. The Board's functions were also to administer the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations*, which scheduled import goods not allowed into Australia. The Board consisted of a Chairman and two members, and the Regulations also established the position of Appeals Censor. The first members appointed to the Board were Dr L. H. Allen (Chairman), Professor S. F. M. Haydon and Mr K. Binns. Sir Robert Garran, a former Solicitor-General and Chairman of the Book Censorship Board, was appointed Appeals Censor.

Not all seized imports were sent to the Literature Censorship Board. It appears that the Comptroller-General of Customs, based in Canberra, had the authority to ban publications as he saw fit. Although *books* were invariably sent on to the Board, the Comptroller-General frequently prohibited magazines himself on the advice of clerks within the Department. Thus, in 1938 a number of pulp magazines were seized from Associated Magazine Importers and Distributors of NSW.[1] The company wrote that they would cooperate completely with Customs, and pointed out that 'we are desirous of giving the poorer section of the community their reading matter at reasonable prices'. The Comptroller-General authorised the banning of five magazines — *Terror Tales*, *Mystery Tales*, *Personal Adventure Stories*, *Actual Detective Stories of Women in Crime* and *Official Detective Stories* — on the basis that they breached customs regulations because they 'unduly emphasize matters of sex and crime' and are 'calculated to encourage depravity'.

Comics were also subject to scrutiny and were frequently banned. In January 1952, a packet was detained containing *Strange Adventures* and *Worlds Beyond*.[2] The former was released, but the latter (a comic strip) was sent to the Comptroller-General in Canberra with a recommendation that it be banned. Shortly afterwards a packet containing *Venus* (a comic strip), and three comics were already on the prohibited imports list (*Tales from the Crypt*, *Dark Mysteries* and *The Beyond*) were seized, and *Venus* was similarly referred to Comptroller-General. The Chief Clerk of Customs wrote to the Comptroller-General, '"Worlds Beyond" and "Venus" are the horror type of comic featuring weird and fantastic stories of the supernatural. The unearthly creatures shown in these comics would be terrifying and repulsive to young minds.' The minute recommended banning, and they were subsequently placed on the prohibited imports list. Similarly, in 1952 *Planet Comics* was banned.[3] The Chief Clerk, C. A. Quin wrote, 'The stories in this comic are about adventures in space and of weird creatures from other planets. There is death and destruction in each of the stories which are made more gruesome by being in comic strip form'.

The judgments of the Literature Censorship Board on books that were sent to it for consideration make interesting reading. It appears that the Board was far more flexible than the clerks in the Department of Trade and Customs when it came to deciding which books promoted crime and depravity in the community. Invariably, it released fantasy, horror and crime books that the Comptroller-General had recommended banning. I will look at three cases involving books that are particularly interesting to aficionados of horror and fantasy literature.

Christine Campbell Thomson's *Not at Night* Series

The *Not at Night* series comprise twelve anthologies published between 1925 and 1937, the last volume being an omnibus. The series included mostly reprint stories from pulp magazines like *Weird Tales*, and these days it is perhaps the rarest and most desirable anthology series prized by fantasy collectors.[4]

In 1939, the Universal Library in Perth imported nine volumes in the *Not at Night* series. All nine books were seized by the Collector of Customs in Western Australia and sent to Canberra. A minute outlining the case and recommending prohibition was drafted by a senior clerk and sent to the Collector-General. According to the clerk, 'The narratives presented in each of the publications under notice are for the most part revolting

stories with abnormal and unnatural themes, told in the greatest degree of morbidity and gruesomeness.' He observes that several of the stories were originally published in the banned pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, and he highlights passages from 27 stories that he finds particularly abhorrent, including 'The Rats in the Walls' (H. P. Lovecraft), 'The Curse of Yig' (Zealia B. Bishop), 'The Black Stone' (Robert E. Howard), 'Fidel Bassin' (W. J. Stamper), and 'The Purple Cincture' (H. T. Rich).

The clerk goes on to say, 'the passages marked support the charge that these books are injudiciously presented and would work harmful results not only to the young mind, but also to the minds of adults whose feelings must be shocked by their contemplation of the macabre and gruesome features presented'. He recommends that the books be prohibited on the grounds that they are calculated to encourage depravity.

The Board rejected the Department's recommendation, arguing cogently that horror is a legitimate literary theme: 'As regards the theme of horror, account must be taken of the fact that the mystery and terror or the Borderland have always fascinated the imagination. The greatest writers have occupied themselves with such themes. In estimating such stories it is to be considered that the normally minded reader is willing to exercise what Coleridge calls "a willing suspension of disbelief". He understands that he is entering an imaginary world, enjoys the make-believe for the time being, and quickly forgets it. The question, therefore, becomes whether the stories contained in these books are so crude or barbarous in their delineation as to leave on the reader a permanent effect, or one, at least, of duration sufficient to cause depravity. It does not appear so.'

R. R. Ryan's *Death of a Sadist*

Death of a Sadist was the second book published by the 1930s cult thriller writer R. R. Ryan. Ryan wrote 11 books for Herbert Jenkins in the second half of the 1930s, including four novels written under the pseudonyms Cameron Carr and John Galton. The books, like many prewar British thrillers, are almost unobtainable today, and Ryan would probably be completely forgotten if Karl Edward Wagner had not included three Ryan novels in his lists of the best horror novels that appeared in the June and August 1983 issues of *Twilight Zone* magazine.

Death of a Sadist was referred to the Literature Censorship Board in 1938, presumably on account of its title.[5] The novel is about Trevor Garron, a poor bank clerk, and Edna Ferrar, who, without the other knowing, are both being terrorised by the sadist of the title, Selwyn Maine. Trevor kills Maine after sedulously planning the crime; however, Edna is arrested for the murder and faces the death penalty. After a good deal of vacuous melodrama, Edna receives an eleventh-hour reprieve, and the book ends happily with the couple leaving England to devote their lives to good works at a leper colony. The recommendations of the Board members offer rare contemporary opinions of the book:

> L. H. Allen, Chairman:
> This is advertised as a 'horror story'. It is written with a sufficient amount of restraint to keep the horror from being raw. It deals with the death — or murder — of a sexual pervert; but his perversions are only hinted at. They are not described in detail, nor are they the central motive story, which is, rather, to produce a legal complication together with a detection strain. A good deal of it is quite well written, though there are touches of the film-story. Though one or two parts are frank, neither the intention nor the effect seems to the Board to be pornographic; and it recommends that the book be passed.
>
> Kenneth Binns:
> This is a straight out murder and detection story though of somewhat unusual character. The villain is openly characterised as a pervert and sadist, as the title indicates; but his acts of sadism are not described. Certainly it is indicated that they cover sex-sadism. I found nothing objectionable, and see no objection to the full importation of the work.
>
> J. F. M. Haydon:
> A rather cleverly constructed and well written 'crime' story, in which there is frequent allusion to sadistic practices and sexual perversion. At the same time there are no passages containing obscene or indecent details. Although it might be claimed that this omission of pornographic detail is made in such a way as to stimulate the imagination along not altogether healthy lines, I see no reason for banning this book. I would pass unhesitatingly.

The reviews are surprisingly positive, and support Ramsey Campbell's view, expressed in his column 'Ramsey Campbell, Probably' in the Winter 1998 issue of *Necrofile*, that R. R. Ryan, while not a major voice, is worth reading. Midnight House reprinted Ryan's only supernatural novel, *Echo of a Curse*, in 2002, with an exhaustive introduction by Dwayne Olsen.

Michael Arlen, *Hell! Said the Duchess*

Better known for his light social comedies, Michael Arlen wrote several well-received ghost stories and this peculiar horror novel. *Hell! Said the Duchess* is another book that probably would be forgotten today if it were not for its inclusion, at number one, in Karl Edward Wagner's list of the Thirteen Best Horror Novels in *Twilight Zone* magazine. By today's standards the book is very tame indeed, written mostly in a light, satirical manner typical of English popular writing of the period. The last twenty pages, however, are surprisingly powerful when detectives investigating a series of sex murders confront an ancient evil.

The novel appears to have created quite a stir in Australia when it was published in 1934.[6] In October 1934, a review appeared in the *Adelaide Mail* that was none too flattering: 'People with depraved minds may smack their lips over its salaciousness . . . The author in this instance is doubly fortunate, first in finding a publisher to encourage him in his freakishness, and next in getting a book of this description past censors who considered that Norman Lindsay's novel "Redheap" was harmful enough to be banned.'

The review brought the novel to the attention of the Collector of Customs, South Australia, who wrote to Canberra on 20 November 1934, 'The editor of the "Mail" has now loaned me his copy of this book for perusal and submission to the Comptroller-GeneralI have read it and am of the opinion that it is indecent. The plot, which is the effort of a depraved imagination, centres around the sadistic and murderous acts of a doctor who by some supernatural aid assumes the bodily form of a beautiful and innocent woman for the purpose of satisfying his lust and luring his victims to destruction.'

Two days later an article in the Melbourne *Herald* of 22 November 1934, quoting the *Collector* in SA: 'The book is a nasty piece of work, which would appeal only to persons of depraved instincts, and would cause harm if it came into the possession of young people. The central idea in the book is that of a man being transformed into a woman and committing evil and brutal acts after the change of sex.' The article says that the book will be sent to the Book Censorship Board in Canberra for review.

Incredibly, on 29 November the case was raised in Parliament: an MP voiced his concerns with the Minister for Customs that 'the book of a well-known novelist was being considered by Customs for banning'.

The book was sent to Canberra and initially reviewed by public servants within the Department of Trade and Customs. A senior clerk wrote, 'It is difficult to point to any particular passages on

which to condemn this book, the circulation of which, in my opinion, must exercise a pernicious influence. A perusal of the final portion from page 155 to the end, which supply the solution to the mysterious murders and outrages dealt with the earlier chapters, will give a good idea of the objectionable nature of the book.' He recommended that the book be banned. However, the Deputy Comptroller-General annotated the same minute in ink that the book should not be banned as 'it was not written with an indecent intention'.

The Book Censorship Board was blunt in its judgment: 'The Board does not regard it as indecent, and recommends without hesitation that it be passed.' The chairman, Robert Garran, has written in pen, 'It is a literary work of distinction.'

Guy Endore: *The Werewolf of Paris*

So far I have considered books that were released by the Censorship Board. It might be interesting to consider a book that was banned as a result of its placing 'undue emphasis on horror and sex'. One of the few horror novels banned by the Censorship Board was, surprisingly enough, Guy Endore's *The Werewolf of Paris*. The book was first published in 1933; however, the edition sent to the Censorship Board in July 1952 was the Avon reprint of 1951.[7] On this occasion Dr Allen provided a detailed and often rambling account of the book that is worth quoting in full:

> This is professedly the story of a werewolf. It is a very old superstition, going back at least as far as the Arcadian legend of Lycaon, who was turned into a wolf for sacrificing a child to Zeus. Petronius' *Satyricon* has also a werewolf story. The superstition seems to stem from the totemistic stratum, when men identified themselves with their totem animals. A very terrible instance of it is given in Prorok's *Dead Men Do Tell Tales*, an account of adventures in little-known parts of Abyssinia. In a ritual the tribesmen behave like jackals, howling and going on all fours, presumably believing that they *are* jackals. An almost epic description of this phenomenon is given in Rider Haggard's account of the two wolf-brethren in *Nada the Lily*.
>
> The book discussed, however, seems to be a queer jumble. Sometimes the monster is a vampire, since he lives, if he can, by sucking blood. Perhaps the two most terrible tales of this superstition are *Dracula* and Le Fanu's 'Carmilla'. At other times he is a ghoul, a demon which exhumes and devours corpses, as the *Arabian Nights* avers. Sometimes he is a schizophrenic in that he thinks of his atrocities merely as a bad dream. At other times he is fully conscious of them, and repents. Here he mergers into Jekyll and Hyde. Again he is pictured as being possessed by an evil spirit. Whether possession is a fact let theologians pronounce. So intellectual and spiritual a man as F. W. H. Myers, in *Human Personality*, takes it seriously. Yet surely a werewolf is a werewolf, not a miscellaneous compound of horrors. The author seems to have piled them together indiscriminately. If he had a serious purpose it seems to be that we are all potential beasts, a thesis which he illustrates by the savagery of communardo and aristocrats alike in 1871. The terrible wars that civilisation has recently experienced point to this as an unpalatable truth. 'Let the ape and the tiger die' says Tennyson; and civilisation has hard work to do it. There is another queer complex in the story. The werewolf falls in 'love' with the beautiful Sophie. This 'love' which consists of a repulsive perversion is pictured as having some restraining, and almost purifying, influence on the werewolf. If the author had a psycho-philosophical intention it is not carried out convincingly. The intention of the publishers is plain. The blurbs are shocking; and the coloured illustration is not only shocking, but actually unrepresentative of the text. Possible the 'artist' had not read the work, which says: 'Bertrand (the werewolf) looked up with an innocent expression in his brown eyes. His clean-shaven face, seen from close, was still youthful, attractive' (p. 130). The cover represents a hirsute semi-gorilla with whom nothing human, however low, could fall in 'love' of any sort.
>
> Undoubtedly, there is ability in some of the writing, but no man with a philosophic purpose could, with any self- respect, submit to the whipping-up of sales by means of such a provocative appeal to degenerate minds. This picture is described by the publishers as 'spine-chilling'. When it is stated that the author has also written a novel entitled *The Furies in Her Body* one becomes suspicious of his genuineness.
>
> There are quite enough sexual crimes in this country to make admission of this book most undesirable. The Board therefore recommends that it be banned.

It is difficult to see what Dr Allen is driving at here. His main argument appears to be that because the werewolf in the novel does not accord with traditional werewolf lore the book cannot be taken seriously. However, whatever its merits this argument fails to prove that the novel places 'undue emphasis on horror and sex'. Dr Allen's main argument in this regard seems to be that the *publisher's* intention was to emphasise horror and sex, as illustrated by the cover picture and the blurbs. As he implies in his comments on *Night's Yawning Peal*, 'outré pictures' could push a horror novel over the edge, though it is difficult to conceive of this particular cover being especially lascivious.

The Literature Censorship Board (and its precursor, the Book Censorship Board) appears to have been flexible and open in its interpretation of the Customs regulations. Certainly, it acted as something of a foil to the rigid and dogmatic approach of officials in the Department of Trade and Customs, who seemed intent on banning anything that sounded vaguely questionable. The Board recognised that horror was a legitimate literary subject with a serious purpose and understood that horror fiction had a significant reading public.

And what happened to all of these rarities, books and magazines that were seized by Customs and either banned or released? Certainly, they are not among the Customs records transferred to the National Archives when their business life finished. I fear that many issues of banned publications like *Weird Tales* and *Terror Tales* were pulped — there is a Customs file granting permission to a company to pulp banned magazines.[8] I would like to think that others escaped punishment and are still sitting in a warehouse somewhere, quietly awaiting discovery.

Notes

1 *A425/1938/6279: Prohibited Publications: 'Terror Tales' and Others as listed.*
2 *A425/1952/830: Prohibited Publications: Worlds Beyond.*
3 *A425/1952/1202: Prohibited Publications: Planet Comics.*
4 http://homepages.pavilion.co.uk/users/tartarus/t3.htm
5 *A3023, Folder 1939: Decisions, with Comments, on Literature Forwarded by the Customs Department to the Literature Censorship Board.*
6 *A425/1943/5278: Prohibited Publications: 'Hell! Said the Duchess'.*
7 *A3023, Folder 1951/1952.*
8 *A425/1938/11733: Prohibited Publications General: Disposal Seized Publications — Procedures.*

Letters of comment

JOHN BAXTER
18 rue de l'Odeon, Paris, France 75006

I take your point about *A Pound Of Paper* making my life seem easy, and it's true there is an element of 'with one bound, he was free' about some of my story. But if there are distortions, they are relatively minor. This, give or take the odd glitch, is how my life has tended to progress; in a series of leaps into the unknown, which, so far and for the most part, have ended happily.

My brother, the bank manager and family ant, regards this grasshopper existence with distaste. In his view, I 'run away' from anything disagreeable. Which has an element of truth, no doubt. I would argue, of course, that it's no more than prudent to move away from a hot stove. But these things come down to personalities in the end, and my brother, like yourself, is of the temperament that stays to face the music, however much — or little — they enjoy the tune.

I had this discussion with Lee Harding while I was in Melbourne. As you can imagine, Lee favours your approach too. Little good it has done him, unfortunately. However he plans to visit us in Paris towards the end of the year, his only foray out of Australia. Remains to be seen, of course, if he goes through with it.

[BRG: Lee and daughter Maddie did get to France, and report they had a great time.

In *A Pound of Paper*, your attitude seemed to be that any Australian could easily move overseas and work there if he or she wanted to. This is not true. John Brosnan had a British grandparent, and so could stay in Britain in 1970. I presume you had a British parent or grandparent as well. I didn't; the latest any of my antecedents arrived in Australia was 1860. Therefore I could not have stayed in Britain in 1974, when I visited there; and during the seventies very few Australians were gaining Green Cards to stay in America.]

Gerald Murnane's letter was surpassing strange; all this talk about an enormous personal archive . . . But literature has plenty of precedents. He reminded me, incidentally, of Russell Hoban, who lives among enormous clutter, and seems increasingly immersed in a private reality. Russell also has a non-English linguistic preoccupation. His wife is German, and his interests are increasingly in that direction.

Thanks for sending the Darrell Schweitzer article. I enjoyed it a great deal. Plenty of my time in America has been spent at sales like the one he describes.

27 February 2004

As I (BRG) interpret John's explanation, these people are (l. to r.): Nigel Burwood (Any Amount of Books); Martin Stone (famed British book collector, and star of John's *A Pound of Paper*, discussed in *SET* 4; and famous fan Bill Blackbeard. (Photo: John Baxter.)

Last week, I was in London, and able to attend the official launch of Rick Gekovski's *Tolkien's Gown*, which took place in tandem with the private view of an Oscar Wilde collection Rick helped accumulate. The great man was discovered just inside the entrance of Sotheby's on a sofa, tête a tête with Jeanette Winterton, which kicked off the evening on a high note, but thereafter it was dominated by stately plump Stephen Fry, who, podgy but tall in black velvet, like an alpha-male sea elephant, insisted on reading the whole of *The Happy Prince* to an adoring crowd of sacred cows. A green carnation decorated each of the trays on which canapes were served, and the favoured cocktail had a piece of star anise in each glass; too decadent for me. Though there was a healthy (or unhealthy?) contingent of book people — including James Tindley, Adam Blakeney and Martin Stone (looking something like, to borrow Raymond Chandler's phrase, 'a blow fly on a slice of Angel Food') — the evening belonged to the gang of chinless wonders, sinister Eurotrash and bimbos that are Sotheby's A-list clients, and Rick, like the rest of us bibliophiles, was somewhat sidelined.

Pat Kearney's photo of Martin may belong to the period after his detox and drying out, which changed his appearance spectacularly for the better. Pictures older than two or three years show a very different man.

This is one of my favourite recent Stone pix, taken in December 2003 in the Santa Cruz mobile home of one-time BNF Bill Blackbeard. The man with the 'What *is* that smell?' expression is Nigel Burwood, of Any Amount of Books. We had just been comprehensively disappointed to discover that Bill's lobby cards of *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Forbidden Planet* etc, not to mention his files of classic pulps and the dazzling jackets of all his first editions, were nothing but colour xeroxes. He'd sold the originals long ago. It probably explains that self-satisfied smile.

25 January 2006

ROSALEEN LOVE
3 Vincent Street, Glen Iris VIC 3146

Loved the kind words you said about Petrina Smith's work. I'll send them on to her (even if she knows already, it's nice to hear it twice). My next book, *The Traveling Tide*, is about to be published by Aqueduct Press, Seattle. It's a small book of seven short stories, some 40,000 words in total. I'm thrilled. The publisher is L. Timmel Duchamp, and she's doing a great job of editing. She's also publishing Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith, so I'm in excellent company.

19 January 2005

[BRG: I enjoyed *The Traveling Tide* a lot, haven't yet reviewed it, and am looking forward to the next Rosaleen Love book. Thanks also for the entertaining talk at the July 2006 Nova Mob meeting.]

STEVE JEFFERY
44 White Way, Kidlington Oxon OX5 2XA, England

Paul Brazier, in his riposte 'if this goes on...' to Andrew M. Butler's article 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at the British Boom', says towards the end that *Interzone* launched the careers of a number of current UK writers, including

Liz Williams. Maybe not quite. Scanning back through a pile of early issues of the writers' workshop magazine *Visionary Tongue*, I found both Liz Williams and, interestingly, Justina Robson among the list of story contributors. Liz probably also got an early start with contributions to Elizabeth and Deidre Counihan's *Sheherazade* magazine. It just annoyed me that *Interzone* claims to have 'discovered' many of these writers when quite a few of them have been honing their craft in the small press before they make the big crossover sale.

Interesting and entertaining as Andrew Butler's essay is, to an extent — though it pains me to say it — I half agree with Brazier. 'Thirteen Ways' covers a lot of territory — or maybe just the map of the territory, drawing parallels to the British New Wave, the cyberpunk 'movement' and into the NWOBSO (New Wave of British Space Opera) of the last 5–6 years or so. However, in one section (which PB seems to take particular umbrage to), Andrew seems to list just about every UK SF, fantasy and slipstream writer working since the mid 1980s to the present. The list is confusing, since it embraces about three different 'booms'.

Given (it's arguable, but I wasn't there or paying much attention) SF was largely in the doldrums in the late 70s and early 80s, the first 'boom' was the legacy of cyberpunk. As Andrew points out, there was an odd British impetus to this in the first place, since Sterling took the phrase 'radical hard SF' from an early *Interzone* editorial (by Colin Greenland?) and put his own interpretation and rallying call in *Cheap Truth*. *Neuromancer* hit the streets, cyberpunk was born, Gibson and Sterling bestrode the SF firmament like gods, metaphors were used without safety nets. Good it was in that time to be alive, and to be young(ish) and at the Cafe Munchen Saturday lunchtimes was very heaven. It *was* fun. There was a real buzz going on. All manner of strange mutant SF–fantasy–slipstream crossovers were birthed. (Or sometimes stillbirthed. This was the time an aspiring young writer yclept Charles Stross would stoppeth one in three to proselytise something he called 'TechoGoth', which, apart from Storm Constantine's 1990 neo-pagan SF novel *Hermetech*, would take another 12 years to bear fruit.) Between 1988 and, say, 1993 (interestingly, roughly coinciding with the Mexicon conventions) there were mini-booms all over the place: cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk SF, horror–splatterpunk, dark fantasy, Pringle's subversion of the *GW* gamebook franchise, fanzines, SF-biased conventions, and SF imprints run by enthusiastic editors like Janie Johnson (Allen & Unwin) and Debs Beale & Charon Wood (Millennium).

Then the accountants and marketing suits moved in. Midlists were slashed, advances receded; interesting, experimental stuff was rejected in favour of 'more of the same' sharecropping. A lot of writers who'd gone full time just years before started looking for part-time day jobs. For a while it looked really bad.

I don't know why the next boom happened. My bet is on the buzz that was created when Vernor Vinge came out with his radical revisionary space opera *A Deepness in the Sky* in 1999. (Andrew misses this, but as a reviewer at the time the effect was startling.) Together with the effect caused by Banks's 'Culture' novels, it was cool to like/write 'widescreen baroque' Grand Space Opera once more, and have strange aliens and sometimes even stranger posthumans (the latter a cyberpunk legacy, bearing not a little debt to Sterling's Shaper/Mechanist stories such as 'Swarm' and the distinctly non-human psychology of Gwyneth Jones's Aleutian novels.) As I think Andrew mentions, 1950s space opera aliens were men in funny suits. Those of the late 1990s were sometimes of more ambiguous gender, often twisted your brain 90 degrees to understand their viewpoint, and were frequently, by any human standards, borderline psychotic. We also had people like xenobiologist, fan and convention guest Jack Cohen inventing plausible biological responses to alien environments.

Also, by the time Al Reynolds was shaping his Inhibitor universe and Ken Macleod his 'Star Road' series, *Babylon 5* had happened (there was a programming pause at the Manchester Eastercon when a key episode was scheduled on TV — though whether it was the first or last of a new series I can't recall), and was followed by *Farscape*. I don't know whether they (the books and TV) were coincident, feeding off each other, or both plugging into something else in the audience *zeitgeist*, but it's odd that these things came in waves.

Or perhaps not so odd. The British SF scene is still small enough that, as Mark Plummer once pointed out, a carefully placed bomb in one pub bar just before the Clarke Award ceremony could effectively devastate UK SF for decades. Perhaps, like those odd psychoses that run through small closed communities, such as fainting epidemics in girls' boarding school dormitories, or the Salem witch trials, British SF 'booms' can be put down to sporadic outbreaks of collective mass hysteria.

25 January 2005

[JS: There was rather more than 'odd psychoses' behind the Salem witch trials, and similar events in other towns and cities in that era. Perhaps it's feminist revisionism to say to, but I still think it highly likely that at least a few of those women accused of witchcraft were singled out by men in power who saw these women as a potential threat to the stability of their little fiefdoms, especially as it's been documented that the property of the accused was seized and acquired by the officials doing the accusing. The aforementioned fainting epidemics, in this light, are not close enough in character to be similar. Soapbox off.]

[BRG: You could say that Greg Egan was 'launched' by Norstrilia Press, with the publication of his first novel here, long before his first appearance in *Interzone* or the publication of *Quarantine*. However, nobody would ever have noticed him if Norstrilia Press publication had been his only debut. *Interzone* seems to have been very good at genuine launches of careers over the years, and I presume Liz Williams' is one of them. Oddly, nobody has written about the whole Australian boom yet, although its lines of influence and the strengths of its authors are much easier to define than those of the diffuse British boom.]

It's difficult to overestimate the effect of at least three, and possibly up to five, adopted Brits in the whole British SF Boom of the late 1980s to early 1990s. Pat Cadigan, John Clute and Geoff Ryman were central figures in shaping directions of British SF. Molly Brown was a regular contributor to *Interzone* and party animal supreme (possibly only Pat C. could rival her for Extreme Party Mode). And, from overseas and by all accounts not known as a huge party animal, Greg Egan's stamp on a young generation of *Interzone* writers (like Simon Ings) has to be acknowledged, even if it did at one time threaten that quantum indeterminacy and chaos theory would become the 1980s version of the New Wave's entropy metaphor.

The New Wave of British Space Opera, by comparison, seems more a home-grown phenomenon. Oh, and I suspect another of those formative media cultural references might be the huge success of Douglas Adams' *Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, first on radio then as a TV show. If, as Andrew points out, the dominant mode of British SF is ironic, then Adams would certainly fit the bill.

25 January 2005

E. B. FROHVET
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive, Apt 506,
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Thank you for sending *Steam Engine Time* 4. Because of the vagaries of distance, chance and timing, we have never had occasion to correspond before. I don't

know if I qualify as one who 'subscribed' to *SET* before; received No 1 in summer 2000 (postmarked, as I recall, UK), responded to there, *blork*. I eventually did get to see nos 2 and 3 some time around 2003 courtesy of Janine, but it did not seem productive to respond at that late stage. Good sercon fanzines are so few and far between that the return of *SET* is a welcome development in fandom.

'The journeys they took': Reminds me of another of my correspondents in your part of the world, Lyn McConchie in New Zealand, who recently wrote me that she was roundly criticised at some function for sending her stories to UK and US publications, and responded that she would gladly sell in New Zealand if there were sufficient markets. As for the rest of the piece, I recognise several of the names from their novels, but my knowledge of Australian short fiction is negligible.

'The British Boom': Andrew Butler says, 'H. G. Wells's writings could stand as a definitive starting point [for British SF] were it not that this would seem a nationalistic move.' Is not Mr Butler writing a nationalistic article? His focus being, explicitly, British SF, I see no reason why we should not accept Wells as a start. (I'm familiar with Aldiss's argument for *Frankenstein*, and respectfully disagree, if only on the grounds it was a one-time event with no meaningful succession.)

Butler also cites Grimwood and Mieville as 'having novels published without a visible track record of short stories'. This may again reflect a local distinction, short SF markets being so few in the US, that I know of many writers who have gone straight to the novel form and been published. Terry Pratchett is a minor cult success in the US but nothing like the mass-market success he has been in UK.

It strikes me as an interesting question, why for more than a century science fiction has been, and remains, almost exclusively an English-language phenomenon. (*Manga* does not count as SF.)

[BRG: This seems to me an extraordinarily ignorant statement. Vast amounts of science fiction are published every year in countries other than America, and in languages other than English. I suspect that Japanese readers alone would buy as much SF in their own language as Americans do in English. You can see this by looking at the annual *Locus* roundup of overseas SF, which details hundreds of writers and works. It seems to me purely English-language chauvinism that stops nearly all these works from being translated and published in America or Britain. In the 1970s, because of the success of Lem's work, there was a slight increase in interest in non-American SF, such as the translations of all of the Strugatsky brothers novels. But from about 1980 onwards, translations almost stopped (presumably because it costs more to translate a book than to buy the rights from a foreign publisher). On the other hand, the major European SF critical journals, such as *Quarber Merkur*, are able to fill their issues with reviews and critical articles about European-published SF without bothering much about English-language books. If I were not your average iggerant Australian who knows only English, I would be able to read some of the world's major SF books.]

Joseph Nicholas says, 'Where . . . are the alternate histories of the English Civil War?' Keith Roberts' *Pavane*, though technically that's an alternate history in which the English Civil War never took place. I don't see any reason why someone could not write an AH of the English Civil War that did not end with the restoration of the English monarchy — that in turn having a massive effect on American history, if indeed there would have been an American history in such a case. Surely there are possibilities for an AH in which King George III was not a stubborn jackass, and in which therefore the American Revolution need never have occurred.

SF biographies: Fred Hoyle wrote an autobiography, but he was a fiction writer only incidentally, and the subject got short shrift in the part of the book I finished.

[JS: The Tiptree biography is in print now, and is apparently well written, according to the few reviews I've read, although more for its illumination of her life than of her status in SF. Said life having been somewhat disguised for reasons of national security, as it were, the book is certainly worth reading for that reason alone. Emmanuel Carrère's *I Am Alive and You Are Dead* (concerning Philip K. Dick) is a fascinating journey into the mind of a writer through not only his life events, but his fiction as well; meticulously and engagingly written, well worth a read even if one knows next to squat about PKD, as did I before I read this book — it made me want to go read a lot of PKD really soon. But I had to resist the urge, as so many other books were waiting.]

Arthur Hlavaty says that Shakespeare 'came down to us, and has had its influence, as words on a page'. I disagree entirely. If you have not seen Shakespeare on stage, you have not gotten any idea of the writer. I recall a college production of The Scottish Play (it's traditionally considered bad luck in the theatre to mention its title) in which an apparently innocuous line convulsed the audience in laughter. The cast were clearly taken aback — obviously no one had perceived it as a funny line. I've seen the same play done by an all-female company, which gave the play a much different aspect.

I am aware of what an iconic position Dick Jenssen occupies in Australian fandom. However, I wonder if you have considered whether the locomotive motif has outlived its charm. Also, steam engines have run other things than railroads… see Hilbert Schenk's *Steam Bird*.

6 February 2005

STEVE SNEYD
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Re the US Civil War Goes Other Way trope: another loc made a strong case for the thesis that an independent Confederacy would have ended up an economic colony of the British Empire. What, though, if the Confederacy had successfully created its own mini-empire, by invading its neighbours to the South? (Ned Brooks some time ago mentioned that there is evidence of plans of this kind among the Southern leadership.) It would still have remained a raw materials supplier rather than a manufacturer, but would have at least escaped the monoculture trap.

To defend a book I reread last year, surely the point about *Wuthering Heights* is its success in portraying the ultimate in revenge as 'a dish eaten cold': the 'romance' element is simply there to provide Heathcliff with an overt cause/trigger for infliction of slow-motion suffering/exercise of power. (As an aside, while mentioning rereads, *The Caves of Steel* was a very recent one, again for the first time in decades: it's still a page turner, but what did strike me was generally how limited seemed the social and technological change in Earth's cities Asimov depicted, when his timeframe was supposed to be thousands of years forward from us, and specifically that in the story it was regarded as a big deal to have cities of ten million — already well passed sizewise in the Third World — and eight billion on the planet, likely in fact to be reached half way through this century).

'The Cicada That Ate Fivedock' is clearly an intertextuality with that seminal instance of genre rock, 'The Eggplant That Ate Chicago.' You mention Bowie — his two Major Tom songs — in the first the astronaut as helpless token human adornment to technology — 'Planet Earth is blue, and there's nothing I can do' — in the second riposting to that ornamental role by becoming a junkie 'strung out in heavens high' — perhaps provided the

earliest popular signals of widespread disillusionment with the hyping of the 'High Frontier'.

[JS: Taken out of context as you wrote it, the lyric quote from 'Space Oddity' would fit your premise. However, if you go back and read all the lyrics together, it should be obvious that Major Tom can't do anything because there's something wrong with his spacecraft — 'Ground control to Major Tom / Your circuits's dead, there's something wrong . . .' and he knew it before Ground Control did. Or perhaps there's something wrong with Major Tom himself? 'Tell my wife I love her very much / She knows . . .' I'll keep this in mind for my *SF in Rock* opus that I'm working on. As for the second song, 'Ashes to Ashes', I'd say Bowie is taking a tongue-in-cheek look at his past as Major Tom/Ziggy Stardust in that one, likening those 'personalities' to addictions he once had (such as cocaine). Both songs have, I think, more to do with their characters than a disillusionment with exploring outer space.]

One point I always find fascinating about the enormous use of SF imagery in music is the relatively frequent appearance of this in opera — a more elitist art even than 'litcrit-approved' mainstream literature, and yet it gleefully embraces not just fantasy material, as indeed it has from its earliest days as a form of artistic musical entertainment, but specifically science fiction texts — from Harry Martinsson's Nobel-winning epic poem of a passenger ship forever adrift in outer space, *Aniara*, right up to Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, to mention just two examples. Perhaps opera feels confident enough in its elite status to feel it does not risk losing it by mingling with genre, whereas Literature with a capital L lacks that certainty as to its role and standing?

[JS: One should also consider the staying power of such operas compared to the 'classics' like *Aida*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Carmen* and others. They're generally staged more often than modern operas, I'd think.]

SYDNEY J. BOUNDS
CoA: 6 Haygate Court, Haygate Road, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF1 1SR, England

I was relieved to hear that Arthur [Clarke] survived on Sri Lanka; I wondered whether the northern coast of Australia got hit by that tsunami. I saw nothing on your country in the news here.

'Best Aussie sf' was interesting, but it was Darrell Schweitzer who fascinated me this time; I'm a reader, and quite happy with a tatty secondhand pb. Real book people have baffled me until I read Darrell's two articles.

But for how much longer will we be able to cherish books? The signs are that Bradbury's firemen are just around the corner; my new landlord [at my previous address in Kingston on Thames] wants me to clear all books and magazines out. Okay, I'd get rid of them if I could find anyone willing but what I hear is 'I haven't got room!' And new houses here are getting smaller and don't have bookcases.

[BRG: I haven't yet heard the story of your change of address, but it looks as if the landlord drove you out anyway.]

Back and front covers excellent, and good luck to Janine.

6 February 2005

LLOYD AND YVONNE PENNEY
1706-24 Eva Rd, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada M9C 2B2

Many thanks for the fourth issue of *Steam Engine Time*. It's usually unlike fans to pick up someone else's project once that person tires of it, so many thanks to Jan for keeping this worthwhile project going. I'll carry on with tradition, and offer some comments on the contents.

Many SF books we grew up with seemed to be set somewhere in the USA, and that became a normal setting once we read sufficient amounts of SF. Now, it's easy to find books set in any given city the author is familiar with. As an example I know well, Robert J. Sawyer often uses Canadian settings, often a familiar place within Toronto. Does it jar American readers to find books set in a foreign land? I honestly think that writers will lose sales if the book isn't set in a familiar place. Rob has said he's been told to can the Canadian settings because it will lose him American sales.

Wonderful conversation Greg Benford had with Stephen Hawking. I would imagine that if Hawking wasn't so busy doing his work, he'd try his hand at an SF story, and I'm sure one certain SF writer would be only too happy to help him. I know that Hawking was thrilled to cameo in an episode of *Next Generation* some years ago.

I think it may be futile to try to describe and account for any boom in publishing, or any other increase in activity in any other interest. Not long ago in another fanzine, there was the discussion of a renaissance in fanzine writing and publishing. We rejoiced, and expected it to last forever, I guess. Today, if there's any boom in zines, it can probably be attributed to new technologies such as PDFs, ezines and webzines.

Jan, you seemed to like some of the things I'd written in my loc, and believe me, expanding on those points and writing an article would be fun. Real life gets in the way, and the job hunt continues. Also, writing this at 3:30 a.m. on my Palm Zire 21 doesn't help, either. If anyone feels that he or she might be able to write an article based on something I've written in a letter of mine, that person is welcome to take a shot at it.

6 February 2005

[JS: Thanks!]

JOYCE KATZ
909 Eugene Cernan St, Las Vegas NV 89145, USA

I particularly wanted to comment on the art/photos by Dick Jenssen. What a find he is! I admired the cat on the back of *Great Cosmic Donut of Life*, and the lovely *Steam Engine* collage . . . but I was especially moved by the fine cover on *Donut*, which is particularly lovely, with its contrasts in light, shadow and texture. That's a framable photo if I ever saw one!

Congratulations on completing (sorta) your move, and also on acquiring the Wonderful Jan Stinson as co-editor: I like her a lot.

8 February 2005

DAVID J. LAKE
7 8th Ave, St Lucia QLD 4067

Thank you for the review of 'Re-deem the Time' on page 6 — very fair comment. The story is conventionally structured; in fact, I pinched the structure directly from Wells. He had two episodes, Morlocks plus End-of-World, to prove that the devolution was proceeding inexorably. I did exactly the same, for the same reason.

I was delighted by Benford's piece about Hawking, especially because I know the scene very well — I was a student at Trinity, Cambridge (Hawking's college) and I can visualise the places they moved through. I read *A Brief History of Time*, but didn't get much out of it; I've read more exciting popularisations of astrophysics; so I haven't read Hawking's later book. He has become an icon largely because of his handicap.

I'm glad your move has proved to be a success. The thought of moving terrifies me — I have a large house that is getting a bit much for me to maintain; but at nearly 76 I am still physically strong, mowing, tree lopping and climbing trees to get down mangoes. I want to move from here only into a coffin.

9 February 2005

CY CHAUVIN
14248 Wilfred, Detroit, MI 48213, USA

I was absolutely amazed when I received my copy of *Steam Engine Time* and found out that someone in Michigan had become Bruce Gillespie's co-editor! I don't believe I thought that anyone in Michigan even read Bruce Gillespie's fanzines, except for perhaps Patrick O'Leary (who discovered them at a Christmas party I had two years ago).

The cover is really nice, but I admit I am easily impressed by colour artwork on fanzines, having become familiar with fanzines before that was really affordable.

I also have the perfect present for Bruce: a videotape of various steam engines still working in Australia! I bought a lot of videotapes about trains, and had no idea that (one) was set in Australia.

10 February 2005

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER
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MD 20907, USA

Janine Stinson misunderstands my critique of Gregory Benford's use of jazz as a way to define how ideas are passed from one generation to the next in SF. Of course jazz still exists and is evolving. But it appeals to an ever-dwindling niche of fans and is no longer something that a mass audience knows or understands. Classical music, too, is also a form of music whose audience has become a niche audience rather than a mass one. As *Washington Post* critic Philip Kennicott observes, whereas in the 1950s the typical middlebrow American would want to know something about leading opera singers and conductors, today this middlebrow knows a great deal about movie and TV stars and gives a vestigial part of his cultural brain to 'the soprano', the lonely representative of classical music brought in to add a touch of class to a political event or a film. Currently Renee Fleming plays 'the soprano'.

[JS: You didn't make this point in your previous loc, therefore how could I misunderstand it? And you haven't answered my question, 'Why does the next question have to be "What sort of jazz?"']

A generation ago, Brian Aldiss predicted that SF would divide into highbrow and lowbrow elements. This division has now taken place, and today mass-market SF tropes are consumed by film and television fans, while the SF writers who do play with themes developed by Golden and Silver Age writers are a dwindling minority. My point is that you can't simply say that 'SF writers are like *jazz* artists' without considering that Bela Fleck's audience is far smaller than that of Louis Armstrong, and Stephen Baxter has far fewer readers than Sir Arthur C. Clarke.

[JS: You apparently assume that Aldiss' predicted division has occurred, but the only evidence you use to support this is the use of 'mass-market SF tropes' in film and television. I have to wonder how much film and TV SF material you've actually seen in the last five years, since you don't use any specific examples. *SET* readers may well have seen many of the same films and TV programs you may have had in mind when making this comment, but unless you name those films and programs, how will a reader know for sure what you're referencing? Additionally, TV and film are going to lag behind the chronological path of written SF because they arrived in society chronologically later than written SF. There are a lot of themes developed 'by Golden and Silver Age writers' — why didn't you pick some specific ones and give examples from those eras? At least some of those themes are still with us in written SF (where else did the so-called 'British Space Opera Renaissance' come from, otherwise?).

One can certainly say 'SF writers are like jazz artists' without giving any consideration at all to how big of an audience any particular jazz musician currently has. The former has little, if anything, to do with the latter in how Benford used the analogy. SF writers *do* refer to each other's works, as jazz musicians refer to each other's works. And it's not just from one generation to the next; both sf writers and jazz musicians use their contemporaries' works as well as that of previous generations to expand and build upon. This is beginning to smell like an article idea, so I'll shoot myself in the foot and not provide examples here; but I do have them.]

I have no idea why E. D. Webber thinks that Americans don't eat lamb, but he's wrong. Americans eat lamb with as much vigour as Australians. In fact, much of our lamb comes from Australia or New Zealand.

Andrew Butler's article about SF writers in Great Britain falls apart because of a false premise. What do J. K. Rowling, China Mieville, and Susanna Clarke have in common with each other? UK passports? It doesn't seem possible to me to make any sort of generalisation about what every British SF and fantasy writer is currently doing. You might make a case for the evolution of selected genres — the way that J. K. Rowling has altered children's fantasy, or what the rise of Alastair Reynolds, Stephen Baxter and Ken Macleod has meant for twenty-first-century hard SF. But trying to make broad conclusions based on the work of every British fantasist active in 2005 is daft. (And does anyone now find 'Cool Britannia' an attractive or vibrant concept?)

14 February 2005

ERIKA LACEY
Somewhere on the high seas

I'd quite forgotten that you were to go to the US until I started my reply to *SET*, whereupon I felt quite daft for having forgotten!

While I'd not actually thought about participating very much in fannish circles for a long time, I'd not intended to completely disappear off the face of the earth. There were three conventions I'd paid up for this year, for example, as well as one for next, which I'd intended to go to. As for fanzining, well, yes; that would have fallen to the wayside since it's not the most pragmatic of things to do when travelling by bike. Then you're just trying to find somewhere to snooze or find time to yourself when everyone around seems most keen on talking to you about your recent travels!

At the moment I've no real inclination to settling down anywhere. Too much of the world to see. At the moment I want to explore a bit of Australia, and from then on the Pacific isles. I've known yachties to spend five years doing that alone, and so . . . quite a while.

20 March 2005

CLAIRE BRIALEY
59 Shirley Road, Croydon,
Surrey CR0 7ES, England

I was very pleased to see the revival of *Steam Engine Time*. I was also pleased that it's been revived at a time when other science fiction fanzines have appeared that don't disdain to discuss science fiction: Pete Young's *Zoo Nation* and the 'Third Row' fanzine *Meta* (edited by Geneva Melzack) in the UK, for instance. *SET* need no longer be a voice crying in the wilderness but part, I hope, of a wider conversation.

I'm not asking you for a moment to consider dumbing down. Nor am I suggesting that those of us who count ourselves as readers and fans of SF rather than critics or academics can't (or don't want to) cope with the approach you've taken; your letter column would in any case put the lie to that. Consider this simply an encouragement to continue to adopt in *SET* the attitude I appreciate about all the other fanzines I've seen from both of you: a serious consideration of science fiction that acknowledges the fact that many of us read SF because we actually *enjoy* it.

I should add that I've no complaints about your reprint policy in this issue, for all that it is partly accidental. I hadn't read any of those articles before, although I'm sure I'd seen and failed to find the time to follow weblinks to some of them. Collecting them together here, necessitating at most one downloading and printing exercise, provides my only meaningful opportunity to read them. (Although I'm delighted to have here a copy of the print edition, since it enables me not only to have the stiffer card covers but to experience the full glory of Dick Jenssen's covers in the intended colours.) That said, some of these articles do provoke me to go away and read more before I feel qualified to respond.

Having read only Andrew M. Butler's article here, rather than the whole issue of *Science Fiction Studies* in which it appeared, it's difficult to assess Paul Brazier's review of that issue; seeing these two pieces in partial isolation, it seems sometimes as if Brazier's criticisms are violently agreeing with elements of the Butler article he terms a 'farrago'. It makes me wonder again about the purpose of reviewing and the use to which reviews are actually put by readers; in this case, a review apparently intended to convey a highly unfavourable impression of a publication has in fact convinced me that I need to see it for myself.

The question of what is a review reasserted itself when I came to the letter column — and I'm afraid, like one of Brazier's criticisms of Butler, that I'm going to be self-referential here and focus largely on my own work. First, Eric Lindsay criticises my article from *SET* no 2 on John Kessel's *Corrupting Dr Nice* for giving away the plot (on which I'm grateful for Jan's editorial reassurance that it didn't read that way to her, at least). But I can see why Eric might have thought that it did, since he terms the piece a 'review'. It wasn't. It was originally written as part of an apazine for Acnestis, the SF literary apa — which now seems, sadly, to be in decline — and was reprinted largely unchanged in *SET* at Bruce's request. I always assume that the majority of readers of a review will not yet have read the book, that the readers of a critical article *will* have read the book (or else will care little for potential 'spoilers') and that the readers of my apazine were aware of my regular caveats that people who didn't want to know plot details before reading a book themselves might want to skip particular sections. I don't know quite where that piece fell between the latter two categories on its republication — it certainly lost its 'ware spoilers' context — but it was never a 'review' in my terms.

Neither, though, was my article which you described as 'a review of *SET* 3', from which you extracted what appears in no 4 as a letter. This response to the Benford and Blackford articles in no 3 originally appeared, as you stated, in my personal fanzine *No Sin But Ignorance* (the title carried over, in fact, from my old Acnestis apazine); as clearly explained there, it was 'a short piece which should have been, and was always intended to be, a letter of comment to another fanzine. It's just that I understand the fanzine in question . . . has ceased publication, and I'm still interested in this subject and want to know whether anyone else has any thoughts about this.' It wasn't a review of *SET*; it was an article adapted from a letter of comment on those two pieces which it seemed would otherwise have no audience — given context for any of my readers who didn't get *SET* at all or who had fallen victim to its exceptionally erratic distribution in the UK. Had I known you were planning to revive the fanzine, I would of course just have sent it to you in LoC form instead, as originally intended several years ago!

More generally, I should congratulate you on your overall editing of the letter column, given your backlog of comments on two issues from a period of two-and-a-half years. I don't know whether praise belongs most to the correspondents or the editors but, although many of the letters made me want to go back to re-read the original articles to which they referred, none really needed me to do so in order to engage with the points they were making themselves. And the decision to run the letters in chronological order seems a pragmatic and logical one in the circumstances. I look forward to the next 'normal' issue, though, and to a resumption of a regular schedule so that *Steam Engine Time* can really begin to live up to the potential of its name as a fanzine at the heart of a vibrant discussion of science fiction — rather than meaning 'too late to be topical'.

10 April 2005

[JS: I'd like to see *SET* become a more regularly published fanzine as well, as I'm sure Bruce would, but time and money seem to interfere with that wish. Bruce has to Earn His Keep, and I tend to get sick at really inopportune moments. We've discussed cutting back on the paper-version mailing list and making *SET* available online with efanzines.com, and it's likely both these things will happen. While it won't solve all the problems of more regular pubbing, it should at least mitigate some of them.]

ARTHUR D. HLAVATY
206 Valentine St, Yonkers NY 10704, USA

[BRG: This is a review/letter of comment that I found in an issue of Arthur's online fanzine *Nice Distinctions*:]

I just got the fourth issue of *Steam Engine Time*, a zine about science fiction whose only flaw has been its infrequency. It's available at efanzines.com, and a change of editors (Bruce Gillespie is now joined by Janine Stinson) has not meant a loss of quality. In the delay and confusion, though, at least one thing was lost: my letter of comment. The first issue included a number of lists of the 20 best SF books of the last 20 years of the century, including one that included other stuff because SF 'doesn't exist in a vacuum'. Here's what I wrote in reply (updates added):

I liked the Essential 20 SFs, which is to say I liked the four real ones and could live without '20 of My Favorite Things and Screw the Topic'. OK, maybe that's a bit excessive, but I've never seen anybody who said that something I like 'doesn't exist in a vacuum' go on to talk about other things I like. This was no exception.

I might have left it to the knowledgeable individuals already present, but I noticed to my horror that nobody had mentioned Greg Egan, or Paul Di Filippo, or Bruce Sterling. Something had to be done.

So, my very own 20. It's SF, by which I mean science fiction and stuff that feels to me like science fiction. I'm happy to draw a bright, if somewhat fuzzy line around that: Peter Straub's 'Blue Rose' series is magnificent, but is Not What We're Talking About. 'Essential' is a suitably vague word, which I would use to cover some combination of the overlapping categories of Important, Good, and I Like; the use of multiple categories makes it possible to say that the book being complained about, regardless of whether included or ex-, is actually under one of the other shells.

- Gene Wolfe: *Book of the New Sun*. Of course.
- John Clute: Encyclopedias. Of course.
- Neal Stephenson: *Snow Crash*. Of course.
- Ursula K. Le Guin: *Four Ways to Forgiveness*. Of course.
- William Gibson: *Neuromancer*. Of course, but in my heart of hearts, I feel he is a one-hit wonder. (I have since decided that Gibson is 10 years ahead of his time, but his time was 1984.)
- Greg Egan: *Permutation City*. Great metaphysical SF. (Still my favourite, but I'm prepared to agree that *Schild's Ladder* is even better.)
- Paul Di Filippo: *Lost Pages*. Or *Ciphers*. Or *Ribofunk*. But you need something by him.
- Bruce Sterling: *Schismatrix*. Continuing inventiveness. Mechs vs shapers is a major metaphor.

- Vernor Vinge: *A Fire upon the Deep*. Excellent hard SF, but I'm afraid what I remember best is the cute little doggies.
- Samuel R. Delany: *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand*. The best first-half novel in SF history.
- Connie Willis: *Impossible Things*. *Fire Watch* may be better Serious Lit, but this one is sheer delight.
- Rudy Rucker: *Software/Wetware/ Freeware*. A series that started out excellent and evolves as our computer knowledge evolves. (Now with added *Realware*.)
- Robert Anton Wilson: *Schrödinger's Cat*. Alternate physics paradigms and James Joyce, among other things.
- Patrick O'Leary: *Door Number 3*. An apparently mimetic book that gets stranger and stranger.
- Robert Silverberg: *Beyond the Safe Zone*. OK, so it's a collection of pre-1980 stories. It's a great collection, and SF is getting more retro all the time.
- Ken MacLeod: *The Sky Road*. The best new political SF writer in years. (He continues to be remarkably inventive.)
- Kathleen Ann Goonan: *Queen City Jazz/Mississippi Blues*. Nanotech as Lotsa Neat Stuff. (Haven't yet read the other two.)
- Patrick Nielsen Hayden: *Starlight 2*. Glad to see someone else picked no 2. No 1 was historically important because of its absence of theme, but no 2 had better stories.
- Tim Powers: *Last Call/Expiration Date/Earthquake Weather*: Gringo Magic Realism.
- David Zindell: *Neverness*. I think as more people get familiar with this and the following books, they'll be an 'of course'.

GILLIAN POLACK
[address withheld],
Chifley ACT 2606

I need to reassure you — I knew about your amazing publishing history. You should have heard me when I found myself on that panel at Continuum 3 — I told the CSFG meeting, very proudly 'I am on a panel with Bruce Gillespie'. It and the 'weird history' panel were highlights of Continuum 3 (2005) for me.

I have no new research on Cordwainer Smith, really. What I have is a bunch of reflections by an historian/writer/ ex-public servant on a writer/ex-public servant. I am very happy though, to bring my thoughts together into an essay — anything that gets him seen and understood makes me a happy bunny. It totally bugs me that a lot of good earlier SF writers are dismissed as 'only SF' when they actually have broader literary claims.

I rather like the thought of not forgetting the work that has already been done on a subject — especially as work from the 1960s would be by people who knew Linebarger. The simple shift in perspective between 1960s writers on the subject and modern writers on the subject would do a lot to illuminate Cordwainer Smith and where he was coming from.

Electronic editions are seriously cool — I hope you go that route rather than having to wait before you can put out more *SET* and *SFC*. You can always do a limited print back run later on for people who don't have the computer capacity. If you regularly publish electronically, I hope you are being archived by Pandora. Your journals are definitely of national significance in the field.

9 August 2005

[BRG: I presume Google accesses and archives PDF files. If I had the time, I would make an index of all past issues of *SF Commentary*, *Steam Engine Time*, *The Metaphysical Review*, **brg, *Great Cosmic Donut of Life*, etc, but somehow it seems more satisfying to publish new issues.]**

HARRY BUERKETT
507 West High Street,
Urbana IL 61801, USA

As to *Steam Engine Time*: I'm a Fortean from way back, but I didn't pick up on the reference. I'll have to look up the Fort quotation: I absolutely love Charles Fort's works. Shame on me! But of course: Heron of Alexandria's steam engine, created to prove that air has mass and 'atoms' which could be excited. And since the Greeks weren't interested in motive power (they had slave power), they didn't develop the steam engine. The Romans knew of Heron and his steam engine, but for much the same reasons saw no use in developing it.

On another note: what would an article on steam engines, in your estimation, entail?

9 September 2005

[BRG: An article about steam engines in *Steam Engine Time* would really puzzle the readers.]

DAVE WOOD
1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon,
Somerset BS2 7QA, England

On 19 August I achieved 69 years on this planet. One of my birthday presents from my daughter was a copy of Mike Ashley's *Transformations* — except it didn't appear, as Andy Richards (bless him) had gone on holiday and the book hadn't been posted . . . whiz forward to today when in the post came the blessed book along with *Steam Engine Time* 4. What serendipity, in that Bruce's review of *The Best Australian Science Fiction Writing: A Fifty Year Retrospective* covered so much of the same period, and more of it will lap over into Mike's final volume. Am totally immersed into the fifties . . . ah. What a wonderful time — be buggered with all this mainstream talk of austerity, boredom and angst: to me the SF world was buzzing as it has never buzzed since . . .

11 September 2005

[BRG: Through the Internet I've just begun to correspond with Dave Wood, only to find that he has extensive treatment for cancer in recent months, and hasn't been given long to live. But he is still cheerful, still posting to the email lists every day.]

TERRY JEEVES
56 Red Scar Drive, Newby,
Scarborough YO12 5RQ, England

Many thanks for sending me *Steam Engine Time*, even though with *Erg*'s demise after 45 years and nothing by way of return. I liked the cover very much. I expect it was done on a computer. I am continually amazed at what PCs can do. A belated welcome to Janine, and what a heap of previous activities she has — my own are much fewer: steel analyst/ut, clay boat stamper, wireless op, wireless mechanic, van driver and finally teacher.

I really enjoyed Darrell Schweitzer's piece on a book sellout. I've never heard of such an affair before; it sounded a great affair. I have some 1000 SF magazines to dispose of. Do you think it would work for them? The book reviews were over my head, as I am completely out of touch with what passes for science fiction these days. I suspect the boom in fantasy is due to the great advances in science being too much for most modern writers to weave into a convincing plot, so they turn to fantasy. As for a British Boom in SF, that, if it exists at all, was a boom in S Fantasy, not in S Fiction. Books on Australian SF make me wonder why choose one aspect of the writers' origins? Can we expect anthologies of Chinese SF, or Slobbovakian SF?

[BRG: In the sixties and seventies we did occasionally see collections of SF writers from non-English-speaking countries. Often the translations were shaky, but we did get some idea of a wide variety of views that have rarely been glimpsed in English-language SF. Australian writers (like Canadian writers) do have a viewpoint — a tone of voice — that is different from that of American writers. If Australian writers (like Canadian writers) sell to American or British publications, often their special qualities are ignored. I trust that the contributions to Rob Gerrand's collection (which was released in Amer-

ica) would make overseas readers sufficiently interested to order Australian SF collections and magazines from Australian suppliers.]

I have just has a week in hospital and, without too much messing around, the specialist diagnosed Parkinson's Disease. Which means sundry little problems. So far I have difficulty walking with a stick, my speech occasionally blurs, my handwriting has virtually gone, and even typing is a real chore, with typos every other word. All of this means that I am having to cut down on my fanac. I'll try to answer letters, but replies will be rather brief, I am afraid. Likewise, LoCs of fanzines will perforce be minimal, if at all, so I shall understand if you drop me from your mailing lists. This isn't a secret, and I don't mind it being passed along so that people will understand why I may not answer letters very promptly. Reckon it is FAFIA.

11 September 2005

[BRG: Fandom has its duties and obligations — and lifelong friendships. Over the years you have sent me far more issues of *Erg* than I have sent you issues of my magazines. I'm sorry to hear about your illness, but at least I can help a bit by continuing to send you *SET*, *SFC*, etc.]

BEN INDICK
428 Sagamore Ave, Teaneck NJ 07666, USA

The *SET* covers are genuinely beautiful, and, I reckon, worth the expense. Maybe. I am truly happy you enjoyed your trip here to the 'Stytes.' Don't be a stranger again. There is an East Coast, you know.

The photo of Darrell is strange, either someone else or 40 years old. At least. This is not the Darrell I know and love, secondarily to Mattie anyway. Since I am a peach-fuzzed kid of 82, my friends are always telling me I should sell off my collection. I have a *complete* Arkham House, with three forgeries, a ton of Stephen King stuff and a drawing by Michael Whelan which was a base for a painting in *The Dark Tower* 1, but I don't want to sell. I like the books and I dislike empty shelves, and my kids can do as they please with them all. Darrell, stay away!

13 September 2005

[BRG: That's the photo that Darrell Schweitzer sent me to print! Could somebody Out There send me a more recent photo?

The Bring Bruce Bayside Fund was set up to enable me to travel from Melbourne to San Francisco for Corflu 2005, and back. Great generosity by American, Australian and British fans meant that I could stay in Seattle for a week, attend Corflu one weekend and Potlatch the week after, also in San Francisco, see some of California, and drop in on Arnie and Joyce Katz in Las Vegas, before returning via three days in Los Angeles. But the fund was never intended to provide an overall American trip. *Sigh* There were many friends I wanted to see again. Fortunately quite a few of them travelled to Corflu and Potlatch.]

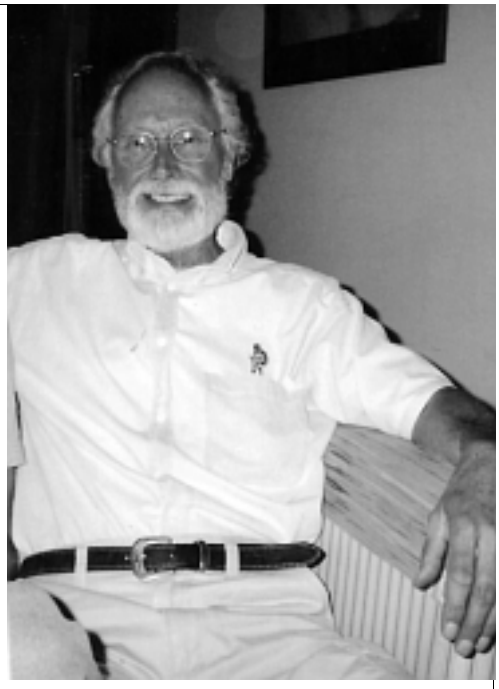
DAVID BOUTLAND
RMB 5464 The Ridgeway, Holgate NSW 2250

Thank you for making contact. When I had the internet I looked you up, but couldn't get an address. For interest, I enclose a photo of me as an old bloke (now 66); enjoyed seeing yourself not much changed, and Harding ditto. J. Baxter I would not have recognised, but then I never did know him well.

Thank you for the two fanzines. I have to confess that they are a bit rarefied for me these days. I'm still stuck in the past; just finished rereading *The Day of the Triffids*. I was delighted Rob Gerrand chose 'Parky', especially for the nostalgia trip. Some great stories in the selection — personally I loved Lee Harding's 'Dancing Gerontius'. Can't say I've ever really understood why 'Parky' was so well received — maybe a kind of endearing dumb kindness shown by the carny boss (a bit like my old friend David Rome, who is also kind of dumb); also, we could do with a 'Parky' then, now, and in the future? Thank you too for your very kind comments about my story, and my writing.

I've definitely quit TV forever, about one step ahead of it quitting me. Tried writing short stories for the American market and actually did get some real interest from *Ellery Queen* — but too many writers and too little space available in the mags. Three months waiting to hear, one sign of interest after a lot of submissions, uh-uh. I've just now completed a novel, *Pelican Dance*, 140 thousand words, and trying to find an agent. It's the toughest work of all this book-length fiction — and again, an overcrowded market. Guess I was lucky to find a way to make a good-enough living writing TV drama.

On the personal side, my partner of 34 years, Cheryl — you may have met her once in Melbourne — is now helping to keep me in the manner I've become accustomed . . . working part-time at David Jones. We live in a rather jerry-built old house on a couple of acres a few miles inland from the coast. Still poor, like most writers' families (never did earn those huge fees everyone thinks we did in telly). Have a son, Matthew, aged 21, just finishing his trade (signwriter).



David Boutland, photo taken in 2005. He is probably remembered by readers of E. J. Carnell's *New Worlds* and *New Writings in SF* as 'David Rome'.

Health's good. Might live till 90. Mainstream reading: have discovered Virginia Woolf. But as always, writing is the thing. Compulsive masochism.

21 September 2005

DAVID CAKE
6 Florence Rd, Nedlands WA 6009

Borderlands doesn't call itself a fanzine; we call ourselves a semi-prozine. I do wish that the various semi-prozines wouldn't call themselves fanzines, which just causes confusion. I think the confusion arises because some in the current generation (and I am probably thinking of the *Eidolon* crew in particular as the origin of the trend) have more exposure to the alternative music/culture fanzine scene, in which payment is common and swapping less so. And I am afraid we don't swap — if nothing else its not really practical for us, as we have an editorial committee of nine people, so a swapping arrangement wouldn't really be a practical way for all of us to read things. We do, however, pay for contributions, though not a large amount, and we are happy to convert this payment to a subscription (which is what many contributors prefer). We can also have our arm twisted to send review copies.

I am also intending to start a fanzine. I was quite surprised that at Interaction in Glasgow, I spent a lot of my time with people who were the 'fanzine crowd' — the Plokta cabal, Randy from *Chunga* (and his Australian girlfriend Sharee, who was apparently an active fanzine fan some years ago), Mark Plummer and Clare Brialey, Colin and Catherine, who are organising Corflu in 2006, etc. I don't

normally spend much time at conventions with people who I think of as the fanzine crowd in Australia — but then, the active fanzine fans in Australia who are also active convention goers is almost limited to you and Eric Lindsay (and I guess arguably Erika Lacey). The upshot was, after reading many issues of *Plokta* and *Banana Wings*, I am planning to write a fanzine myself, mostly focusing on fandom itself rather than SF, I am afraid.

I tremendously enjoyed the previous issues of *Steam Engine Time*. I'm quite happy reading your fanzines only in PDF, where practical — I prefer paper, like most people, but I don't want to add to your financial burdens, and really don't mind PDF that much.

7 October 2005

[BRG: I spend a small fortune — for me, a large fortune — on this magazine. If I'm willing to trade fanzines, I can't see why fiction magazines can't return the favour. The net result is that I will not subscribe to a magazine that I think should trade, so I have never seen a copy of *Borderlands*. :: I'm glad you fell in with the right people in Glasgow, but I still have not seen a copy of a David Cake fanzine. Western Australia badly needs its own good fannish fanzine.]

[WAHF: Larry Bigman (we caught up with each other at Corflu, February 2005); Janice Gelb; Pete Young; Robert Elordieta; Tom Feller (who is willing to download *SET* from efanzines.com); Guy Lillian; Earl Kemp; Howard Hendrix; Jim Linwood; and Bob Sabella (who found *Steam Engine Time* 4 at eFanzines.com: 'I have traded with Janine Stinson for several years, and I know you have gotten a wonderful co-editor. I hope this means lots more issues of set in the future'; Bob is willing to download *SET*, but I value his *Visions of Paradise* so much that of course we will trade with him).

[Mark Plummer sent us a copy of the complete version of the review he wrote of *Steam Engine Time* 4 and *Great Cosmic Donut of Life* 42 for *Matrix*, the news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association. His article was called 'Everyday Life in the Fan Household'. Thanks, Mark, for such comments as: '*Steam Engine Time* 4 produced with American co-editor Jan Stinson, is all you might expect and hope a science fiction fanzine to be — apart from the fact that it looks far too slick and expensive. But that's the thing about what Bruce does, both on his own and with Jan: he may wear the outer garments of a respectable literary quarterly but, to paraphrase something I half remember from *Ansible* several years back, he wears his fannish underpants with pride. There's some great stuff in here: articles from the BSFA's own Andrew M. Butler — his Pioneer Award-winning article on the British Boom in SF — as well as Daryl Schweitzer, Greg Benford, Paul Brazier and, well, loads of people, plus a good slice of Bruce himself (Jan isn't that visible this time around). And, happily — to spare Bruce and Jan from bankruptcy — you can get this and other issues from the efanzines.com website . . . As usual, the arrival of a Bruce fanzine makes me think that, hey, we should be doing this sort of thing too and I immediately make a start by changing the CD and returning to the sofa because, well, you've got to think right around these things.']

— 31 July 2006

Peregrine Nations is a quarterly fanzine that can be downloaded from **efanzines.com**
or you can obtain your copy from **Janine G. Stinson, PO Box 248, Eastlake MI 49626-0248, USA**
or **tropicsf@earthlink.net** (use 'Peregrine Nations' in your subject heading)
for $2 per copy, or for contribution (LoCs, articles, reviews, art, etc).
British agent: **Peter Sullivan: peter@burdonvale.co.uk**

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