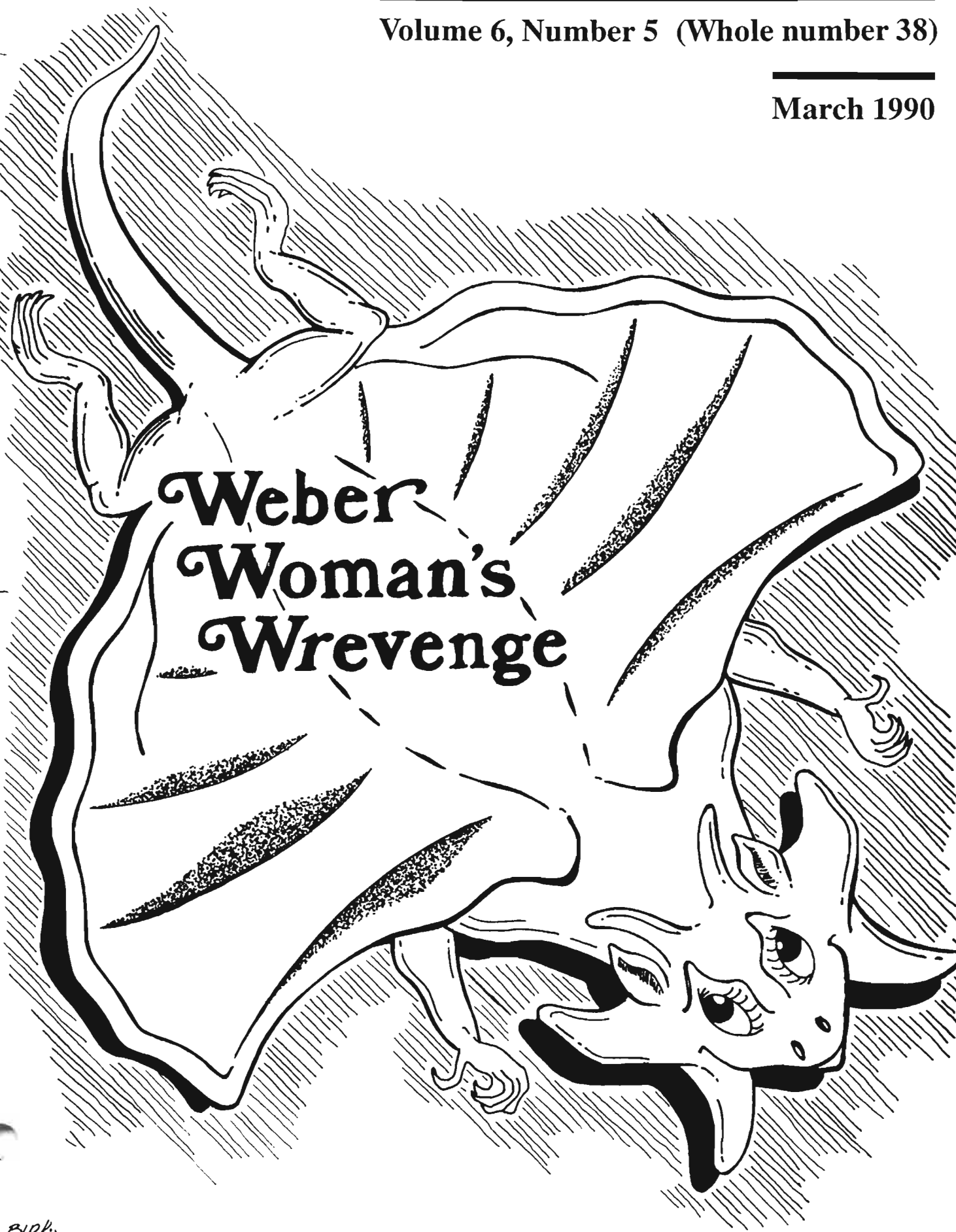

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**Weber
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Wrevenge**

Weberwoman's Wrevenge 38

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I prefer some sort of personal response.

The Rubbish Bin

Last issue, I mentioned that I was moving. Much has happened since then, including two moves (it's a real nuisance when one can't get possession of the new place before one absolutely must be out of the old one), but we survived. It would be a bit premature to say I'm 'settled into' the new place, since it will be a construction zone for some months to come, and we keep shifting furniture from one room to another so we can get at the walls, but at least I know what I'm working on now.

You can read more about it in my diary excerpts. But first, find your address list and change mine yet again. Sorry about that, but if you think it's a nuisance, you ought to be on this end.

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Fan funds past and present

Roger Weddall

In recent years there's been a lot of discussion in Australian fandom about the different fan funds: whether the way they are managed and run should be changed, how often delegates should be sent from one country to another, even whether the funds are worth maintaining at all.

It seems curious that, given the expenditure of all this energy, no-one has devoted much time or column space to the question of what the different fan funds are actually all about.

Perhaps this is because everybody already knows what they're about. I suspect that most fans carry around their own, private, different convictions and interpretations of how each fan fund ought to function, who ought to be sent as a representative, and so on.

At the same time, I suspect that whatever disagreements or differences of opinion there may be between fans about this spring from a single, largely unrecognised conflict that is inherent in the set-up of (and the history leading up to the formation of) the very first fan fund – TAFF.

The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund first came into being in 1955. Its express purpose was to enable the ferrying of fans from Europe (Great Britain) to North America (the U.S.A.) and vice versa.

TAFF did not, however, spontaneously spring into existence. Before it there were two separate occasions on which fans banded together to raise the funds necessary to bring to North America a popularly acclaimed European fan. The Big Pond Fund brought the well-known Ted Camell across from England, and in a similar – but unrelated – effort, the 1952 trip of Walt Willis to America was paid for by monies raised in fandom.

On neither occasion did these fans 'stand' as 'candidates' in a 'race' of any

sort. Both were known to many fans in America, and both were the subject of popular acclaim.

Someone else will be able to write with any authority about what happened next, but it seems clear that people in fandom thought these trips successful, and the funding of future trips to be, in principle, a Good Idea. It was then somehow established that the exchanges would be a both-ways affair, and TAFF was set up as a regular, annual, event, 'to encourage closer ties between fans' on both sides of the Atlantic.

At that point, when TAFF became a regular event, everything changed. No longer was it a case of a particular fan being the focus of such popular acclaim that other fans would simply get together and decide that it was worth their while to pay for this person to travel to meet them. Now, the arrangement was to become formalised, the spontaneous acclaim to become annual approval. Now, if you'll excuse the metaphor, there was to be a mill, and grist would have to be found for it.

Not – and I should make myself perfectly clear on this point – that I think the idea of an annual fan fund 'race' is a bad one. You will see, however, that there is a clear difference between a group of people more or less spontaneously deciding they want to pay for someone to travel to meet them, and the same group of people being told that it is hoped that they will help meet the cost of *someone's* journey to meet them, and here is a list of people they can choose from to vote for.

The spontaneous sort of one-off fan fund is far from dead, please note. In



1959 Irish fan John Berry was brought to America, as was Walt Willis for a second time, in 1962. For Aussiecon I in 1975, Bob Tucker was flown to Australia, and ten years later Bob Shaw was likewise invited Down Under to appear at Aussiecon II. (There are other examples.)

Meanwhile, every year since 1955, fans around the world have had a choice of whom to send as a representative to (or, whom to invite over from) an ever-increasing number of fannish destinations.

The conflict I spoke of earlier, then, is that many of the trappings of that earlier type of fan fund are still in place around the newer and nowadays-more-common model. And people become confused by this, confused by the way that some of those trappings or traditions are turned on their head, their meaning and function distorted and even reversed.

Take, for example, the business of a fan fund candidate's nominators. Whereas one might expect a nominator to be someone who of their own accord decided they'd like to nominate someone who would make a good candidate, nowadays it's common – if not the rule – for the can-

didates to be the ones who do the asking, asking if people would be willing to be their nominators.

The picture – and role – of a nominator has changed, then, from being that of someone who had spontaneously jumped on the bandwagon of acclaim for a candidate, to that of someone who is in effect a character reference or a guarantor of the candidate's suitability or credibility.

Even more obviously, there's the nature or standing or 'quality' (always an interesting word to use when talking about people, I think) of the candidates themselves. In a system where people can put themselves forward as candidates, where's the guarantee of 'quality'? Theoretically, a person's nominators are those guarantees, but tales of nominators being press-ganged into the job because they're too polite to say no are legion.

What then does one do, if one feels that, for all of a person's worth as an individual, they're somehow not really 'candidate material'? Is it permissible – as has been debated in the pages of this fanzine and elsewhere – to campaign against a candidate?

Under the earlier model of fan fund, it would seem churlish in the extreme to do so. After all, here is someone whose trip is going to be arranged and paid for by fandom at large because they are widely considered to be just about the best thing since sliced bread, and *you* want to campaign against them? The answer in this case is surely, simply, not to contribute to the fund.

When considering the latter case, however – a newer type of annually-run fan fund – it's rather different. What if one or more of the self-chosen candidates really is unsuitable? Because, to be blunt about it, although a fan fund race has about it many of the aspects of a mere popularity poll, there's more at stake here than just a 'Nice Person of Fandom 1999' award: there's the matter of a huge amount of money changing hands, a trip overseas as a representative of the fandom the person comes from, and one of the

principal ways that fandom has of honouring and rewarding one of its members.

Commonsense and a modicum of tact might dictate that, were one to feel that for one reason or another a candidate did not somehow measure up, *as a candidate*, one might well feel justified in somehow speaking out. As with all things, it can be done well, or done badly. And of course, it can also be done inappropriately.

Here again is where confusion can reign. Looking in vain for a secure and foolproof way of ensuring that 'the right person' or 'the right *sort* of person' wins a fan fund race, even the most senior and experienced of fans will sometimes in their uncertainty cling defensively to an unwritten set of

In a system where people put themselves forward as candidates, a certain amount of scrutiny is not only inevitable, it is appropriate

principles or conditions or traditions that have, properly, nothing to do with the more modern, annually-run fan fund.

I'm told that, prior to the supremely successful visit of DUFF winner Lucy Huntzinger to Australia in 1987, there was some grumbling in North America about how she hadn't been 'active' in fandom for 'the required ten (or was it fifteen?) years' for her to be a suitably eligible candidate. On a more mundane level, in some people's minds it can apparently count against a candidate what their sex is, their age, and even what part of the country they come from – when clearly it ought to come down to what sort of job they'll do as both a representative and an administrator.

The point to keep in mind, I think, is that in a system where people put themselves forward as candidates, a

certain amount of scrutiny is not only inevitable, it is appropriate. To treat every hopeful, potential fan fund winner as some sort of sacred cow who is automatically beyond reproach does neither the fan fund nor the candidates themselves a service.

It doesn't do right by the fan fund, because the question of how suitable a candidate is, is never squarely addressed. It doesn't do right by the candidates, because when there is no opportunity for open, honest discussion, there is instead what Robert Lichtman referred to in a recent issue of *Trapdoor* as 'the surprise potshots or downright nastiness from anyone so inclined', otherwise known as gossip. Usually anonymous, often outrageously irrelevant, always unanswerable.

Clear-eyed and honest examination, then, of both the candidates and – more importantly – what the various fan funds themselves are there for, can only be a good thing. My larger goal in writing this article has been to try to help with the process of sorting out the present day fan fund wheat from the historically-based chaff. Hopefully, the clearer the understanding in people's minds of why there are fan funds at all, and what is meant to be achieved by them, the better fans will be able to address the question, now and in the future, of whether those fan funds are meeting the functions they were created to fulfill.

{The editor can't resist saying a few things here, especially as I am in the group that believes fan funds 'ought' to be rewards for services to fandom. At the same time, I recognise that the funds have changed, and that today – whether I like it or not – the candidates frequently promote themselves, rather than their supporters promoting them. At the same time, many of the people I think most deserving of a win decline to stand, even when their friends encourage, insist, demand that they do so. One bows to the inevitable, and supports the revival of the special-purpose funds. Both serve their purposes. – JHW}

Life, don't talk to me about life

Excerpts from Jean Weber's diary

You may recall me complaining about the difficulty of finding what I was looking for in a house, in an acceptable location, within my price range. After several months, I changed my tactics and began looking in a different area. This time I found just what I'd wanted all along, but had never seen advertised anywhere near the price range I was willing to consider. So, off to another auction, where I had to go to my absolute limit of money to get the place (but that wasn't much more than the other, less desirable, places would have cost me). I signed the contract that night and moved in just before Christmas.

What I've got is a house in the Federation style, built in 1914 and not much changed since then (except for new guttering on the roof, a flush toilet installed indoors and a kitchen that looks about 1940's or so). There are four large rooms, a tiny bathroom, an utterly inadequate kitchen (but I don't cook if I can avoid it anyway), and a glassed-in sun porch in very poor condition. The ceilings are high and ornate, and there are fireplaces in each room. Two of the fireplaces have beautiful tiles inlaid around them.

The house is located in a quiet, pleasant neighborhood only three blocks from a major bus interchange and shopping center. The other dozen or so similar houses on the block appear to have been renovated.

The first major problem needing correction was the roof. Several of the slate tiles had slipped, and in one spot a minor waterfall occurred in the living room every time it rained heavily. Eric and I managed to fix that ourselves, which was a good thing because no roofers were interested in doing it the week before Christmas.

The next project was to stop the rising damp. I got someone to do that

in January. It was fairly dramatic, involving removing the baseboards, drilling holes in the bricks, and pumping in a silicon solution. On the outside, the decorative cement had to be removed from one row of bricks first. At one point there was a mini-jackhammer, a heavy-duty drill, and a compressor all roaring away at once. Even with earplugs, it was amazingly noisy.

The next big project is to renovate the bathroom to a slightly more usable standard, but without spending too many thousands of dollars doing it. It's a tiny room, with a tub and a toilet (both in good condition, fortunately), but no shower or handbasin. The walls are hideously ugly and the window surrounds are cracked. A linen cupboard in the corner made the room look even smaller (apparently the original hot water service for the tub was in this spot; when it was removed, shelves were put in). So far I've ripped most of the old wall linings off and demolished the old cupboard. Soon I'll get someone to replace the window and a plumber to install the new basin and shower, after which I'll reline the walls and lay tiles on the floor. My deadline is May 17, which is when my parents arrive for a visit.

The backyard features several exotic outbuildings which have been built around the original toilet. Eric and I have almost finished demolishing a well-rotted timber greenhouse, and I've started reclaiming the garden.

We also climbed up in the attic and cleaned out a lot of junk up there. When we came

down, we discovered that part of the ceiling in my office had fallen down. Eric was very upset about that, but I said if it was going to fall, it would have done it eventually and I'd rather it happened now than later, like when the laser printer is underneath (or I am).

I've finally admitted that the ornate ceilings in the entrance hall and the living room need to be replaced (they are sagging badly and could easily fall down any time), but that will cost too much money and isn't urgent, so it will just have to wait.

Meanwhile I've been patching walls and painting a few things, which makes it look like I've accomplished something, and Eric keeps putting in electrical outlets.

Minou just loves this house with the wide window sills and no screens. Boy, is she going to be annoyed when I get screens installed.

Three sets of neighbors introduced themselves to me within a few days of my moving in, and filled me in on some of the neighborhood gossip and folklore – including a lot of information on the former owner of the house, who'd lived there for about 40 or 50 years and was well known and liked – obviously a hard act to follow. They also showed me through their houses so I could admire the renovation work



and gain some ideas and inspiration.

One young woman (Joanne from #11) turned up while the moving van was there and invited me to her place for lunch – very welcome at that point! She lives with her parents, a sister, and her baby daughter.

'Uncle Bob' from #9 showed up next, to tell me he'd been taking care of the place since the previous owner died, nearly a year ago, and for some years before that. Bob is recently retired and apparently has a fair amount of time to kibbitz. It quickly became clear that his standards of front-yard maintenance were vastly higher than mine, so when he offered to mow the lawn, I encouraged him. The first time I offered to pay him, he acted insulted, but after another month went by without my mowing the lawn again (I didn't consider it needed it yet) despite his dropping lots of hints, he finally agreed to accept payment. I was enjoying our conversations, which went along the lines of:

'Your lawn could use a trim.'

'Really? Nah. It's just getting long enough to wiggle your toes in.'

Next day:

'You're not going to mow your lawn, are you?'

'Sure I am... just not very soon. Doesn't need it yet. I like long grass.'

Next day:

'Do you mind if I mow your lawn for you?'

'No, go right ahead.'

Later:

'Now, doesn't that look better?'

'Ye-e-e-ss, but don't you think it's too short now?'

The couple in #5 (Kim and Malcolm) have been giving me hints on the cure of drainage problems (which mainly involves a lot of digging), and making other practical suggestions when asked.

Travels: future

My parents, who moved from Virginia to Washington State (Lacey) last year, are visiting Australia again in May-August. After a few days at my place, they're heading off to tour the

Northern Territory and Queensland by car. I'm planning to spend 10 days with them around the Alice Springs -Ayers Rock area. I was shocked to realize that it's been nearly 15 years since I visited that area – I went out there just after Aussiecon One (1975). I may join them for another week or 10 days later in the trip, but I have neither the time, money, nor inclination to spend a long stretch with them. We get along fine, but drive each other mad after awhile.

Conventions

In early October, Eric and I attended Circulation 4, a 3-day con in Canberra at which I was 'mascot'. I quite enjoyed myself, as you might expect.

The first weekend in December Eric took the bus to Melbourne to attend a convention, and I drove to Canberra for the first Space Conference to be held by the National Space Society. Alas, it was not to be. The letter informing me of the conference's postponement reached me nearly two weeks later. So I spent several hours hanging around the National Science and Technology Centre, looking for the con, and enjoying the exhibits. (The weekend staff at the Centre knew nothing, either, except that the conference rooms were booked.)

The Centre itself was fascinating and enjoyable to visit. There were some wonderful gadgets I would love to have. Most of the exhibits are participatory: you do various things which are often amusing while demonstrating some principle of physics (usually), or chemistry or biology.

I appeared to be the only person wandering around alone, which is probably why one of the attendants (a man somewhat older than myself) latched on to me. Several exhibits required an authorized person to start them, so he would insert his key and tell me to push the button. This generally caused something loud and dramatic to happen, and he'd shout 'Now look what you've done!' much to the amusement of the children present. Then he'd drag me off to

some other exhibit that wasn't getting enough attention from other visitors, and insist that I try it out.

Between being entertained by this character and staying with Carole and Jim Nomarhas (whom I always enjoy visiting), the weekend was far from a loss, though disappointing to miss the space conference.

Working at IBM

The good fun of the first few months soon gave way to entirely too heavy a workload of not-terribly-interesting stuff that needed intense concentration and meticulous attention. This ended at Christmas, when the urgent projects were completed, and has been followed by a span of weeks with very little to do. If I could afford it, I'd simply take the time off and work on the house. I suppose I should be grateful that IBM is willing to keep paying me instead of just laying me off until they have work again.

Things did improve a bit when I finally got a PC (actually a PS/2 Model 70 with 120 Mbyte hard disk, but not OS/2) on my desk. Previously I had only a terminal to a mainframe, and no way to either take files home or print them in privacy. The other good bit was finally getting a signon that allows access to the 'conferences', IBM's electronic bulletin boards. What fun! Also very educational.



Another view of 1989

An anonymous reader

I read your item on *Woodstock*, *Moonwalks and Me* and for the first time in many years I actually felt a pull to put pen to paper. It is almost a case of 'the other side of the coin' for me.

I also vividly remember man's first steps on the moon. It was evening here in Australia. My husband was out at night school and I was home with the children, catching up on the ironing and watching *The Momentous Historical Event* on television. The children (aged 4 and 3) had given me a long hard day, and I can remember distinctly thinking to myself, 'How come we have the technology to put a man on the moon, but haven't yet developed any real technology to relieve woman of the tiring domestic chores such as ironing and child care?'

Now some twenty years later, I'm still saying much the same thing. 'We now have the technology to send our interstellar visiting card, visit the closer planets, and explore the outer reaches of our solar system (albeit by remote control), but woman is still burdened with the chores such as ironing and child care in most (family) homes.'

Maybe I was just lucky with my choice of partner. He was willing to allow me some room. This doesn't mean that our marriage has been a piece of cake.

I went into marriage much the same as you – fully stereotyped and conditioned by society to accept the role of 'woman, the home-maker and child-rearer' with a 'bread-winner husband'. My husband was much the same, except for one little quirk. He liked science fiction, went to an SF club, and even enjoyed (what was then) 'B' grade movies of '(nominal) SF/horror'. I can still remember the first time he took me to the movies – it was a midnight double feature of 'The

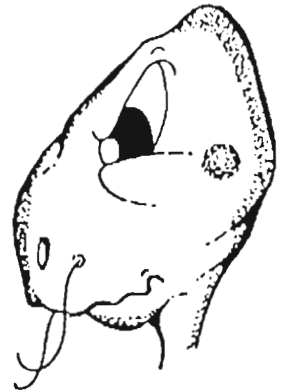
Blob' and 'Mothra'. I didn't get home till nearly 5:30 – the first time I'd ever been allowed out so late. And my mother was thunderstruck to think I'd seen a 'B' grade movie at the drive-in!!

We married, and I moved to another capital city, where he worked and lived. His parents were overseas (Air Force family), so I didn't know a soul. Maybe it was this that made us both more self-reliant and dependent on each other. Economics (namely both our lack of experience in handling money) stepped in, and I felt forced out to work. It was my decision in the end. My partner just supported me in my decision and its implementation.

In 1969 (5 years married), I had to catch up with the chores, such as ironing, at night. I also remember *Woodstock*. Once again I watched it on television – well, parts of it anyway. The long queues of cars, panned shots of crowds, the hysteria during the music, etc.

Strangely enough, I had no real desire to attend anything like that. The music had changed from that of my teen years (the 50's and Rock'n'Roll), and it was so much louder. Rock was still fairly popular, but there was a different emphasis in the music. And I seemed to have developed a strong dislike of crowds. But as you said, it set the scene for the later changes in the seventies and eighties. During the seventies, despite the handicap of the children, we both (either together or singly) managed to attend quite a few SF conventions. Our interests widened. We also enjoyed gaming and had taken on one of the 'self-discovery' movements (among other things). Maybe once again we were lucky. The self-discovery movement was a gentle one which allowed both of us to grow.

My parents, while they never joined us, always took an interest in our ac-



tivities. (Sometimes, they couldn't see in them, that which we did.) But they were able to take an interest because they too had changed when WWII changed their lives and their world.

The years have rolled on. We celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary, quietly, earlier this year (1989). Unfortunately, my mother was not alive to celebrate with us. She did of cancer (so young it seemed) three months before the event. My father celebrated it, but a week later – to the very day – he also took his leave of this mortal coil.

Today our interests are quite far-ranging. From my point of view, I was a liberated woman in the 1960's, long before 'women's lib' hit the scene. Sometimes I felt sorry for the (later) women's libbers. They seemed determined to throw off/out everything without regard to some of the values or worth of what they threw away.

My husband and I (how proud I am to be able to say it) have accepted responsibility. Sometimes separately, sometimes a joint responsibility. We are both free to live our own lives, but have chosen to share – which enriches one's life immeasurably. Between us, we provide a place where (hopefully) all can feel 'at home' or at ease. Any responsibilities we accept are those we choose to accept. And it's a wonderful life we live.

If you wish to publish this in your fanzine, please feel free to do so, but I would prefer to remain anonymous.

Who said, 'A responsibility is only one when it is accepted as such, and it goes only as far as its value. But once accepted, it cannot be passed away.'

Thoughts on my brother's death

Gordon Lingard

Why?

The question burns.

with only guesses to connect

But then it dies to be reborn.

Oh! Will we ever learn.

Phoenix arises.

Who?

Soul burned and blackened.

*Always hidden behind smiles
and lies unknown.*

Oh! Will we ever learn.

We never listen.

Forever!

Never, ever. No turning back.

But the song goes on and on.

*Look at all the lonely people
where do they all come from.*

Oh! Will we never learn.

Always hope.

I'm not one to try and write poetry, but this I felt compelled to pen. In the early morning of Wednesday, 30th September 1989, my brother Alan drove his car down to Sutherland National Park and killed himself. He was only 24. I'm writing to you to explore some of my thoughts and feelings and maybe prompt some of your readers to share their experiences.

It was no half-hearted attempt that accidentally worked, but was done with determination and planning. Alan bought a length of flexible tubing and tape, taped the tube to the exhaust pipe and fed it into the car. He died of carbon monoxide poisoning. He made very sure he wouldn't be accidentally found by parking his car in the remotest spot he could find.

We don't really know why. On the front seat were a large number of photos of his girlfriend, and we believe the trigger was a slight cooling off of their relationship. They were still friends though, and they had planned to see each other for lunch on the Thursday. This was only the trigger,

but doesn't really tell us of the deeper pain within that drove him to this release. From some of his writings we have found, we now suspect Alan made an attempt about two years ago but called it off. Now the family is beginning to piece pieces of his inner life together that we never really knew.

It is the effect on the family and friends that's been the most devastating. There is nothing we can do for Alan now, so we must turn to our own healing and lives. I got the call on Wednesday night from my younger sister. My parents weren't home yet as they were coming back from theatre, but I could hear my other sister crying in the background. I was in shock. I walked away from the phone, and at that moment Brian, one of the people I was sharing a house with, arrived in. He took one look at me, obviously saw something was wrong, and asked if I was all right.

I was shaking. I have/had never been on very friendly terms with Alan, yet I was shaken to the core. It's hard to describe. There was no single sense of grief or sadness, but a thick montage of a million different things at once. That which came up most was the sense of the irrevocability of Alan's action. That I would never see him again, ever. There was also a sense of unreality, that this couldn't happen. And last of all was the burning, maybe never to be answered, question of *why*.

I called back later when my parents arrived. My mother seemed to be taking it surprisingly well, and my father surprisingly not. He is a man who tries to hide his feelings, but my sister told me he was being sick in the bathroom and trying to hide it. Over the next few days when I rang up, to keep in touch, I was very worried at how depressed he sounded.

The next day I went to Uni, managed to struggle through one lecture, and gave up. I was in too much

shock to cope, and for the rest of the day just talked to friends to try to get it out of my system. I was in a daze for the entire day, but the next day, when I went to Uni, it was business as usual, as if nothing had happened. I hadn't forgotten, but that sense of unreality had made everything seem to retreat into the background as if it were a dream. I think the fact that I was so far away, some 500 km, helped this along.

The one other person who was incredibly hurt by this was Alan's girlfriend. She was devastated. The photos in the car have her questioning herself, making herself feel guilty in that maybe she didn't do enough. That if she did, maybe she could have prevented it. Of course there was nothing she could have done, but she is only 21 and the horror of this will haunt her for a very long time. For her I feel the most sorry, and hope she has not been too scarred by this. From what we are learning, it seems Alan had been very depressed for a number of years, and his suicide was only a matter of time.

It is sometimes possible to feel a little angry at Alan for all the hurt his action has caused, especially to his girlfriend, but the anger is a bit pointless. The police have told us they find thirteen suicides a week in the park, almost two a day, and it makes you wonder what sort of world we live in that can drive so many people to this. We judge and criticise so easily, never listen, accept others for what they are with such difficulty. We live in an economic society that expects so much of others and uses them with such callousness. And so many people feel so alienated, so unloved and uncared for, by it all. And people die from it - if not physically, then spiritually.

I look back over my own life, and remember there were some very, very black times when I was about his age. I would hide in my bedroom all day,

horribly depressed, and I now realise I came very close to following my brother's course. Fate was kinder, or maybe I was tougher, but I pulled through and now know in myself that I have grown far too strong ever to

choose this course. There is always hope and life in the world, even if you have to make it yourself. I wish Alan, my brother, could have discovered this, but of course, it's too late now.

Rest in Peace.

Letters

Harry Andruschak
P.O. Box 5309
Torrance, CA 90510-5309, USA
4 February 1990

Here I am at age 45, and the pressure is still on to conform. Right now the buzzword is 'relationship' = getting laid regularly. I have no prospect of this happening soon, and am not really sure I am all that interested...

Here in the USA every bookstore has a 'self-help' category, stuffed with books on achieving happiness, relationships, harmony, etc, and it sometimes slops over into the New Age section. I've tried reading a few, and frankly have little idea what all the talk is about.

(Harry also asks (in another letter) what is meant by 'top' and 'bottom' in lesbian sex. My understanding is that a 'top' is the dominant partner ('master'), and a 'bottom' is the submissive partner ('slave'), regardless of the sex of the participants.-JHW)

Richard Faulder
P O Box 136
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Australia
3 September 1989

My own medical misadventures have been sufficiently different from those of Lyn McConchie to make comparison difficult, but I can see enough echoes from my own experience to see the points she was making. Part of my problem is my lack of experience with doctors. Aside from a couple of broken limbs, I had had no dealings with doctors throughout my adult life...



Thus, when presented with a neurosurgeon whose approach was to breeze in, note that I apparently hadn't collapsed since the last time he saw me, and breeze out again, I was left with my mouth hanging open waiting for the conversation to start. (Not for nothing did the nurses refer to him as 'Snappy Tom'.)

Eventually I learnt to start talking as soon as I saw him. He didn't seem reluctant to answer my questions, just anxious to be on his way. In fact, as a general comment, none of the specialists volunteered any information, although they would answer my questions. It helped if you knew what questions to ask, though. When I asked the neurologist how I'd feel after the operation, his reply was 'Great' or some such. As a result, it was somewhat of a shock to wake up in intensive care with almost total aphasia - left me wondering if the surgeon's scalpel had slipped. Why couldn't I have been told 'You might not be able to speak for a few days'?

With a biological background, I was better placed to ask and understand the right questions - how a member of the general public would manage, I don't know. An additional advantage for me was the fact that my little sister is a double-certificated nurse, and, if she ran into one of the specialists on her way to or from visiting me, she would question them also.

Fortunately the GP I've ended up seeing locally a couple of times since has proven able to communicate with me as a professional. While I now know that medicine is as much an art

as it is a science, this fellow is at least a good artist. I don't know how widespread it is in medical schools, but Little Sister has been told by her GP brother-in-law that they should give higher weight to their own observations and diagnosis, so that if anything the patients say disagrees with this, they are wrong. Such a belief breeds arrogance.

(The answer to your question 'why couldn't I have been told...' is, surely, that medical personnel don't want to worry the patients beforehand, particularly when the possible effect is only possible. I can understand that, though I have felt as you did in similar circumstances.-JHW)

R Lauraine Tutihasi
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USA
8 September 1989

I agree that one should be skeptical about doctors. They certainly do not know everything. Too many patients look on their doctors as gods. One should question. I think I know whereof I speak. Doctors seem to run on my mother's side of my family. My grandfather was a gynecologist. My uncle is an ophthalmologist. My sister is a pediatrician. I notice that the horror stories related frequently involve surgeons. My sister, who is more conservative than modern about medicine, told me that there are three types of doctors I should try to avoid if at all possible - anaesthesiologists, surgeons, and gynecologists in that order. By the way, gynecologists are surgeons.

I'm very fussy and demanding of my doctors. I expect them to be knowledgeable and willing to explain things, but also willing to admit it when they don't know something. I also expect them to listen to me. After all, I live with myself all the time and know my body better than anyone else. I wasn't always this way. I used to trust doctors just like many others still do. I had the fortune to run into a good doctor when I was in grad school, one that tells it like it is and doesn't dress it up for the patient.

By the way, not all doctors are trained the same way any more. (In the USA) there is a new breed of doctors called DOs. They are interested in a more balanced approach to medicine, as is the new specialty of Family Medicine that in many cases replaces the General Practitioner. They believe that in many cases one must look at the entire family and not just the single patient. That is, the environment is taken into consideration. My own primary physician is an internist, but she is quite open-minded, in many cases more so than I. I actually felt threatened when she once suggested I see a chiropractor for a problem I was having.

Buck Coulson
 2677W-500N
 Hartford City, IN 47348
 USA
 31 August 1989

I doubt that generational differences are as important as individual ones. Certainly we have a lot of very close friends who are in their thirties - some of Bruce's friends became ours and some of ours became his - and they don't show any of the differences that Marty mentions. Or the bulk of them don't, anyway; a few do. Difference in individuals. Of course, all our younger friends are fans, but then, so is Robbie. On the other hand, we have a friend our own age whose wife has to handle the money because if he sees something he likes, he buys it, whether he can afford it or not. Juanita and I feel more like Marty does, but our

spendthrift friend went through the Depression the same as we did. He just didn't react the same to the experience. You can't categorize people, even by generation, and you certainly can't make an accurate generalization from one individual. (When it comes to people, you can't make an accurate generalization, period.)

An awful lot of people in our county dislike our doctor - I suspect because he tells them things they don't want to know. Like saying I was optimistic because I bought evergreen seedlings and planted them as a future wind-break. I know the odds are against my living until they mature; I just laughed at the joke. Some people might have been offended. Or his telling me once that he didn't have the faintest idea what I had; here's a broad-spectrum antibiotic, and if it doesn't work come back and we'll try something else. (It

worked.) A lot of people want doctors to metaphorically pat them on the head and tell them that everything will be all right - so a lot of doctors do just that, and in the process become contemptuous of *all* patients. I've encountered doctors like that; I find someone else in a hurry. *But*, they're usually quite popular; it's what people want. What's needed isn't just outside investigation of the medical community, but regular information provided to the general populace on what one can and can't expect from doctors. Which won't happen, and wouldn't be absorbed if it did.

As for Jessica, of course experiments have to have a control group. The other side of that coin is that the experimental medication could just kill you a lot faster than the disease will; that's why it's experimental. As our GP once mentioned, sooner or later a new medicine has to be 'tried out' on the population at large - and because people all react differently, it's going to kill some of them. The idea of an experiment is to try it out on a small group first; then if too high a percentage of the patients drop dead, it won't be released to the general public. Anyone who doesn't like the process is free to join the Christian Scientists and avoid medicine altogether.

Frank Macskasy Jnr
 P O Box 27274
 Wellington 1, New Zealand
 5 September 1989

Even after the Cartwright Report on the Cervical Cancer Experiment at Auckland Women's Hospital, secrecy still surrounds the medical profession in this country.

Our courses of action, when faced with unsatisfactory service from a medical person, is limited: change your doctor; complain to the medical association; complain to the hospital (if there is one associated); and write to your local Member of Parliament, newspaper, and the Minister for Health if nothing else seems to be happening.



But even so, all this seems to rest on a small group of aging professionals and politicians to achieve results.

I would suggest that, for best long-term results, women's groups get together and work toward setting up clinics for women and children. I also firmly believe that young girls should be encouraged to be more than nurses, they should strive to become doctors and other medical specialists.

Once women take matters into their own hands like this, they can complete the process of achieving total control of their own bodies.

(I don't know about New Zealand, but in Australia and the USA there are many health clinics run by women for women, offering 'alternative' medicine as well as 'modern' medicine, but by no means is this sufficient for women to 'achieve total control of their own bodies'. So long as some procedures and choices are illegal (abortion, for example, or the dispensing of some drugs), and the laws are made mainly by men and women who don't support the concept of 'control of one's own body', this happy state remains but a dream. This is not to say I don't think the clinics are important and necessary - I do - just that more is also needed. But perhaps that's what you meant, and I misread you? -JHW)

Lloyd Penney
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21 September 1989

I purchased American Express travellers cheques at a branch of my bank, and headed off for New Orleans. While I was gone, the branch discovered they'd made a mistake in calculating the charges for the cheques, and casually took another \$75 from my account. When I got back, I found the \$75 gone, traced the disappearance, and insisted they return the money. I didn't authorize the withdrawal, didn't appreciate such theft, and would not take responsibility for the fact the bank had posted the wrong exchange rate for their tellers that day. I got my money back.

Skel
25 Bowland Close
Offerton, Stockport
Cheshire SK2 5NW, U.K.
15 October 1989

It was a shock to read that, whilst Lloyd George may not have known my father (exotic UK song reference), my great-grandfather could very well have known Marty Cantor. Fifty-something? I didn't think fans were ever in their fifties. I thought they

stayed in their forties for about twenty years and then god sent down a bolt of lightning which transformed them painlessly into sixty-year-old Boring Old Farts. Nobody ever told me I'd have to be Fifty some day. Then again, I suppose growing older isn't so bad when you consider the alternative. At least now we know what sort of gift to take with us when and if we get to Casa Cantor - pacemaker batteries, incontinence garments, denture cleanser, wheelchair spares, that sort of thing. Oh yes, and something for Marty too, of course.

Lyn McConchie's piece was excellent. I am reminded that we place far too great a faith in the competence of doctors. When I visit our local surgery, I tell the doctor my symptoms, he examines me with whatever degree of thoroughness seems indicated, gives me a prescription, and I leave. When I get back home, Cas asks 'What's wrong with you?' and I invariably reply 'Dunno. I didn't ask, but I have to take these tablets.' Unspoken is the rider '...and then I'll be alright again.'

Pamela Boal
4 Westfield Way
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Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW
U.K.
7 February 1990

The sad story of your sister's tenants trashing the house reminded me of the days when I did voluntary work for Shelter. The housing situation in this country is deplorable, and many landlords are indeed despicable traders in human suffering. Unfortunately, I could not continue to see Shelter as my way of helping. Too many Shelter workers see *all* home owners as exploiters and deserving of the malice of society's misfits.

I told one senior Shelter worker of an RAF couple who were soon to be homeless when they left the Force because the house they had saved up for all their service life had been wrecked by the tenants (the RAF couple couldn't afford the repairs that included structural damage), who had the lease at only the cost of the rates



(*property taxes-JHW*) while supposedly waiting for another long term agreement to be sorted out. Needless to say those tenants disappeared without even paying the rates. The Shelter worker opined that all home ownership was exploitative, and for the couple to buy a house while they were still living in married quarters was criminal so they deserved their fate.

Shelter, feminist movements and many similar groups have a tendency to shout about the rights of individuals, yet seem incapable of accepting the concept of an individual, persons with differing circumstances, abilities and needs. I find extremists of any type offensive; your quiet and reasoned espousal of feminist viewpoints is therefore all the more acceptable.

Mankind's greater ability to describe, quantify and utilise physical laws does not change reality... It seems to me you are debating not reality but people's perceptions of the world around them, both physical and emotional. It is the imagination and perception of gifted people that enables humanity to discover and utilise reality... I can only hope that people with the right knowledge and training share my perception of the world about me, and set about discovering those realities. Alas, I have not discovered the physical and emotional responses that will turn the reality of my unfit body into the reality of a fit one.

(You've summed up my point very neatly: when many people discuss what is 'real', 'true', etc, what they are actually talking about is their perceptions of what is 'real'. This is fine when people understand that's what they are doing, but many people don't seem to make that distinction.

In addition, and related to that problem, there is the problem of the use of one term ('reality') to mean two things: what is, and what we perceive. Thus we often end up talking about different things, but thinking (or pretending, in the case of the 'stirrers') that we're talking about the same thing.-JHW)

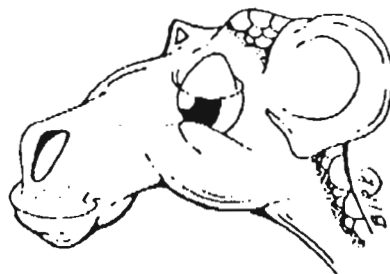
John Newman
P O Box 327
St Kilda, Vic 3182
Australia
3 December 1989

It was chastening to read about the things you were doing (and going through) in 1969. I've generally felt 'of a generation' with you, but I was only in fifth form then, and that few years probably makes our 'realities' different!

Do you feel young? I have always really related to my memories of youth, until recently when the experience of trying to be an adult for Ben (going on 15) has shaken me to the core. I don't understand. I'm discovering the down side of being middle-aged, just as he's showing me that being young isn't all that great either.

(In trying to answer your question, 'do you feel young?', I discovered that it really doesn't have any meaning for me. What does it mean to 'feel young'? I tend to feel startled whenever I remind myself of my true age, because I don't 'feel' that age - but then I think, what does 'feeling x years old' mean, anyway? I certainly don't feel 'old'.

Most of my friends of my own age are active, fit and healthy (more so than I am), whether or not they have children. Many of them are, in fact, grandparents, but they sure don't fit the 'elderly' image of grandparents. Have you noticed that many films depict grandparents as looking what I think of as mid-sixties in age, recently retired from employment, just the grandchildren are of an age that might suggest grandparents in their late forties or early fifties? I suspect our images of 'age' are one or two generations out of date. Or maybe it's just that, as I get older, everyone - including myself - seems younger.-JHW)



Judith Hanna
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U.K.
2 February 1990

I quite agree with your conclusion that focussing on establishing your own needs and your own interests is essential to a healthy life - as long as it's not pursued as an obsession. If it is, it becomes ridiculous and, I think, counter-productive. It seems the happiest and healthiest people are those who are clear about their own needs, but intensely interested in a variety of other interests and issues.

The objection to Scientology is not to the pop psychology of Dianetics, but the dealings documented in Russell Miller's *Barefaced Messiah*.

(Ah, that makes sense - the difference between objecting to an idea and objecting to the actions of a group that claims to carry out that idea. But the shorthand version of expressing objection to the group often sounds like one is objecting to the idea. I have no problem with that concept.-JHW)

Jessica Amanda Salmonson
PO Box 20610
Seattle, WA 98102, USA
February 1990

The Ranson cover was indeed a nice one, and chiefly because of its sense of costume. Still a traditional beauty queen, but what the hell, putting clothes on the barbies is the first step to making 'em more than barbies. And of course the article by McConchie addresses this issue, in its broader sense, very correctly, but in the specifics, the arguments are flawed.

Many warriors, historically speaking, fought in the raw, the continental Celts most notably, and many of tropical climates. In the Roman Circus, they fought in the raw because it was sexy; among the gladiators and the venatores (animal-wrestlers) were many women.

The issue of fighting with the hair flying loose is also more complex. Obviously the fantasy illustrations are

stupid and sexist, and nudity and long flowing hair certainly isn't realistic as portrayed, and reveals mostly the lack of skill these artists have, girly nudes being far easier to draw than convincing costuming. But some warriors did fight with hair flowing. The faggot Dorians (the men in this case) curled and oiled their hair before going into battle, so that their enemies would admire them. A front-rank battalion of women warriors among the early Longbards fought with hair flying wild, and one legend has it that the name Longbard originally meant 'long hairs' rather than the 'long beards' usually cited. There are numerous accounts of women warriors fighting with hair loose chiefly so that the enemy would know that a woman was killing them; and I've encountered three historic tales of women who even revealed their tits and vaginas (in the French Revolution; among the American Indians; and the XAnthian women of mythology who defeated Bellerophon by lifting up their skirts).

It is not ultimately the fact of nice hair, or nice tits, or nice legs that makes fantasy illustration obnoxious and unimaginative. It is the whole attitude of the artists who are either assholes or just have very limited understanding of beauty. A woman who is androgynous, or bulky, or flat chested, and whose face doesn't resemble Barbie's (if girls draw her) or a Playboy bunny (if boys draw her) is just outside their own idea of romantic imagery (in the old sense of romance). I've seen classic portraits of the Dahomey amazons, nearly nude, armed with swords and rifles, trophy heads hanging from their shoulders, and these portraits look powerful, not like made-to-fuck rubber dollies.

Sad to say, though, the books these abysmal covers advertise are as stupid inside as out, and it is a suitable wedding of unimaginative artists with unimaginative authors. The portraits of Tomoe Gozen on *Thousand Shrine Warrior* and *The Golden Naginata* are both correct in every detail. It helped that a Japanese woman painted them.

It also helped that the artist came from outside our field and wasn't influenced by pulps, comics, and cheap paperback. More typical is the cover on *The Swordswoman's* first printing: the girl in the miniskirt playing with the sword really was, in real life, a Playboy centerfold, and the stinking artist couldn't have cared less if the painting fit the book. or was even good on its own terms, so long as he made his deadline and got to have a nude model from Playboy in his studio.

{Jessica included with her letter a flyer for a new book, What Did Miss Darrington See? edited by herself and Rosemary Jackson, and published by The Feminist Press at CUNY, 311 East 94 Street, New York, NY 10128. It's an anthology of women's supernatural fiction, covering more than a century. I haven't seen a copy yet, but the table of contents sounds very intriguing.-JHW}

Below:

The Rabbit's Progress

by Lyn McConchie

You know, Pablo, there are all these rich people who buy your abstracts. They pay out thousands of dollars for them.



Quite so, George. I am one of the best known and richest abstract painters in the country.



I know, Pablo! The critics say that your paintings will appreciate in value for years to come. And, there are all the financiers, and merchant bankers, and black marketeers buying them up. I often wonder...

What do you wonder, George?

The collective noun for a group of people who purchase your abstracts, Pablo? Is there one?

Certainly, George! I call them a soak of suckers!



Garth Spencer
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 13 February 1990

I always thought reality was a vast, animated, metamorphosing blog of Silly Putty that I kept bumping into, an fantasy was fictional literature featuring unicorns and virgins and other mythical creatures (not unlike Hansard, or the Congressional Record).

My own fantasy is that, in fact, it's against the law for artists to read what they're illustrating. In fact you won't find it on the books, you can't look it up, it's a *secret* law. There's a whole body of Secret Laws, they're how the *real* System works, they're designed so that you *can't* know the rules. Or else a lot of fantasy artists *can't* read.

Also Heard From: David Bell, Tom Cardy, Tracey Cooper, Teddy Harvia, Jeanne Mealy, Joy Hibbert, Janice Murray, Ben Schilling, Julie Vaux, Chuq Von Rospach.

Books

Pamela Sargent, *Venus of Shadows*, Bantam Spectra, 1988.

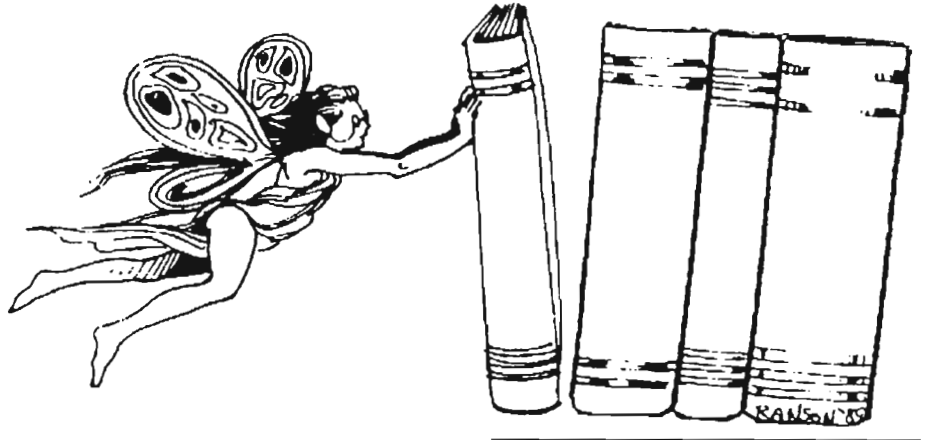
I was very impressed with *Venus of Dreams* (reviewed in an early issue of *Wrevenge*), and am equally impressed with this volume, its sequel (a can't-put-it-down volume). It takes place in a domed colony on Venus, which is undergoing some social upheaval. In its early years, the colony was small and suffered few problems from disruptive individuals. But recent immigrants have brought Earth's problems with them, and groups of the colony's people seek different solutions to these problems. For example, the council must deal with the murder of a local by an immigrant: the first murder ever in the colony. A new religious group gains adherents and slowly takes over a vigilante role. Earth and the Habitats, long-standing rivals, negotiate over their roles on Venus. And so on...

Sargent's political science fiction appeals greatly to me. She has enough hard sf to make it realistic, but focusses on the effects on people.

Bruce Sterling, *Islands in the Net*, Ace, 1988.

Another can't-put-it-down book, this one takes place in a future where almost all information is linked through the global data net, and high technology is involved in just about everything. But parts of what we'd call the 'third world' are exploring alternatives to the global culture, and don't recognize that culture's rules. They are data pirates, and/or use modern technology (including genetic engineering) in different, often illegal, ways.

The book focusses on people, and the interactions with the technology – a point of view of great interest to me.



There's lots of danger and adventure to keep things moving along, as the main character, Laura, learns to see things from different points of view, and begins to question the assumptions of her life. Her generation is determined not to repeat the mistakes of the late 20th century, but she is sure that their way is the best, if not the only, way to make the future better. It's a shock to learn that others may have a different point of view!

Elizabeth Ann Scarborough, *The Healer's War*, Bantam Spectra, 1988.

The book describes the experiences of an American military nurse in Vietnam. Much of it seems fairly straightforward: the racism and sexism displayed by the (mainly male) Americans, the naivety of the (mainly young) men and women, the drugs, the 'insanity' that becomes the only way some of these people can cope with the situation, and so on. The fantasy element is interesting, but not really important to the story, in my opinion (it didn't detract; it simply wasn't essential).

The treatment of some Vietnamese by some Americans (a realistic depiction, from all I've heard) outraged me. In fact, most of the book kept me in a state of outrage. No doubt Scarborough intended that, and she certainly did a fine job. I read the book all the way through in one sitting, and emerged exhausted (by anger, not just by lack of sleep). I was most impressed.

Sheila Finch, *The Shaper Exile: The Garden of the Shaped, Shaper's Legacy, Shaping the Dawn*, Bantam Spectra, 1987, 1989, 1989.

These books explore several philosophical issues: ethical considerations of genetic engineering of humans; nature-versus-nurture questions about basic human traits; the effects of very long life (1000 years or more) on human memory, value systems, goals, etc.; and the clash of different value systems among human cultures.

I can't quite accept the idea of 'shapeshifting' (creating major changes in one's body by the effort of will), but these books (and the issues they discuss) were sufficiently interesting to me that I was willing to ignore that minor problem. Or rather, I was willing to consider it a metaphor for a major difference between two human races or cultures (or what the people themselves identified as a major difference).

I wouldn't say these were great books, but they certainly were interesting, and I found them somewhat hard to put down. (I also appreciated the covers: both males and females were fully clothed.)

Elizabeth Moon, *Oath of Gold* (Book 3 of *The Deed of Paksenarrion*), Baen, 1989.

I've reviewed the first two volumes of this series (*Sheepfarmer's Daughter*

and *Divided Allegiance*) previously, and had looked forward to reading this concluding volume. I certainly was not disappointed!

In this book, Paks finally learns to accept responsibility for her own behaviour, and thus is able to overcome some personal problems and become 'heroic' (one of her problems was a very unrealistic idea of what 'courage' and 'heroism' are all about). Despite the fantasy elements, this book seemed very realistic to me (Moon's use of gritty, unpleasant detail is excellent.)

Again: a good cover: Paks is shown riding, sword in hand, through the snow; she is fully (and apparently warmly) clothed, most appropriate for the conditions depicted.

Spider Robinson, Time Pressure, Ace, 1987.

A very enjoyable book that is both fun to read and a serious discussion of such topics as – surprise! – taking responsibility for one's own actions (while not taking the blame for someone else's actions).

The story takes place in an American hippy community in Nova Scotia, Canada. A beautiful female visitor from the future injects a different point of view, and causes some confusion for the community. Robinson mixes his usual rollicking humor with a the working out of a serious problem in the mind of the narrator.

His descriptions of the commune and its rituals are delightful, bringing to my mind some similar experiences of my own. He's also very good at confusing the issue just enough to keep the mystery from being solved too quickly.

William Gibson, Mona Lisa Overdrive, Bantam Spectra, 1988.

Set in the world of *Neuromancer* and *Count Zero*, this is (for me) a more readable book than the others, in the sense that I could 'relate' to what was going on. Plugging in to the net and

mentally travelling in cyberspace is still an idea I have trouble with (which is why I liked Sterling's *Islands in the Net*, because it didn't have that aspect), but it was a less intrusive concept in this book than in the earlier ones (or maybe I'm just getting used to the idea).

Whatever the reasons, I found this book readable and interesting, even though the basically negative worldview, and the physical, emotional and intellectual poverty depicted, was generally very off-putting. There's little joy and happiness in this book, though there are some rays of hope as the bigger bad guys are undermined by some of the little people they think they are manipulating.

John McLoughlin, Toolmaker Koan, Baen, 1988.

I found this book quite fascinating. A probe sent from Earth into the Oort cloud detects a mass that behaves in an odd fashion; the investigators sent to check it out find a hollow cylinder run by a sentient computer which calls itself Charon. Eventually the humans are introduced to the aliens that the computer reconstructs, and the two groups study each other. I figured out the main mystery (where did the aliens come from) long before the human protagonists did, but then McLoughlin left clues the size of planets around for the reader to stumble over.

The main philosophical question discussed in this book, and reason I found the book interesting, is: Have humans evolved too quickly for our own good? That is, has our technological ability outstripped our morality - have we invented all sorts of things that changed the world before we knew the right way of handling them? Charon is studying this question. All the races he's discovered that made it into space have destroyed themselves. Will humans do the same? Why or why not?

C.J. Cherryh, Rimrunners, SF Book Club edition, 1989.

Set in the world of *Downbelow Station*, this adventure novel follows a machinist, Bet Yeager, who is down on her luck following the wars, and stuck on a nearly abandoned station. She must find a berth and get off the station, but to do so someone must accept her onto a ship. The only ship that will take her has a suspicious past as well - not to mention being run by her old enemies. Dramatic reading!

Douglas Adams, The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul, Pan, 1989.

Another of the wacky sort of books we've come to expect from Adams (the *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* series, and Dirk Gently's *Holistic Detective Agency*). This book also features Dirk Gently, along with a collection of misplaced Norse gods. There's little enough humour (science fictional or otherwise) that appeals to me, but Adams' certainly does. I look forward to every new book, and thoroughly enjoyed this one.

Damien Broderick, Striped Holes, Avon, 1988.

This is one of those wacky books reminiscent of Douglas Adams, but different. All sorts of bizarre things happen, but Broderick manages to pull all the threads together and make the whole thing make sense at the end. I laughed a lot. Fun reading.

Jane Yolen, Sister Light, Sister Dark, Tor, 1988.

This fantasy novel is a bit hard to describe without summarizing the story. A baby girl is found and raised by members of the mountain warrior clans of women, who worship Alta. Each woman, at her coming-of-age ceremony, is joined by her 'dark sister',

who can only be seen in certain conditions, such as moonlight. Eventually some come to believe that the child (Jenna) is the one mentioned in an ancient prophecy. Thus she is in great danger, as indeed are all the groups of warrior women. Will Jenna save them or cause their ruin?

Gene Wolfe, *There are Doors*, Tor, 1988.

A bizarre tale, as are many of Wolfe's. Is the main character, Green, insane, or does he really pass through 'doors' between alternative realities? Who is Lara, a woman who turns up under many similar names in the different realities he visits? And what about all these other people who seem to be waging war against each other, who again keep turning up in various guises, and under various names? Fascinating reading.

Writers of the Future Volume 4, Bridge, 1988.

More of the winners of the WoF contests. I enjoy these volumes. Not all of the stories appeal to me, but I do meet several interesting new writers each time, and the quality tends to be at least as good as, if not better than, that of most anthologies.

Boris Vallejo's *Mythology Calendar*, 1990.

Lest anyone think I object to near-naked women and men in art, I mention my delight at this calendar. I only object to book covers that seem unrelated to the story, and where the near-nudity seems gratuitous, merely an attention-getter.

This calendar is different. Firstly, it's not illustrating a story, but rather scenes from Norse mythology. Secondly, while it may be silly for human women and men to ride horseback, or fight, without protective clothing, it's not silly for gods and goddesses to do so. So I have no philo-

sophical objections to these depictions.

Beyond that, wow, what stunning bodies! Yum, yum. I sure am glad some distributor sent me this review copy. I was also impressed to find that the holidays listed are Australian and New Zealand ones, and that this edition is printed in Australia!

David Eddings, *Sorceress of Darshiva (Book 4 of The Malloreon)*, Bantam, hc, 1989.

I confess to not reading this book (which arrived as a review copy), because it doesn't look like the sort of fantasy I enjoy. Lots of people think Eddings' stuff is good, however, so just because it isn't to my taste doesn't mean you won't like it. Mind you, if there weren't so many books I'm sure I'll like, I might read one of Eddings to find out what they're like, and I might be surprised.

Juanita Coulson, *Legacy of Earth and The Past of Forever (books 3 and 4 of the series Children of the Stars)*, Del Rey, 1989.

I read the first two volumes in this series several years ago, and found them interesting but not exactly impressive. Coulson does the sweeping family saga well, but that not usually my taste in books (Pamela Sargent's novels are an exception). I did enjoy these books, especially *The Past of Forever*, where she does a brilliant hatchet job on the academic pretensions of archaeologists.

James Tiptree Jr, *The Starry Rift*, Sphere, 1986.

Three long stories linked by the device of some alien scholars doing research on humans. I had read at least one, and possibly all, of the stories in other places previously, but was glad to have them in a collection.

Tiptree wrote marvelous stories, frequently with a real sting in them.

M.J. Engh, *A Wind from Bukhara (originally published in the United States as Arslan in 1976)*, Grafton, 1989.

Arslan is a young man from Turkestan who manages to conquer the world. The details are vague, as is appropriate to the point of view of the main characters in an Illinois community where Arslan sets up his headquarters. The book focusses on these people and their relationship with Arslan, who is ruthless and apparently without mercy. His mission is to save the world, by destroying 'civilization'. As political science fiction, this is a very thought-provoking book.

M.J. Engh, *Wheel of the Winds*, Tor, 1988.

I got bored with this book, although it had lots of interesting ideas in it. If you're interested in world-building, you might find more in it to keep your attention.

An human stranded on an alien planet must find his way back to his communicator and other possessions, in order to be rescued. The planet always keeps the same side toward its sun. The story is entirely told from the point of view of the aliens, few of whom normally travel far from their homes. Some set out with him to circumnavigate the world (although they don't know that's what they will be doing).

Other titles read

(no room this time to review): Arthur C. Clarke, *2061: Odyssey Three*, Grafton, 1987; Beth Meacham, editor, *Terry's Universe*, Tor, 1988; C.J. Cherryh, *Divine Right (#5 of Merovingen Nights)*, Daw, 1989; Harry Harrison, *Return to Eden*, Bantam Spectra, 1988; Jody Scott, *Passing for Human*, The Women's Press, 1977.