SF COMMENTARY 80

40th Anniversary Edition, Part 1

August 2010

PHILIP K. DICK SPECIAL
INCLUDES 'SCANNER DARKLY' DISCUSSION

BOB TUCKER SPECIAL

CONTRIBUTORS:
BRIAN ALDISS
RALPH ASHBROOK
LENNY BAILES
DOUG BARBOUR
JOHN BAXTER
SYDNEY BOUNDS
DAMIEN BRODERICK
JOHN BROSNAN
HARRY HENNESSEY
BUERKETT
STEPHEN CAMPBELL
IAN CARRUTHERS
GRANIA DAVIS
MATTHEW DAVIS
DITMAR
(DICK JENSSEN)
BARRY GILLAM
BRUCE GILLESPIE
JEFF HAMILL
HOWARD HENDRIX
JOHN HERTZ
STEVE JEFFERY
WERNER KOOPMANN
ROSALEEN LOVE
PATRICK McGUIRE
ROBERT MAPSON
GERALD MURNANE
GREG PICKERSGILL
A. LANGLEY SEARLES
BOB SMITH
COLIN STEELE
PHIL STEPHENSEN-PAYNE
TIM TRAIN
BOB TUCKER
IAN WATSON
GENE WOLFE
RAY WOOD

& MANY MANY OTHERS

Dedicated to the good friends who organised the Bring Bruce Bayside Fund, 2004–2005, which took me to San Francisco, Seattle, Las Vegas and Los Angeles in February–March 2005: Arnie and Joyce Katz, Bill Wright, Robert Lichtman, and Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer; Irwin Hirsh and Dick Jenssen; and many generous contributors, especially Thomas Bull, David Russell and Phyrne Bacon. This is the final chapter of an epic story.

CONTENTS

SF COMMENTARY 80

40th Anniversary Edition, Part 1

August 2010 96 pages

SF COMMENTARY No. 80, August 2010, is edited and published by Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street, Greensborough VIC 3088, Australia. Phone: 61-3-9435 7786. Also available in .PDF file from eFanzines.com

**Available for The Usual (letters or substantial emails of comment, artistic contributions, articles, reviews, traded publications or review copies) or subscriptions (Australia: $50 for 5, cheques to Bruce Gillespie;
Overseas: $US50 or 25 pounds for 5, or equivalent, airmail; please send folding money, not cheques).**

Printed by Copy Place, Basement, 415 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000.

Cover: Ditmar (Dick Jenssen): 'Contemplation'
Photos: Elaine Cochrane (p. 4); Jennifer Bryce (p. 6); Bruce Gillespie (p. 21); Toni Weisskopf collection (pp. 37, 50); Harry Buerkett (p. 46). Thanks to John Baxter for book covers shown on p. 39.

Also available:

40th Anniversary Edition, Part 2:
SF COMMENTARY 81

40th Anniversary Edition, Part 3:
SF COMMENTARY 82

Contents include:
Colin Steele covering the SF/fantasy field 2005–2010; Terence M. Green's life and writing times; Ian Watson interviewing Stephen Baxter;
Guy Salvidge's extensive coverage of the entire work of Philip K. Dick;
'Criticanto' covering the major works of recent SF and fantasy.
the editor natters; and more!

Respond or subscribe now to get your copy; or download from efanzines.com

**Also look for the PDF/efanzines.com supplement:
SF COMMENTARY 80A (see p. 96 for details).**

I must be talking to my friends

Welcome to the 40th anniversary edition of *SF Commentary*. Not that it *is* the 40th; more like the 41-and-a-halfth. I'll keep calling it the '40th' because almost everything in it was in the files by January 2009, the true month of the anniversary. Only the editorials, Harry Buerkett's contributions about Bob Tucker and a few of the letters of comment are recent.

The 40th anniversary edition comes in three bits: *SFC*s 80, 81 and 82. Welcome to Part 1.

Damien Broderick suggested that I produce an *SF Commentary* 80 filled entirely by contributors who were featured in No 1, January 1969. One slight problem: only Damien and I are still alive from the people who contributed to that issue. We lost John Foyster in 2003, and George Turner in 1997. Even Stephen Campbell was not there at the very beginning. He came on board, as cover artist and chief assistant collator, only with No 4 (mid 1969).

I was teaching (not very well) at Ararat Technical School in 1969 when I met **Stephen Campbell**, then a schoolboy attending the other secondary school in town. As he relates in his Guest Editorial, I shoved some Philip K. Dick and Cordwainer Smith books in his hands, and the damage was done. He was also excited by the idea of fanzines, helped me duplicate the early issues, and joined ANZAPA (Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association) for a few mailings. He already wanted to be an artist, and that ambition remains. He attended Syncon 1, Sydney, New Year 1970. In early 1970 he and his family moved elsewhere in Victoria. I quit teaching at the end of 1970, and moved back to Melbourne. When Stephen turned up to visit me at my parents' place in East Preston, he had quit school and turned into a wandering rover. We've kept in contact over the years, and now he is living in the Victorian coastal town of Warrnambool, quite near David Russell, another great friend of the magazine. Steve is still being an artist and still hoping for that great breakthrough. He does not own a computer, so every now and again he sends me wise and stimulating letters about whatever is currently itching his mind. One of those letters seemed an ideal item for a Guest Editorial.

I did not so much meet **Damien Broderick** for the first time at the Melbourne SF Conference, Easter 1968 (my first convention) as witness his visitation. One day of the convention was spent in rural surroundings up at Boronia, in the lower reaches of the Dandenong Ranges. At the beginning of the authors' panel (reprinted in *SF Commentary* 3, transcribed by Tony Thomas, who is still with us), Damien swept down the central aisle, all long hair and beard, accompanied by people who seemed to be his disciples from Monash University, spoke his piece at the panel, then swept out again at the end, not to be seen again until the Easter 1969 Melbourne SF Convention. In the meantime I had published, thanks to amazing efforts of Lee Harding, Leigh Edmonds, John Foyster and John Bangsund, *SF Commentary* 1. In 1968, I had had few people to talk to during the convention. Easter 1969, everybody wanted to say hello. To my amazement, no less a figure than Damien Broderick summoned me over for a natter. In the years since, Damien has travelled much further than I have — producing many well-known Australian novels and short stories and critical books; acquiring a doctorate; and moving to San Antonio, Texas — but he's maintained an interest in *SF Commentary*.

Stephen Campbell (l.) and Bruce Gillespie (r.), 17 February 2010.
(Photo: Elaine Cochrane.)

What has been the greatest change over the years since 1969, apart from my disappearing hairline and expandng waistline? Not just the change from typewriter-and-duplicator production methods to computer typesetting and offset printing. Not just the influence of the Internet, a channel that has rediscovered friends long thought missing and delivered to me the vast plenitude of material available for this issue. No, the major change has been inside my head, typified by the long-running editorial column heading 'I Must Be Talking to My Friends'. As Damien himself once said, what I wanted to publish originally was more like *SF Criterion* than *SF Commentary*. What became obvious by the early seventies is that I really wanted to do was gather all my friends in one magazine. My friends knew me and each other because of their mutual interest in science fiction literature. Many of us have met because of our interest in one author: **Philip K. Dick**.

Hence the shape of what has become Part 1 of the 40th Anniversary Edition. A major section of *SF Commentary* 1 was the first of my essays about Philip K. Dick. I had written two of them in 1967 and had sent them to John Bangsund's *Australian SF Review*. Little did I know that *ASFR* was about to go into decline. My essays did not appear there. At the beginning of 1969, when for the first time I had an income that would support fanzine publishing, I launched *SFC*, where the essays appeared. This led to one of the great days of my life. I felt as if I were floating down the main street of Ararat as I carried a letter I had just received from Philip Dick, complimenting the essays and offering to send me his most recent three novels. In 1975, I gathered my essays and later *SFC* material about Dick into the volume *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd*, which eventually sold out.

In 2005, when the fans of Australia, America and Britain paid for my trip to the West Coast of America (the Bring Bruce Bayside Fund, a highlight of my life), I felt honoured that the committee of Potlatch should ask me to speak about their Book of Honour for that year, Philip Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*. You can find on p. 16 as much of the proceedings from that convention as I've been able to gather.

Recently a young school teacher from Western Australia, **Guy Salvidge**, sent me an article about his own discovery of the works of Philip K. Dick. Guy, born within months of Dick's death, discovered the books in his teens and was moved to write a 24,000-word essay about them. It should appear in *SFC* 82.

The most recent issue of *SF Commentary* (No 79) celebrated the life and work of **Arthur Wilson (Bob) Tucker**. Fortunately it reached him before his death, as you will discover in this issue's special section on Tucker, centred on Harry Buerkett's recent essay about Tucker's novel *Ice and Iron*.

The shape of the issue has been much influenced by the passion and generosity of those friends who have kept the magazine going all these years: the letter writers. About half of all the people who received *SFC*s 78 and 79 responded in some way or another, and enough of those responses were interesting that the letter column (including more than 100 'We Also Heard From...' items) takes up much of this issue.

The appearance of the magazine is today most influenced by the support of long-time cover artist **Ditmar (Dick Jenssen)** and the advice of my printer, **Copy Place** of Melbourne.

And none of it would be possible without the support of my wife **Elaine Cochrane**.

In the last decade, ***Steam Engine Time*** has taken up much of my time. **Paul Kincaid and Maureen Kincaid Speller** and I dreamed up this new international magazine over dinner after the Hugo Awards Ceremony at Aussiecon 3, 1999. Paul and Maureen later found that fanzine publishing was not really the direction they wanted to take, although Paul did a superb job of editing and designing the first three issues. *SET* continued because **Janine Stinson** from Michigan came on board as co-editor. *Steam Engine Time* specialises in long essays about SF and fantasy, whereas *SFC* has always run a lot of shorter reviews. A vast crop of these will appear in *SFC* 82 (the 40th Anniversary Issue, Part 3). I also have some very fine long essays on file. After that? *Steam Engine Time* Nos 13 and 14 are already full and ready to roll. *SFC* will also continue, in much shorter bursts. All contributions — letters of comment, items of artwork, articles, reviews, traded fanzines and subscriptions — are welcome.

I wish I could say 'Onward for the next forty years of *SFC*' in print form. Ever-increasing postal rates make it more and more difficult to keep publishing a real fanzine. Thanks to **Bill Burns** at **http://efanzines.com**, I and many other fanzine editors should be able to keep going by publishing files on the internet. I will keep going as long as I can keep talking to my friends.

— Bruce Gillespie, 9 July 2010

Guest editorial 1:

Stephen Campbell

Has the treasure been stolen?

Thank you for the fanzines you send me, Bruce. They are always devoured with interest, and loved for their tactile value. As usual, the covers are amazing productions by Dick Jenssen. In earlier days I did not suspect that the mimeographed papers that offered stimulation and excitement would evolve into these sophisticated productions that still offer the same illumination based on communication between friends and like-minded people. The exchange of ideas generated by science fiction writing have opened my mind to how much and how many care for science fiction, which I see as a literature whose ideas have had massive social effect.

In *Steam Engine Time* 12 I was brought to a stop by the words in your article 'The Treasure Hunt: Books About SF' promising an endless vista of possibilities! This exploded something in my mind, which was still absorbing previous articles that I had just been reading. Bear with me, please, as it might take some time to unravel my revelation and put it into cogent words.

The sharing of your earliest 'treasures', and your discovery of science fiction as one of them, reminded me that it was you who first placed into my eager thirteen-year-old hands a paperback copy of *The Zap Gun* by Philip K. Dick, accompanied by words something like 'You might be interested in reading this'. As a youth of endless curiosity about stories from the world (I had read a curious book by a man called Shakespeare but I could not understand anything about it until I read it to myself out loud when my older sister told me it was dialogue for a play) I accepted this book from you, even though the title seemed a little silly to my pretentious youthful perceptions.

This book — this science fiction, a term I had never heard before, and later heard adults around me dismissing and holding in lower regard than even comic books — elevated my sense of wonder and exhilarated my consciousness even more than reading mythologies and fairy tales because it could convey a world beyond my world of ideas for the sake of themselves, and this was a concept that, to borrow your words, promised an endless vista of possibilities.

As you might remember, I borrowed more Philip K. Dick books from you, and after reading these continued to borrow whatever SF you would lend me — Alfred Bester, Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov, Cordwainer Smith etc — and continued to look for books and read whatever authors' names you gave me, and entered science fiction fandom to meet other people who were turned on by the sheer wonder of this written universe of speculation without end. I watched the landing on the moon live in the school hall and understood that it was reality, and saw the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* and realised that it was a fiction greater than reality, like any good science fiction.

Concepts of control over time and space in the *Doctor Who* television series fascinated me, the family Robinson *Lost In Space* entertained me, and the allegories of American ideals of economic imperialism delivered to the universe from the Star Ship *Enterprise* worried me, but science fiction as a fountain of ideas still succoured my sense of wonder.

I remember the arrival of the New Wave of science fiction writing as it presented itself through magazines and novels. I can recall my teenage enthusiasm for innovation in any of the arts, but I also felt at the time that my sense of wonder that occurred when I read SF that was written conventionally but encompassed amazing ideas was starting to be replaced by writing that had become amazing but whose thought was now conventional, a bit like an abstract painting depicting a mundane musical instrument, where the technique inspires more interest than the subject being explored.

Brian Aldiss's *Barefoot in the Head* showed a Europe that was tripping off its head on LSD introduced into everybody's diet via bombs in the air, and this book spoke to me of some veracity of the times. Gross inspection of the minutiae of human society had led to 'deconstructionism', where every word of our language was considered not to mean what it does, rather like a hallucinogenic bomb landing in the air of our rational thoughts. Linguistic methods we use to inspect and describe our own reality were becoming sterilised by that reality so that it could no longer be inspected.

That has left us with the culture of 'genre', which by its very nature does not offer us anything new in the way of impressions, merely echoes of the new impressions when we read a book with ideas that have become genrefied. A single science fiction novel could cover a hundred ideas (later to become genres in themselves) merely as a background to a greater idea (which could not be a genre). To me science fiction is about all ideas, and not just one idea that gives an impression that needs to be refilled, in the way that nostalgia is a return to a feeling.

The feeling I have when reading Cordwainer Smith over and over has never diminished, probably because of the straightforward lightness and humour he uses to describe a very strange and terrifying place. No techo-trope or genre-grit comes near it.

So maybe we are all tripping and didn't notice, because we have so many specific distractions laced with so many specific superlatives to occupy our attention. Too old to wonder and too young to know.

The endless vistas of possibilities has become an endless avenue of ghettos subjugated by the endless greed of economics. For me, the treasure has been stolen.

— Stephen Campbell, 17 March 2010

Damien Broderick appeared in *SF Commentary* 1, January 1969, with an essay about Kurt Vonnegut Jr. For the fortieth anniversary edition, Australia's senior science fiction writer, currently living in San Antonio, Texas, contributes an essay originally published in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*.

Damien Broderick is a Senior Fellow of the Department of English and Cultural Studies in the University of Melbourne, Australia, and holds a PhD in literary studies from Deakin University. His critical/theoretical books include *The Architecture of Babel: Discourses of Literature and Science* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995), and *Transrealist Fiction: Writing in the Slipstream of Science* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000). He has published many novels, including 1981 Campbell Memorial Award runner-up *The Dreaming Dragons*; a recent success is *Transcension* (New York: Tor, 2002). An American website on his work is at http://www.thespike.addr.com.

Guest editorial 2

Damien Broderick

New Wave and backwash: 1960–1980

First published: Edward James & Farah Mendlesohn, *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (Cambridge University Press; 2003; Chapter 3, pp. 48–63).

The 1960s — like the turn of the twentieth century, and the apocalyptic, futuristic millennial years 2000 and 2001 — carried a special freight of nervous expectation. Atomic weapons ringed the world, and people daily suppressed their anticipation of radioactive doom from the skies. That terror had been manifest, in disguised form, in earlier sf tales and movies of monsters, horrific transformation and alien invasion. By late 1962, the world actually faced just such a science fictional threat — the Cuban missile crisis — and saw it narrowly averted. Two images epitomise this turbulent, paradoxical era: the brief, grainy film frames of President Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, and the equally indistinct television coverage, live from the Moon, of Neil Armstrong's first step into the lunar dust on 20 July 1969. These were beamed about the planet via a medium, television, that just 40 years earlier had been, in the

Damien Broderick, who now lives in San Antonio, Texas (photo: Jennifer Bryce).

contemptuous phrase journalists love, '*mere* science fiction'.

After the generally straitlaced, vapid fifties, and despite repressed dread, the sixties would be a metaphor and icon for psychic unbuttoning (which Marxist guru Herbert Marcuse decried as 'repressive desublimation', diverting insurrectionist rage into self-indulgence). Obsessed with style, teens and 20s reached first for simple raunchy pleasure in popular music and other entertainment media — to the distress of an older generation — and then for complexity and engagement. The growing moral crisis of the Vietnam War was not resolved until American defeat and withdrawal from southeast Asia in the early 1970s; partisans in the conflict would find literary expression, in part, through upheavals in the way science fiction was written, published and read. In this article, the emphasis will be almost entirely on sf from the West — Britain, the USA, Australia and other Anglophone outposts. Significant work was being done in the USSR and its satellites — by Stanislaw Lem in Poland, especially, and by Russians such as the Strugatsky Brothers — but despite efforts to translate and publish the best work, it had little effect on sf's main trajectory until more recent decades.

While it is not absurd to view history as a succession of ten-year tableaux, alternative perspectives are equally valid. A human generation is roughly 25 years long, birth to parenthood. Certain punctuations leave their generational mark on a whole culture, especially disruptive warfare or atrocious natural catastrophe. In the West, the two global wars created just such markers. By 1918 and 1945, many young men in their prime were dead; millions more had been separated from home for years. The routine cycle of marriage and childbirth was disrupted. Both wars were followed by a baby boom, particularly the second, which coincided with a period of feverish technical growth and new abundance.

One might expect the children of those epochs to make their cultural mark *en bloc*, in their late teens or early 20s. So it proved with the emerging field of science fiction in the 1940s, although military service disturbed the expected pattern somewhat, delaying the full flowering of Golden Age sf for several years. A raft of the most brilliant Western sf writers of that period were born around 1920, from Frederik Pohl (1919), Isaac Asimov (1920) and James Blish (1921) to Judith Merril (1923). Roughly a generation later, we find another loose cluster: John Clute, Thomas M. Disch, Norman Spinrad (1940), C. J. Cherryh, John Crowley, Samuel R. Delany (1942), Joe Haldeman, Ian Watson (1943), Michael Bishop, Ed Bryant, M. John Harrison, George Zebrowski (1945). Some of these war years' prodigies would blossom in their teens — Delany's first novel was published when he was 19; others, like Haldeman, would be delayed by a new war.

Perhaps this generational claim is falsified by a representative scattering of equally brilliant, consequential names from between the wars: Carol Emshwiller (1921), Brian Aldiss (1925), Philip K. Dick (1928), Ursula K. Le Guin (1929), J. G. Ballard (1930), Gene Wolfe (1931), John Brunner and Harlan Ellison (1934), Robert Silverberg (1935), Joanna Russ, John Sladek, Roger Zelazny (1937), Michael Moorcock (1939). Still, few of these important figures came to true literary fruition until the early or mid 1960s ... perhaps because the *Zeitgeist*, as it were, had not yet condensed into a favourable configuration able to bring their interests and technical skills to an appropriate convergence. It's plain, even so, that in some important ways the emerging concerns and techniques of Dick and Zelazny have far more in common with those of Delany than they do with the narrative tools of Robert Heinlein (1907), A. E. Van Vogt (1912), Arthur C. Clarke (1917) or that golden *wunderkind* Isaac Asimov.

This new postwar generation had great expectations, and chafed under them. Education, especially to university level, increased many-fold, with a post-Sputnik scare boost for the sciences and engineering but also seeing vastly increased places throughout the West for humanities students. Paperback books filled every back pocket; early, beatniks declaimed rough, angry and sensual poetry, and later, The Doors broke on through to the other side. So if politically it seemed in some ways the dreariest of times, it was also hopeful, striving, experimental. A high point of kinetic sf modernism in the 1950s, the vibrantly knowing science fiction prose of Alfred Bester (and other savvy, literary writers such as Theodore Sturgeon and Cordwainer Smith) was one goal for emulation by the smart kids who went through college in the late fifties and early sixties, wolfing down John Webster, Arthur Rimbaud, James Joyce and Jack Kerouac alongside their astronomy or physics classes. Ambitious in ways unknown to most meat-and-potatoes sf readers, they thrilled the innocent with vivid language, bold imagery and a profoundly sceptical analysis of the world even as they unsettled an old guard who found these modernist experiments a betrayal of everything sf's established rules.

The emergent movement, a reaction against genre exhaustion but never quite formalised and often repudiated by its major exemplars, came to be known as the New Wave, adapting French's cinema's *Nouvelle vague*. Auteurs such as Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut broke with narrative tradition at the start of the sixties, dazzling or puzzling viewers with tapestries of jump cuts, meanderings, all-but-plotless immersion in image. Christopher Priest appropriated the term for an sf almost equally disruptive, existentially fraught and formally daring, that evolved around the British sf magazine *New Worlds* in the mid to late 1960s.

Alfred Bester had provided a kind of advance imprimatur. In February 1961, as fiction reviewer for the most literary of sf venues, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* he boiled over in a scornful denunciation of his peers. 'The average quality of writing in the field today is extraordinarily low.' He meant not stylistic competence — 'it's astonishing how well amateurs and professionals alike can handle words' — but thought, theme and drama. 'Many practicing science fiction authors reveal themselves in their works as very small people, disinterested [sic] in reality, inexperienced in life, incapable of relating science fiction to human beings, and withdrawing from the complexities of living into their make-believe worlds ... silly, childish people who have taken refuge in science fiction where they can establish

their own arbitrary rules about reality to suit their own inadequacy' (Bester, [1961] 2000, 400, 403).

It is undeniable that by the early sixties much sf had become complacent, recycling with minor modification a small number of tropes and ideas. The previous decade's sf had suffered in microcosm just the sort of preposterous, trashy pseudo-ideas that would blossom as the 'Age of Aquarius' and go on to form the basis of an ever-expanding retreat from Enlightenment science and values, what would become known as the New Age movement — eerily, a feature of the end of the twentieth century predicted and deplored in Robert Heinlein's Future History as 'the Crazy Years'.

Most of these loony tunes — Dianetics, the allegedly psionic Hieronymus Machine that worked even better if you took out the resistors and left only the circuit diagram, even a sophistical advocacy of slaveholding — were warbled by John W. Campbell, Jr., usually regarded as Golden Age sf's founding father and fearless proponent of science and gung-ho technology in an era of renewed superstition. During 1960, his famous and influential magazine, *Astounding*, changed its name to the less ludicrous *Analog*, in a bid for respectability and lucrative advertising, but his irascible editorials pressed on with the promotion of strange ideas, deliberately against the liberal grain. His magazine slowly lost popularity among the young even as its bizarre quirks foreshadowed the flight from reason that would go hand in hand, among hippies and housewives alike, with chemical self-medication in the quest for existential meaning and transcendence in a cruel world where, as even *Time* magazine noted in a famous cover story of 1965, God was dead.

Alexei and Cory Panshin (1989) have argued that the driving impulse of Golden Age sf was a 'quest for transcendence'. That quest did not falter in the sixties; if anything, it intensified. By the seventies, its febrile flush was fading, and a kind of rapprochement emerged between the New Wave's radical stylistics, and those arduously won techniques of the 'lived-in future' that Heinlein and others had devised, if not yet quite perfected. Perhaps surprisingly, the earliest index of this continuing hunger for transcendence was Heinlein's own award-winning *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), which by the sixties' end was a best-selling cult novel on campus and beyond, as was J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy *Lord of the Rings* (1954–56; in one volume, 1968), the canonical twentieth-century fantasy, yet one developed with the rigour of an alien-populated science fiction landscape. In mid decade, Frank Herbert's *Analog* serials *Dune World* and *The Prophet of Dune* (1963–65) appeared in revised book form as *Dune* (1965), perhaps the most famous of all sf novels (if we leave aside forerunners Mary Shelley, Verne, Wells, Huxley and Orwell). It manipulated superbly that longing Bester had mocked so ferociously: an adolescent craving for imaginary worlds in which heroes triumph by a preternatural blend of bravery, genius and psi, helped along in this case by a secret psychedelic drug, *melange*. The deep irony of *Dune*'s popular triumph, and that of its many sequels, is Herbert's own declared intention to undermine exactly that besotted identification with the van Vogtian superman-hero. It is in this crux, as much as in the stylistic advances and excesses of the New Wave, that the sixties made its mark on sf, and sf made its even greater mark on the world.

Critic John Clute, in an essay with the deliciously absurd New Wave title 'Scholia, Seasoned with Crabs, Blish Is' (1973), diagnosed James Blish's central sf texts as *Menippean satires*, a borrowing from Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Third century BC philosopher Menippus, on this reading, prefigured a kind of seriocomic idea-centred fiction quite unlike the character-focused novel perfected in the nineteenth century and taken by literary scholars of the mid twentieth century (and by many even today) as almost the only allowable version. Heinlein's *Stranger* is a clear candidate. Its characters are stylised, not naturalistic, acting as mouthpieces for systems of ideas paraded and rather jerkily dramatised. In this case, the ideas advanced included 'free love' — still rather shocking in the early sixties — a sort of relativist 'Thou-art-God' religiosity, and scornful hostility to such established doctrines as democracy. Young Valentine Michael Smith had been raised in isolation by aliens and hence with altered access to reality (in accordance with the now unfashionable linguistic theory of Benjamin Lee Whorf) due to unique Martian semantics, now a redemptive gift to humanity. The novel's cast were at once collective (sharing a 'Nest', bonded near telepathically and given miraculous powers by the inscrutable Martian language), authoritarian (happily serving under their whimsical 'Boss', Jubal Harshaw, one of the great figures of sf and surely a skewed portrait of Heinlein), yet libertarian: an unstable compound. Efforts by stoned hippies to put those ideals into practice came predictably unstuck — as the novel's paradigms, primitive Christianity and Mormonism, had done. Unfortunately, none of them could think in Martian. Still, the wistful fantasy filled a void left by the death of God, if only for a giddy semester.

Presumably Heinlein did not really believe that changing your linguistic habits could give you miraculous powers, although more than one of his stories used this trope. By contrast, it seems clear that Frank Herbert did intend his ornate, baffling sequence about the Atreides supermen and women of the year 10,000 to induct readers into a sort of advanced consciousness. L. Ron Hubbard, a Golden Age hackmeister, had made just that claim in his self-help cult Dianetics (enthusiastically supported by Campbell and van Vogt during the fifties). Happily, Herbert did not seek followers; like a Sufi or Zen master, he wished to prod his readers toward an enlightenment of their own, a moment of *satori* or insight that would free them from mechanical adherence to routine, habit and the dull complacency of the previous decade. Regrettably, his technique served better as a hypnotic. Hundreds of thousands of readers, probably millions, revelled in the glorious adventures of Paul Muad'Dib, embattled heir to the desert planet Arrakis or Dune. The books overflowed: female Jesuits, the Bene Gesserit, with their centuries-long eugenics breeding program, the mysterious Arab-like Fremen, blue-eyed from the drug *melange* and driven by visions and artful myth, the great savage worms like sand whales, Mentat supermen with enhanced minds able to think as fast as the forbidden computers, galactic intrigue and

warfare ... It remains a heady blend, if rather clunkily wrought, and carried the main vector of Golden Age sf toward a kind of apotheosis.

Except that Herbert had hidden a hand-grenade in his wish fulfilment — so artfully that it blew up in his editor's face. Declining the sequel, *Dune Messiah,* Campbell complained with forthright coarseness:

> The reactions of science-fictioneers ... over the last few decades has [sic] persistently and explicitly been that they want *heroes* — not anti-heroes. They want stories of strong men who exert themselves, inspire others, and make a monkey's uncle out of malign fates! (cited O'Reilly, 188)

Slyly, Herbert had meant exactly to subvert that facile template, and his secret instinct resonated with the writers of the emerging New Wave if not with older sf fans. 'What better way to destroy a civilisation, society or a race than to set people into the wild oscillations which follow their turning over their judgment and decision-making faculties to a superhero?' (O'Reilly, 5). That was nearly a full generation, of course, after several self-declared supermen and their viciously subhuman regimes were toppled in Europe at the cost of millions of lives. It was a lesson that sf never quite learned until New Wave writers began to peel open the ideological myth of supreme scientific competence and galactic manifest destiny. The first begetter of this heretical tradition, or at least most prominent, is often held to be J. G. Ballard, whose uprooted childhood in wartime Shanghai, brought to a close by the distant science fictional flash of a nuclear weapon bursting over Japan, would be filmed by Stephen Spielberg in 1987 as the movie *Empire of the Sun*.

J. G. Ballard was launched in an unlikely venue: the venerable, dull pages of John Carnell's *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*, which against the odds were also responsible for Brian W. Aldiss, John Brunner and several other brilliant autodidact harbingers of the revolution. Strictly, these few slick British innovators were fifties' writers, but each came into his own (or very, very rarely, her own) during the ferment of the sixties' New Wave. With his achingly dry surrealist wit, clarified prose and devotion to recurrent 'properties' (empty swimming pools, damaged astronauts, catastrophic and numinous landscapes), Ballard was from the outset a goad to traditionalists. By that very token, he was a gift to the quirky US anthologist Judith Merril, whose *Year's Best SF* series featured his work, together with an increasingly agitated propaganda for new ways of writing something she dubbed 'speculative fiction' — new ways that were generally, in the larger literary world, rather old. Alongside unnerving tales by Aldiss, Ballard and Cordwainer Smith, Merril paraded pieces by Borges, Romain Gary, dos Passos, Lawrence Durrell, plus the usual literate-to-brilliant sf suspects: Asimov, Bradbury, Clarke, Zenna Henderson, Algis Budrys. In 1960, impeccably, she selected Daniel Keyes' superb 'Flowers for Algernon', a gentle emergent superman story with a bittersweet twist; today, it seems scarcely sf at all, more like Norman Mailer's account of the Apollo Moon landing. By 1965 Merril had Thomas M. Disch's bleak, absurdist 'Descending', the louche poetry of Roger Zelazny's 'A Rose for Ecclesiastes' and Ballard's paradigmatic 'The Terminal Beach':

> In the field office he came across a series of large charts of mutated chromosomes. He rolled them up and took them back to his bunker. The abstract patterns were meaningless, but during his recovery he amused himself by devising suitable titles for them ... Thus embroidered, the charts took on many layers of cryptic association. (Merril, *10th Annual SF*, 259)

As, indeed, did Ballard's ever stranger body of work. When *New Worlds* expired under Carnell in 1964 of terminal blandness, a youthful Michael Moorcock tore in to its rescue, changing the magazine utterly as its backlog cleared. Now, with Ballard as house patron saint, under the sign of William Burroughs, the New Wave began to roll relentlessly toward science fiction's crusted shores. Donald Wollheim found Norman Spinrad's gonzo novel *Bug Jack Barron*, serialised in *New Worlds*, a 'depraved, cynical, utterly repulsive and thoroughly degenerate parody of what was once a real SF theme' (cited Harrison, 1971, 170). Still, the undeniable detritus carried along with the New Wave was not necessarily welcome even to devoted surfers. (A usefully analytical, admirably waspish study of New Wave and *New Worlds*, emphasising Moorcock's role, is Colin Greenland's *The Entropy Exhibition*, drawn from his PhD thesis.) Half the names on *New World*'s contents pages are now forgotten — Langdon Jones, Michael Butterworth, Roger Dean — and some were pseudonymous ('Joyce Churchill' hid M. John Harrison, a fine artist who grew disenchanted with sf's mode). That is also true, of course, of many regular writers for *Analog, Galaxy* and other US magazines — Christopher Anvil, William E. Cochrane, Jack Wodhams. What is striking in retrospect is how enduring, even so, the impact of the major New Wave writers has been, the longevity of its biggest names: Ballard (who largely abandoned sf before his recent death), Aldiss, Moorcock himself, and sojourning Americans during the swinging sixties: brilliant funny, caustic John Sladek (who died in 2000), Pamela Zoline, Samuel R. Delany, Thomas Disch (who died in 2008) and Norman Spinrad. The work of Robert Silverberg, formerly a prodigious writing machine, deepened markedly in a New Wave direction after 1967, winning him a special Campbell Memorial award in 1973 'for excellence in writing'. Still, another important writer–critic, disenchanted by the hype, declared the Wave washed-up by the decade's close (Blish, 1970, 146).

Its brief moment is displayed in raucous glory in several anthologies: Merril's proselytising *England Swings SF* (1968; in Britain, *The Space-Time Journal)*, Harlan Ellison's immensely ambitious fusion of New Wave and American can-do, *Dangerous Visions* (1967), Spinrad's *The New Tomorrows* (1971), and Damon Knight's important long-running not-quite-New Wave series of original anthologies, *Orbit* (1966 and later), showcasing such offbeat and consequential talents as R. A. Lafferty, Gene Wolfe, Joanna Russ, Kate Wilhelm and Gardner Dozois.

The mood of bewildered antagonism from the old guard is caught perfectly in Isaac Asimov's bitter remark, cited by Ace Book's editor Donald Wollheim on the jacket of Merril's showcase: 'I hope that when the New Wave has deposited its froth, the vast and solid shore of *science fiction* will appear once more.' Wollheim had already taken care to distance himself, to comic effect. On the back jacket, in bold red capitals, he shouted:

THIS MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT SF BOOK OF THE YEAR

and underneath, in black and a smaller font:

(or it may be the least. You must judge for yourself!)

By 1968, however, Wollheim had proved himself an editor of some courage, if little discrimination, publishing amid a constant drizzle of mediocre consumer product several exceptional novels at the margins of the New Wave: Delany's romantic, flushed *The Jewels of Aptor* (1962), *Babel-17* and *Empire Star* (1966), and *The Einstein Intersection* (1967). Ursula K. Le Guin's first Hainish novels (*Rocannon's World*, 1964; *Planet of Exile*, 1966; *City of Illusion*, 1967) appeared under the dubious Ace imprint. Le Guin's triumph at the cusp of the seventies as the thoughtful, elegant anthropologist of sf and fantasy, begun with *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), was established with *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) under a revitalising Ace Special imprint by New Wave-sympathetic editor Terry Carr, and confirmed by *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974).

An error readily made when considering these several trajectories is to suppose that one literary movement follows another in a parable of progress, dinosaurs giving way to eager young mammals — or, in an allegory of regression, gains accumulated arduously are lost to the onrush of barbarians. Neither image is valid. In part, this is because writers, publishers and readers are always somewhat out of step. By the time a 'fashion' is visible, built from the latest work available to readers, a year or more has passed since those texts were created and sold. Unless a movement is geographically concentrated — as the London *New Wave* scene largely was — mutual influence straggles.

Even more importantly in a marginal mode like sf, read most enthusiastically by the penniless young, genre history is piled up indiscriminately in libraries and secondhand book stores. Near the start of the 1960s, fresh inductees to the sf mythos could read the latest coolly ironic Ballard whack at bourgeois prejudice or Zelazny MA-trained gutter poetry — 'where the sun is a tarnished penny, the wind is a whip, where two moons play at hot-rod games, and a hell of sand gives you the incendiary itches...' ('A Rose for Ecclesiastes', 1963) — then turn at once to a paperback of 'Doc' Smith's tone-deaf *Lensmen* series from the Golden Age and earlier, meanwhile soaking up scads of Asimov, Heinlein, annual 'Year's Best' gatherings, and comic book adventures. We must apply Stephen Jay Gould's evolutionary insight: in every era, most species are simple life forms, fitted almost from the outset to a range of environments and tremendously persistent. So the classics of sf, at least until fairly recently, have always remained alive in the humus. Certainly that was so in the 1960s and 1970s, when the backlists of many publishers formed a reliable backstop to their annual income.

Nor is the distinction between New Wave and Old as simple as pessimism versus triumphalism. Several sets of coordinates overlap, to some extent by accident. It is true that much of the 'experimental' sf of the 1960s took a gloomy cast, while the continuing mainstream of commercial sf was distinctly upbeat, constructing a universe in which technological salvation comes through virtuous human efforts. Was that distinction *necessarily* echoed in the contrast between a disruptive textuality seeking to enact its ideas in richly modernist symbol and vocabulary, versus traditional sf's adherence to a 'clear windowpane' theory of writing?

It is more likely that stylistic differences derived from the filiations (and education) of its writers. Even if the science of classic sf was often laughable or wholly invented, it did borrow something structurally important from the lab: scientific papers, after all, are meant to rid themselves of any taint of the subjective, uttering their reports in a disembodied, timeless Voice of Reason (even as those findings are acknowledged to be fallible, provisional, awaiting challenge). New Wave writers — and those signing up as established middle-aged veterans, like Philip José Farmer — took, as their model, narratives drenched in artful subjectivity, even when, as in Ballard's remote constructs, personality seemed wilfully denied. From the outset, it was impossible to mistake Ballard's dry voice and curious obsessions: 'Later Powers often thought of Whitby, and the strange grooves the biologist had cut, apparently at random, all over the floor of the empty swimming pool.' ('The Voices of Time', 1960, in Ballard 1965). Or in his pungent, non-linear 'condensed novels': '**Narcissistic**. Many things preoccupied him during this time in the sun: the plasticity of forms, the image maze, the catatonic plateau, the need to re-score the C.N.S., pre-uterine claims, the absurd — i.e., the phenomenology of the universe ...' ('You and Me and the Continuum', 1966).

At the same time, the brilliantly iconoclastic Philip K. Dick forged a powerful new vision from sf's generic trash, which he dubbed 'kipple'. Dick was no less driven than his more routine peers by commercial urgencies, but something wonderful happened when his hilariously demented tales ran out of control inside the awful covers of pulp paperbacks. Australian critic Bruce Gillespie has posed the central quandary, not just of Dick's *oeuvre* but for sf as a maturing yet weirdly shocking paraliterature: 'how can a writer of pulpy, even careless, prose and melodramatic situations write books that also retain the power to move the reader, no matter how many times the works are re-read?' Part of his answer is that Dick repeatedly takes us on an 'abrupt journey from a false reality to a real reality ...' or, in the extreme case, 'a roller coaster ride down and down, leaving behind ordinary reality and falling into a totally paranoid alternate reality. By the book's end, there is nothing trustworthy left in the world' (Gillespie, 2001).

Just that existential vertigo is arguably the key to New Wave textuality, sometimes masked as an obsession with

entropy, the tendency of all organised matter and energy to degrade toward meaningless noise and inanition. Certainly that is how many traditionalists viewed their rivals, and who could blame them when faced with an exultantly transgressive cut-up collage from Thomas M. Disch's *Camp Concentration*, serialised in *New Worlds* in 1967:

> **The Parable of the Sun and the Moon**
>
> The king arrives unaccompanied and enters the parenchyma ... The dew Pia watering it, dissolving layers of trodden gold. He gives it to the toadstools. Everything comes in. He divests himself of his skin. It is written: *I am the Lord Saturn.* The epithesis of sin. Saturn takes it and careens (Hoa). All things are Hoa. He, when once it has been given Him, illapses into prepared matter. O how fall'n. (Squab, upon a rock.) (Disch, 1969, 102)

This delirious passage runs on for pages at a pivotal point in Disch's superbly crafted evocation of a sanctimonious genius growing much smarter, and bleakly insightful, under the baleful influence of a genetically engineered syphilis virus. It left conventional sf readers cold or outraged, even as Samuel R. Delany found it 'far and away *the* exemplar' of Disch's work, and by extension of the gathering New Wave project (Delany 1978a, 181). So Disch was entirely ignored by voters for the Hugo Award (hundreds of self-selected fans at the annual World SF convention) and even the Nebula (chosen by other sf writers). He would achieve no recognition until 1980, by which time his interests had moved elsewhere, to the genre's loss.

Still, such awards did recognise works of talent as well as less interesting candidates: Nebulas (started in 1965) went in the sixties to Herbert's Hugo-winning *Dune*, Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*, Delany's *Babel-17* and *The Einstein Intersection,* only to offer the 1968 prize to Alexei Panshin's competent but not extraordinary *Rite of Passage* rather than Delany's bravura *Nova* and Keith Roberts' *Pavane*, now credited as the finest of all 'alternate histories'. Hugos were won by Walter M. Miller, Jr's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960, but parts published in the 1950s), a mordant cycle tracking the recovery, after nuclear war, of technical knowledge guarded by monastic 'bookleggers', by Heinlein's *Stranger* and New Wave-influenced *Lord of Light* (Zelazny's mythopoeic reworking in 1967 of Hindu and Buddhist imagery), as well as by Clifford Simak's sentimental, pedestrian *Way Station* (1963) rather than another nominee, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr's exquisite and funny *Cat's Cradle.* In a different medium, though, both old and new combined dazzingly in Stanley Kubrick's 1968 movie from an Arthur C. Clarke script, *2001: A Space Odyssey* and Kubrick's 1971 *A Clockwork Orange*, both Hugo winners. It seemed for a moment as if sf might be about to come in from the cold.

Everyone agrees that it is inappropriate to judge a book by its cover, although for most of sf's commercial existence it has been shudderingly difficult to do anything else. Might we more reliably judge a book by its title? The shift from the lurid action-adventure 1950s to more polished, sensitive 1960s' sf might be gauged by considering some gauche short story and book titles from the earlier decade: 'Lord of a Thousand Suns' (1951), 'Sargasso of Lost Starships' (1952), 'Captive of the Centaurianess' (1952), *War of the Wing-Men* (1958), *The Enemy Stars* (1959).

Contrast those with several measured titles by Poul Anderson, who in 1997 would be selected a Grand Master of the SFWA: 'Deus Ex Machina', 'World of No Stars', 'The Road to Jupiter', *The Man Who Counts*, and a graceful, elegiac borrowing from Rudyard Kipling, *We Have Fed Our Sea.* These titles are more typical of a later generation, one senses, shaped by the revolution of the mid 1960s. The odd reality, though, is that the second set of titles is just Anderson's original choice for these sombre, haunting tales brutally retitled by editors who figured they knew how to titillate 1950s' patrons. Surely those editors were wrong, since customers for 'Captive of the Centaurianess' were not dissatisfied by Anderson's lyrical if sometimes thumping prose. One apparent transition from the fifties to the sixties and seventies, then, is more illusory than real, a tactic of crass marketing adjusted to a somewhat less barbarous news-stand ambience.

In the 1960s, popular taste — as registered in the Hugo awards for shorter fiction — favoured a kind of excessive or hysterical posturing, mostly marked in several Harlan Ellison titles (matched by the overwrought contents): '"Repent, Harlequin!" Said the Ticktockman' (1965) through to 'Adrift Just Off the Islets of Langerhans: Latitude 30 54' N, Longitude 77 00' 13" W' (1975). Such titles reveal the market's mood as plainly as 'Sargasso of Lost Starships'. In a fit of verbal thrift, Ellison won a 1978 Hugo with 'Jeffty is Five'. Things were calming down.

After the flash and filigree of the sixties, the next decade can seem rather docile, even disappointing. It is widely regarded as an interval of integration and bruised armistice. David Hartwell, scholar and important sf editor (he bought both Herbert's *Dune* and, 15 years on, Gene Wolfe's incomparable *Book of the New Sun* and its successors), declared: 'There was much less that was new and colourful in science fiction in the 1970s and early 1980s, given the enormous amount published, than in any previous decade ... a time of consolidation and wide public acceptance' (Hartwell, 1984, 182). At the end of the seventies, in the first edition of his magisterial *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, Peter Nicholls ran the two preceding decades together, noting an on-going and complex generic cross-fertilisation. 'The apparently limitless diversity opening up is an excellent sign of a genre reaching such health and maturity that paradoxically it is ceasing to be one' (Nicholls, 1979, 287).

This bursting open of a previously secluded or mockingly marginalised narrative form happened on the largest possible scale in 1977. Two prodigiously successful movies were released: *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind,* vigorous and even numinous (if equally set at child's-eye level), unabashedly revived and exploited the sense of wonder known until then mostly to the few hundred thousand devotees of print sf — and the many who watched bad monster movies and clumsy early epi-

sodes of *Star Trek*, which premiered in 1966. In part this success was enabled by technical advances that finally came close to matching the immense spectacle of space travel, physical transformation and sheer luminosity of metaphor that had always worked at a dreamlike level in classic sf. That impulse has not yet faltered, carrying sf/fantasy (of a rather reduced, simplified kind) to the point where it accounted for most of the highest-grossing films of the last two and a half decades.

Meanwhile, though, the generic hybrids of Old Wave and New, enriched by techniques drawn from modernist general fiction, myth, art and movies rose to broad popularity among sf readers. As with most scientific experiments, it was granted that many had failed (one might say that their hypotheses had been falsified), yet they led toward genuine improvement. Ursula K. Le Guin's stately, beautifully rendered and felt fiction had little in common with the thumping adventure tales that characterised early commercial sf, but neither did many polished routine tales. As in the greater world, political issues continued to bubble and deepen: feminism, renewed in the mid 1960s, found utopian and critical expression in sf, from sex-role reversals and other simple adaptations of standard patriarchal commonplaces through to the authentically subversive novels and stories of Joanna Russ (especially her technically dazzling *The Female Man*, 1975). It is arguable that Anne McCaffrey's endless Pern sequence, begun with 1968 Hugo winner 'Weyr Search', resembles Herbert's Dune setting, remaking fairy tales into ecological planetary romances. Otherwise unremarkable women writers such as McCaffrey, Joan Vinge and Marion Zimmer Bradley, Brian Atteby has commented, become more interesting if you ask of their work such questions as 'what is a female hero?'

At the same time, gay writers such as Samuel R. Delany, who was also black and hence doubly alienated from the established order, used sf to confound prejudice and illuminate otherness — something sf had prided itself on doing since the 1950s, yet had rarely managed to achieve. Delany's most ambitious novel of the period, *Dhalgren* (1975), became a million-selling success, but not, by and large, among sf readers. His *Triton* (1976) was even less congenial, featuring a bitterly misogynistic man whose lack of insight into his woes within a diversified utopia are only worsened after a total sex change.

Adjustments to fresh possibilities are found on many of the Hugo, Nebula and Campbell Memorial Award ballots of the 1970s. Few remained untouched by a drenching from the New Wave, by then ebbed. Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), technically adventurous in borrowing formal devices from Dos Passos, was a kind of New Wave hybrid, and had been sampled in *New Worlds*. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, searchingly testing the nature of gender, won both Hugo and Nebula, but the following year so did Larry Niven's far less subtle *Ringworld*, in some ways a direct descendent of Heinlein and Pohl in the 1950s, yet marked, arguably, by Hemingway's minimalism. Hemingway's influence could be seen five years later in Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, also a dual winner, which interrogated Heinlein's contentious *Starship Troopers* from the basis of Haldeman's own brutal experience of the Vietnam War. Yet old-timers were not absent either: Arthur C. Clarke won Hugos for both *Rendezvous with Rama* (1973) and *The Fountains of Paradise* (1979), each an exemplar of just what his old friend Asimov had hoped to find after the foam settled. So too, in its way, was Asimov's own *The Gods Themselves* (1972), Hugo and Nebula winner; his uneasy blend of satirical naturalism — portraying the practice of real science — with a truly alien (and even sexy) universe adjacent to our own was applauded more in affectionate tribute than for its true merits. (In 1974, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* was nominated for a Nebula, but had to settle for a National Book Award.)

The same drift toward convergence can be seen in several awarded novels at the end of the seventies: Kate Wilhelm's *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (1976; Hugo), a cautionary tale of global pollution and human clones when those ideas were still new, Pohl's *Gateway* (1977; Hugo, Nebula, Campbell), told with sidebars and divagation, Vonda McIntyre's feminist wish-fulfilment *Dreamsnake* (1979; Hugo and Nebula), and Gregory Benford's masterful *Timescape* (1980; Campbell), probably the best sf novel combining plausible science and politics, wrapped around a fascinating idea: causality disruption via signal to the past.

None of these prize-winners was as radical in form as their New Wave antecedents, although the superb, cryptic fiction of Gene Wolfe, trialled during the 1970s in Damon Knight's anthology series *Orbit* and elsewhere, finally blossomed into full maturity at the very cusp of the 1980s with the opening volume of his *Book of the New Sun*. Inevitably, even insiderly popular taste missed some of the most profound or innovatory works of the period: Disch's *On Wings of Song* (1979) caught a Campbell Memorial Award but was otherwise scanted, as had Barry N. Malzberg's dyspeptic *Beyond Apollo* (1972), scandalously. Lucid, enamelled and — let's not forget — very enjoyable essays in world-building, now apparently forgotten, include M. A. Foster's *The Warriors of Dawn* (1975), which introduced the mutant Ler, and the saga of their coming, *The Gameplayers of Zan* (1977). An increasingly detailed and delicious transhuman solar system — Heinlein as wrought by a post-New Wave hand — was introduced by John Varley in 1974. Jack Vance's *Demon Princes* sequence (1964–81) was quirky, ironic space opera sprinkled with mock-authoritative footnotes. Ian Watson's impressive debut, *The Embedding* (1973), was runner-up for a Campbell; the mandarin density of its mix of Chomskyan linguistics, radical politics and alien invasion made it one of the finest novels of the decade. Another runner-up was John Crowley's *Engine Summer* (1979); disregarded by fans, Crowley was fated, with Wolfe, to be one of the enduring talents in the new, enlarged hybrid form that was now science fiction.

Theorised criticism of science fiction from the academy, previously almost unknown, opened the sixties with spectacular ructions over British novelist Kingsley Amis's laid-back Princeton University lectures on sf, *New Maps of Hell* (1960), and closed the seventies with Professor Darko Suvin's formidably formalist and Marxist *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), and a batch of other studies

variously intelligible or obscure. None, of course, reached the paradoxical contortions and laborious *faux*-Francophone discourse familiar in subsequent decades, except perhaps Suvin's own, Fredric Jameson's (whose Marxist-structuralist essays provided dense, darkly illuminating insight into Dick, Le Guin and others), Delany's critical collection *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (1977), and his intensively close reading, influenced by Roland Barthes' proto-deconstruction, of a Disch story, *The American Shore* (1978b). Positioned midway was Robert Scholes (coining a term dead at birth, 'structural fabulation'), a structuralist sliding relentlessly toward semiotics and deconstruction. With Eric Rabkin, he combined essays and exemplary stories in *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision* (1977).

At the farthest extreme from these academics were several sadly lame works of advocacy by speakers for the Old Wave, especially editors Lester del Rey (*The World of Science Fiction*, 1979) and Donald Wollheim (*The Universe Makers*, 1971). M. John Harrison's wickedly accurate dissection tells how vile and misjudged Wollheim's efforts seemed at the start of the seventies: 'Its awful prose style, rising like thick fog from the depths of its author's private grammar, permits only brief, tantalising glimpses of subject matter and intent' (Harrison, 1973, 236). Wollheim stood firmly against the dismal entropic embrace of the New Wave, with its artsy nay-saying and repudiation of mankind's glorious galactic destiny. It was hard to reconcile with his early support for Delany, Le Guin, Zelazny and even Merril.

Academic journals began to appear — *Foundation* in the UK (1972–) and the US *Science-Fiction Studies* (1973–); argument over the New Wave flourished in the major ephemeral US fanzines, especially Dick Geis's *Science Fiction Review* and Frank Lunney's *Beabohema*. Perhaps as importantly, shrewd essays in fanzines from the rest of the world began to puncture sf's complacency, by Australians John Foyster and Bruce Gillespie on Aldiss, Ballard, Blish, Dick, Cordwainer Smith; German Franz Rottensteiner on Heinlein and Stanislaw Lem (until then unknown beyond Poland); Lem on Dick, much of this translated initially for Australian fanzines such as *SF Commentary*.

One way to understand the long, slow eddies of those two decades, and the two generations they represented — one fading (but due for a startling resurgence in the 1980s, as Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein, Herbert, and Pohl reached toward belated bestsellerdom), the other growing into comfortable dominance — is to adapt Professor Scholes' simplified analysis of literary theory in his *Textual Power* (1985). He detects three primary ingredients in every encounter with texts: reading, interpretation and criticism. Strictly, none of these has priority over the others, but in a sense we can see them as a rising sequence of proficiency.

Reading is pushing a key into a lock. Meaning is stored inside a story's sentences, with agreed codes and procedures for unpacking it. Writer and reader are assumed to share access to those codes. In reality, texts are always gappy; we miss some things, and read in our own conjectures, a step one can call *interpretation*. 'We may *read* a parable for the story but we must *interpret* it for the meaning' (Scholes, 1985, 22). Beyond interpretation, no text speaks with a clear, pure voice deflecting every misunderstanding: so the final step, *criticism*, must challenge in-built assumptions buried inside text and reader alike — ideological, political, ethnic or gender biases inscribed subtly within the shape of the sentences and the story they tell, and lurking within our own prejudices in unpacking the literary experience.

A theorist might summarise these three moments of reading as *positivist* or *empirical* (accepting what is given), *epistemological* (questioning *how* we know), and *ontological* (interrogating what *is*, or is assumed to be). These can serve as a useful window into major forms of literary endeavour of the last couple of centuries: naturalist realism, modernist symbolism and postmodernist deconstruction. This last is not as user-unfriendly as it sounds — it is embodied radiantly in all those reeling reality-disruptions of Philip K. Dick's novels and stories that form the core of several highly popular movies (including some, like 1998's *Pleasantville*, that fail to acknowledge his influence, now pervasive). (A somewhat similar model is Joanna Russ's *naïve*, *realist*, and *parodic* or *post-realistic* (Russ, 1972).)

On this three-phase analysis, it is arguable that sf before the 1960s was predominantly *readerly:* however gaudy or galactic its venue, you accepted what was on the page as if seeing it through clear glass. With the New Wave, sf convulsed belatedly into the crisis of modernism that half a century earlier had shaken mainstream high art, opening its texts to a radically *writerly* invitation to endless reinterpretation. Beyond the end of the seventies, the prescient spirit of Phil Dick invited a new generation of sf innovators toward a postmodern gesture: deep ontological doubt, a profound questioning of every reality claim.

Obviously this does not apply to most science fiction of the eighties, nineties and later. The seductive rise of mass-media 'sci fi' has torn sf away from its elaborated specialist roots, carelessly discarded its long, tormented history. Science fiction and its consumers now start again from scratch, again and again. For the best sf, though, accepted or consensus versions of reality have become the landscape, the postulate, to explore or explode with corrosive and hilarious doubt. Without the frenzy and exhilaration of the New Wave experimenters, this aperture might not have opened, and without the diligent consolidation of the subsequent decade it might have remained where Philip Dick's penny-a-word genius found it: eating dog food at the foot of the rich man's table.

Suggestions for further reading

The indispensable source for basic information and incisive commentary is Clute, John, and Peter Nicholls, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, 2nd edition (London: Orbit, 1993). See especially the useful and sometimes pungent entries on CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL WORKS ABOUT SF, HISTORY OF SF, NEW WAVE, and on various relevant authors. Other useful compendia include Barron, Neil, *Anatomy of Wonder: An Historical Survey and Critical Guide to the Best of Science Fiction* (New York: Bowker, fourth edition 1995) and such landmarks as Hall, Hal W., *Science Fiction and Fantasy Reference Index,*

1978-1985 (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited), and Guillemette, Aurel, *The Best in Science Fiction: Winners and Nominees for the Major Awards in Science Fiction* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1993).

On-line sources are even more convenient, although perhaps less reliable. See, for example, http://www.dpsinfo.com/awardweb/. Copious information is held at Dr Jonathan vos Post's http://www.magicdragon.com/UltimateSF/, which provides Timelines by decade, listing many prominent books and stories, plus the major prize winners. The Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database compiled by Hal W. Hall is http://library.tamu.edu/cushing/sffrd/default.asp. Other readily accessible sites record all the Hugo, Nebula, Campbell Memorial, Jupiter, Ditmar and other Awards to date. An interesting recent essay by a participant in the New Wave is 'Science Fiction and the Beats: American Literary Transcendentalism', by Norman Spinrad: http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/normanspinrad/beats.htm

Important or useful anthologies of primary texts, and texts cited in the essay:

Aldiss, Brian W. and Harry Harrison, *Decade: the 1960s* (London: Pan, 1977).

Ballard, James, *The Four-Dimensional Nightmare* ((1963) Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

—— *The Terminal Beach* ((1964) Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).

—— 'You, Me and the Continuum', in *The Atrocity Exhibition* ([1969] London: Panther, 1972).

Disch, Thomas M., *Camp Concentration* (London: Panther, 1969).

Ellison, Harlan, *Dangerous Visions* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

—— *Again, Dangerous Visions* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

Merril, Judith, *The Year's Best S-F* (New York: Dell, especially from the Fifth Annual Edition of 1960).

—— *England Swings SF* (New York: Doubleday, 1968

Moorcock, Michael, *New Worlds: An Anthology* (London: Fontana, 1983; this includes a complete content listing of all issues of *New Worlds* magazine back to Vol. 1, No. 1, 1946, as well as a sampling of New Wave fiction and criticism from 1965-75).

Spinrad, Norman, *The New Tomorrows* (New York: Belmont, 1971).

Suvin, Darko, *Other Worlds, Other Seas* (New York: Random House, 1970).

Critical texts include:

Aldiss, Brian W. with David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (London: Gollancz, 1986).

Bester, Alfred, 'A Diatribe Against Science Fiction' (F&SF, May 1961), in *Redemolished* compiled by Richard Raucci (New York: ibooks, 2000).

Blish, James (writing as 'William Atheling, Jr.'), 'Making Waves', in *More Issues at Hand* (Chicago: Advent: Publishers, 1970).

Broderick, Damien, *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Clute, John, 'Scholia, Seasoned with Crabs, Blish Is' ([1973], in Moorcock, above, 1983).

Delany, Samuel R., *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* ((1977) Berkely Windhover, 1978a).

—— *The American Shore: Meditations of a Tale of Science Fiction by Thomas M. Disch — Angouleme* (Elizabethtown, NY: Dragon Press, 1978b).

Lester del Rey, *The World of Science Fiction: 1926–1976. The History of a Subculture* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1980).

Gillespie, Bruce, interviewed by Frank Bertrand, 'My Life and Philip K. Dick' (http://www.philipkdick.com, 2001).

Greenland, Colin, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

Harrison, M. John, 'A Literature of Comfort', in *New Worlds Quartlerly* 1 (London: Sphere Books, 1971).

—— 'To the Stars and Beyond on the Fabulous Anti-Syntax Drive', in *New Worlds Quartlerly* 5 (London: Sphere Books, 1973).

Hartwell, David G., *Age of Wonders: Exploring the World of Science Fiction* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1984).

James, Edward, *Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994).

Lem, Stanislaw, *Microworlds: Writings on Science Fiction and Fantasy*, ed. Franz Rottensteiner (London: Secker & Warburg, 1985).

Mullen, R. D., and Darko Suvin, *Science Fiction Studies* (New York: Gregg Press, 1976).

Nicholls, Peter, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1st edition, London: Granada, 1979).

O'Reilly, Timothy, *Frank Herbert* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981).

Pringle, David, *Alien Planet: J. G. Ballard's Four-Dimensional Nightmare* (San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 1979).

—— *Science Fiction: the 100 Best Novels* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1985).

Panshin, Alexei and Cory, *The World Beyond the Hill: Science Fiction and the Quest for Transcendence* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, Inc, 1989).

Russ, Joanna, 'The Wearing Out of Genre Materials' (*College English*, 33:1, October, 1971.

Scholes, Robert, *Structural Fabulation: An Essay on Fiction of the Future* (Indiana: Notre Dame, 1975).

—— *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

—— and Eric Rabkin, *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

Shippey, Tom, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (Boston: Houghton Miflin, 2001).

Suvin, Darko, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

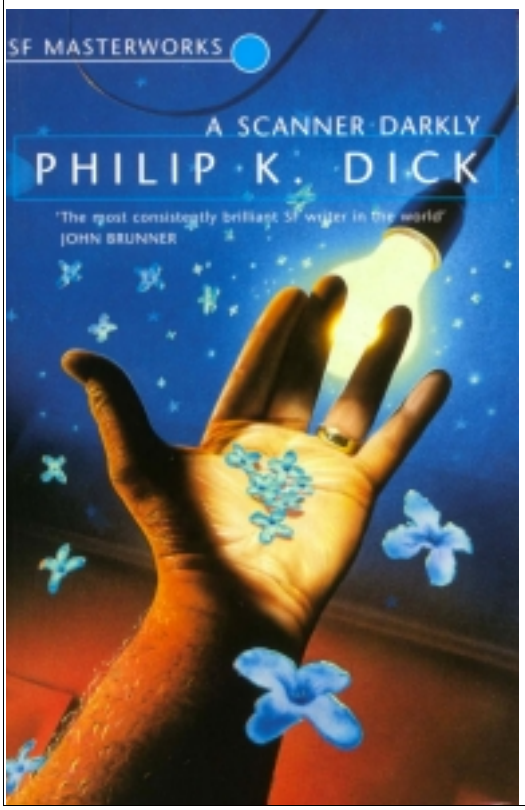
Wollheim, Donald, *The Universe Makers: Science Fiction Today* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

The BBB Report: The final chapter

The Bring Bruce Bayside (BBR) Fund was one of a number of fan funds that have been set up since the 1950s to enable individual fans to attend international SF conventions. **Arnie and Joyce Katz**, **Bill Wright**, **Robert Lichtman**, and **Claire Brialey** and **Mark Plummer** raised enough money in late 2004 for me to attend two conventions in San Francisco in early 2005 and also to visit Seattle, Las Vegas and Los Angeles. Copies of my trip report, *American Kindness*, are still for sale.

The following is the bit of the report that was not yet available in time to include it in *American Kindness*. Thanks to **David Bratman** (representing the Potlatch 14 committee), **Lenny Bailes**, **Ian Carruthers**, **Howard Hendrix** and **Grania Davis** for their help in assembling the following:

Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*: Book of Honour, Potlatch 14



Introduction:
Richard Linklater's animated film of Philip K. Dick's novel *A Scanner Darkly* was scheduled to be released about the time of Potlatch 14, San Francisco, 4–6 March 2005. Many of Dick's short stories have been made into films, but this is only the second film to be based on one of his novels. (The other was *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, some elements of which appeared in *Blade Runner*.) In the end, the film lay on the distributor's shelf for more than a year, and was not seen in Australia until early 2007.

A Scanner Darkly (Philip K. Dick's novel, first published in 1977) was made the **Book of Honour** at **Potlatch 14**. Potlatch is an annual convention of science fiction readers who gather to discuss their favourite reading matter. I was asked to take part in the introductory panel discussion of *A Scanner Darkly*. Here is my keynote speech. The other members of the panel were **Howard Hendrix**, novelist and academic; **Lenny Bailes**, reader and critic; and **Grania Davis**, long-time friend of Philip Dick until he died in 1982, and former wife of Avram Davidson and tireless anthologist of his posthumous works.

I've attempted to reconstruct the panel, based on my speech, which was written beforehand but had to be abridged during delivery; **Lenny**'s notes, prepared beforehand, but also abridged during the panel; and **Ian Carruthers**' notes and transcription of the comments by the other panelists, **Howard** and **Grania**, and our replies to questions from the audience.

Bruce Gillespie

The bleakest book I've ever read: Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*

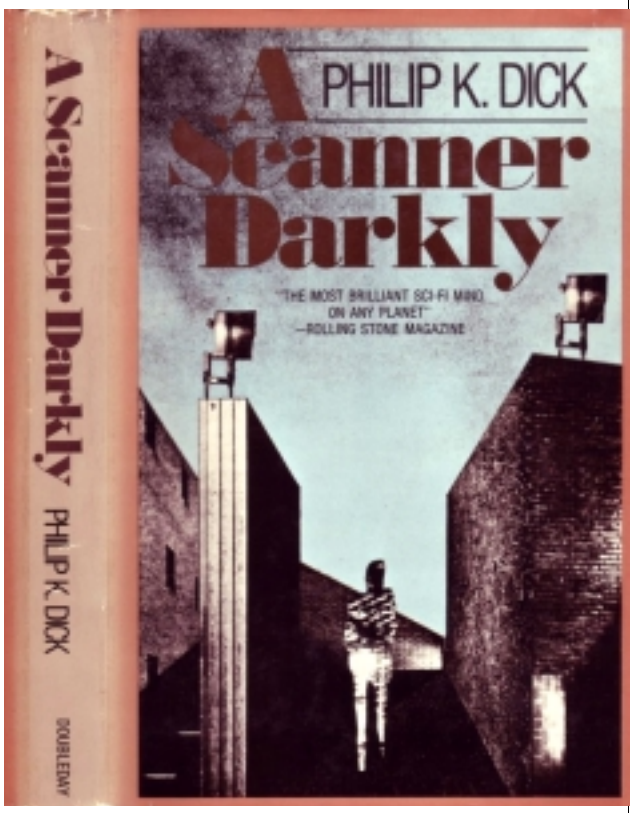
It's very satisfying to attend my first Potlatch in 2005, the year when you pay tribute to Philip K. Dick and one of his most challenging novels, *A Scanner Darkly*. And it's all Philip Dick's fault that I am here on this platform in front of you, 12,000 miles away from home.

At the end of 1967, I was 20 years old, and had just finished my Arts degree. For a year and a half I had been buying a thin, duplicated magazine called *Australian Science Fiction Review* from the front counter of McGill's Newsagency in the centre of Melbourne, Australia. This magazine seemed like a repository of genius to me. I reread many of its pages recently. It still reads better than any SF critical magazine being published today. In November 1967, I had just finished passing exams and writing essays. Now I wanted to redirect all that energy to something really interesting: I wanted to write deep and meaningful long essays about science fiction for *ASFR*.

For me in 1967, there was only one huge body of SF writing worth exploring: that of Philip K. Dick. At that time, few people had written about him. I had heard about John Brunner's pioneering essay. I didn't know that Brian Aldiss was also writing about him. I had never seen any of the American fanzines, so I did not know about the Dick material that had appeared in *Lighthouse*, *Niekas* and others. I felt strongly that Philip K. Dick was the best SF writer in the world, and that everybody was ignoring him.

I sat down, scribbled copious notes in the margins of my Phil Dick books, wrote the long essays, and sent them to John Bangsund, the editor of *ASFR*, who lived in a suburb the other side of Melbourne. One night, John rang me. 'We're impressed by your articles. Would you like to come over to our place for the weekend and meet the *ASFR* people?' I was the shyest 20-year-old in Melbourne at that time, but I couldn't pass up this opportunity. During that weekend at the end of 1967 I met many of the people who have had the greatest continuing influence on my life, such as John Bangsund himself, Lee Harding, George Turner, Damien Broderick, Rob Gerrand, John Foyster, Leigh Edmonds and quite a few others. Although Philip Dick didn't realise it at the time, he was my entry to the world I've occupied ever since: that of science fiction fandom. Nearly 40 years later, it is the world of SF fandom that has paid for my trip to America to attend Corflu and Potlatch.

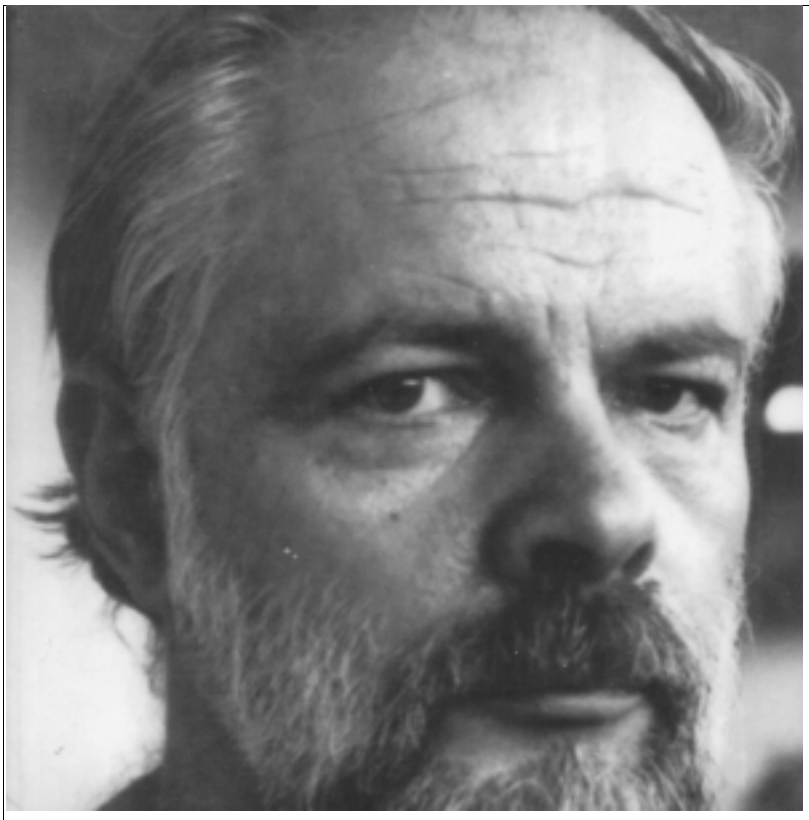
In 1968 I became active in science fiction fandom. My articles failed to appear in *ASFR*. The magazine began to



appear less and less often. It died in early 1969. I had my first real income at the beginning of 1969, so of course I began publishing a fanzine. I called it *SF Commentary*. It is still going, subject to a rather hiccupy schedule. The main initial reason for its existence was to provide a place where I could publish my Philip Dick essays. I sent *SFC* to Doubleday, Dick's publisher in New York. My greatest moment in 1969 was receiving a letter of appreciation of Philip Dick, which led to a friendly correspondence that ended in the mid seventies when he decided that, like so many of his other friends, I was no longer his friend. I never knew what I did to upset him.

Those three long essays that I wrote about Dick's work in 1969 made *SF Commentary* an informal centre of Philip K. Dick fandom for some years. Many of my continuing best friends are people who took the trouble to meet me because they knew I had written about Philip Dick's work.

In 1972 Philip Dick sent to *SF Commentary* a copy of 'The Android and the Human', the speech he delivered to the Vancouver Science Fiction Convention that year. Publishing the speech was one of the high points of my



Philip K. Dick 1982.

life, especially as the speech marked the end of the dark period of Dick's life that he fictionalises in *A Scanner Darkly*.

In 1975, Carey Handfield, one of Melbourne's more famous fans, suggested we start a small publishing company. What was more natural than to gather the Philip Dick material from the pages of *SF Commentary* and call the book *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd?* We published 1000 copies. There are but a few file copies left, and it is still in demand.

Our timing was superb — *Electric Shepherd* came out about the same time as the special Philip K. Dick issue of *Science Fiction Studies*, and took its place at the front of the huge armada of Dick scholarship that would follow.

I won't claim much for *Electric Shepherd* itself, except that it pretty much a first. It was a slim volume, and needs to be revised and expanded. These days I would disagree with many of my own opinions. The famous Stanislaw Lem essay, 'SF: A Hopeless Case — With Exceptions', in which he claimed that Philip Dick was the only Western SF writer worth anything, has been reprinted since. George Turner's cranky but accurate essay about *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* is there. The early letters that Phil wrote to me are there, but not the very frightening last letters, the ones I found too intimidating to publish.

That's the autobiographical bit. Now for an abject confession.

When I went back to reread *A Scanner Darkly*, I realised I had not read it since 1977, when it came out. When I leafed through *Ubik* the other night, I realised I had not read it for more than 30 years. Except for Philip Dick's non-SF novels, about which I wrote in 1990, I've re-read hardly any of the great Philip Dick novels since I wrote those essays. Everybody in this room — indeed, everybody at this convention — will be able to offer opinions that are wiser and much more insightful than mine. I am going to be your ideal audience. For me, this convention represents a way to catch up on the most important author in my life.

Yet Philip Dick has never been far from my mind during those years. Once you live inside *Ubik*, it lives inside you. One never forgets the last page of *Now Wait for Last Year* or the first or last pages of *Martian Time-Slip*, or the three stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, forever hovering on the horizon, an image now replaced by the fifty-year-old face of Philip Dick, forever hovering from the back covers of the endless reprints of his books. In the last 30 years Philip Dick has moved from a position of being an invisible writer to becoming *the* SF writer.

In all that time, I've never felt that *A Scanner Darkly* was a part of the mainstream of Philip Dick's work. It's probably the bleakest book I've ever read. Rereading it in the last week or so, I still feel that way. Even at the end of *Ubik*, when Joe Chip barely exists in half-life, awaiting an inevitable end, he grasps at the possibility that the spray can of Ubik will save him, will keep him clinging onto reality. At the end of *Now Wait for Last Year*, Eric Sweetscent is in similar dire straits, this time condemned to death through his use of JJ-180, the time-altering drug, but he has the courage to keep on keeping on. What we remember from Philip Dick's great books is that sense of very frail people maintaining their courage, just managing to survive.

I'll make a very large generalisation: most of Philip Dick's novels about people who discover that the reality with which they are familiar is actually a fake reality — that under and simultaneous with the world of ordinary existence lie different worlds, usually horrifying and dangerous, into which the main characters are plunged. The characters are judged by the way they deal with this transformation. Dick's main characters usually find some bare trace of hope, no matter how treacherous the world in which they find themselves. The entertainment value lies in the extraordinary inventiveness with which Dick builds these worlds, combined with his cut-down, clipped prose and the way he leaves out everything but the essentials in his books. If only we could return to the 220-page SF novel!

A Scanner Darkly works quite differently from Dick's earlier novels. For a start, although it is set some years in the future of 1977, almost no science-fictional elements are introduced. The only SF invention is the 'scramble suit', worn by anti-drug agents when investigating dopers and pushers. This is a membrane made up of a surface of a million and a half electronically generated images playing over its surface, preventing the outsider from seeing the identity of the person inside the suit.

Apart from its one SF gimmick, *A Scanner Darkly* seems

to be a realistic novel. It is based on Philip Dick's experience in 1971 and early 1972, when he had little income, but kept open house to a wide variety of drug users and other social drop-outs. Philip Dick's Epilogue to the book includes a list of a number of casualties of that drug scene. Little has changed; people rather like the people in this novel might be found scoring and selling drugs on the major streets of most cities in the world. The purpose of the novel is didactic — to warn people against getting involved in the world of hard drugs. In the novel, Substance D, the super-powerful drug that most of these people take, leads inevitably to brain death, then physical death.

Most of Phil Dick's SF novels tell of main characters who are placed in situations of despair, but keep their humanity and their perceptiveness despite the amazing roller coasters of world-shifting that we find in these novels. At the end of *A Scanner Darkly*, however, courage and humanity have been eliminated from the world of the main character, Bob Arctor. His personality has been destroyed; he can no longer react to the world as a human, but only as a kind of slow robot. He has become the dark scanner of the title, a mere camera who observes. He even discovers the source of Substance D, the drug that has destroyed him, but he cannot do anything about the situation.

For many insights about *A Scanner Darkly* I am indebted to the work of a fellow Australian, a fellow Melburnian, Christopher Palmer. In 2004, he produced a brilliant critical book called *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern*. When I first looked at the book I thought it a bit too academic in approach, a bit too postmodern for my taste. Reading Chapter 10, Palmer's chapter on *A Scanner Darkly*, I find a brilliant analysis of the complexities of the book. Palmer uses his critical tools to shed light on aspects of *Scanner* that I had read and noticed, but which I had not been able to put into a pattern. I'm not sure how you would buy the book. It was published by Liverpool University Press, an organisation famous equally for the quality of its books and its determination to hide them from all purchasers.

The many useful points that Chris Palmer makes include his observation that the world of *A Scanner Darkly* is not that of your ordinary California. Its action excludes 'straights'. It's a completely self-enclosed world, like many of the worlds of Dick's SF novels. *A Scanner Darkly* begins where most of the other SF novels finish — in a world in which it is difficult to survive. For some time the characters do not realise this. Much of the enjoyment of the book is Dick's ability to put on the page the endlessly wandering, loopy conversations of these people as they show their total inability to fix machines or anything else in ordinary life. Dick builds up absurdity upon absurdity; you just know he's heard one or other of his friends say every line in the book at some time or another.

There are almost no characters in the book who are not dopers, dealers or narks, the representatives of the law. Bob Arctor is one of them, but in order to do his job he infiltrates the world of the dopers. In turn, he becomes addicted to Substance D, which progressively destroys his perceptions of the world around him. He becomes two people, Fred, the man in the scramble suit, who reports to his superiors and watches tapes of his own house; and Bob, the addict, who lives in the house being watched. Fred's assignment is to report on Bob.

There are plenty of harbingers of this totally paranoid world in Dick's earlier work, most often in the short stories. You can go back to 'Impostor', made into a movie a few years ago: the main character has no knowledge that he is actually the alien sent to earth. The main character of 'The Electric Ant', a much later story, finds out that he is actually an artifact run by a tape. When he cuts the tape, his existence ends.

Much of this aspect of Philip Dick's work has infiltrated into the movies as much as into written SF. Who could forget the image of the twins at the end of Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*, men whose separate identities are portrayed brilliantly by one actor, Jeremy Irons, whose identities fuse at the end of the film? Pure Philip Dick, although Cronenberg has never formally made a film based on a Dick story. Who could forget the revelation at the end of David Fincher's *Fight Club* about the identity of Tyler Durden? Again, pure Philip Dick, via the novelist Chuck Palahnuik, upon whose book the film is based. I can't believe Palahnuik isn't familiar with Philip Dick's works.

It's this shifting world of identity, of a character shifting around worlds entirely inside himself, that is new to *Scanner Darkly*, but this divided world is also treated very science-fictionally. The story teller is himself a character both inside and outside the action, interrupting scenes with quotations from German poetry. Or is it Bob Arctor, both divided inside the novel and divided from it as its story-teller? The world of this novel divides and subdivides, until Bob, who became Fred the narc, becomes Bruce the brain-dead drone.

What makes *A Scanner Darkly* a major book of Dick's work is the sheer level of invention, even if often the inventions are shown in the form of the wildest fantasies of various paranoid characters. Who is watching who? Who is betraying who? All these things are worked out in little bits of business, wheels within wheels grinding away at the characters' personalities.

Why don't we dismiss this as merely a manifestation of Philip Dick's personality undergoing a very dangerous screaming set of mental gear changes in the mid seventies? We know from all the books about Dick that he did undergo such a process. At the most obvious level, we like the novel just because Phil Dick has a more interesting personality than almost any other American writer of the twentieth century. In all the books of interviews I've read, friends, wives and girlfriends tell of the speed of Phil's mind, the brilliance of his wit. He took himself totally seriously, but on another level he didn't take himself seriously at all. He was always the subject of his own mirth, especially in *A Scanner Darkly*, in which Bob Arctor shows many of Dick's most uncomfortable personality traits.

On another level, Dick has, from all this mad palaver and desperate series of actions, built a universal metaphor for the end of the twentieth century. That's why it's useful to consider, say, Chris Palmer's postmodernist interpretation of the book, or any one of the number of other interpretations that have been applied to it. *A Scanner Darkly* is a cut-off world, yet it has multiple connections with everything that's still going on, 22 years

after Philip Dick's death and 33 years after the actions upon which it is based. Palmer points out that all the drugs, all the products people use in the novel are just that — manufactured and branded products. Only one character, once, expresses an interest in a product that has independent value: a rather good bottle of wine. When these people are not swapping and taking brand-name drugs, they are eating cheap brand-name food or drinks or buying cheap products that break down. Take away the drugs from this picture, and it remains the inescapable world in which many people now live.

Inescapability is the main concept of *A Scanner Darkly*, but that's also the element that links it with the wide sweep of his SF novels. There, the characters cannot escape from the alternate world into which they are pitched, but they can understand their predicament and retain a spark of human hope. However, in *A Scanner Darkly*, the people cannot escape because this world they inhabit has robbed them of their essential humanity. That's why the last pages of the book are so extraordinarily sad and memorable: because Bob Arctor, now just a mindless worker called Bruce, has had even the concept of sadness and despair stripped from him.

So, to start the conversation, I'll ask a few of the questions I asked myself when I was re-reading *A Scanner Darkly*. Is it a realistic novel, or an expressionist, even postmodern novel? Was Philip Dick being entirely honest when he wrote that all he wanted to do was recall the lives of the people among whom he lived in 1971 or 1972? If it is actually as much about 2005 as it is about 1972, why? Is it quite different from Philip Dick's other work, a bridge to his last three books, or a seamless part of the great big SF novel that Dick spent his life writing? If it's so special and different, why are we discussing it this weekend instead of, say, *Ubik* or *The Man in the High Castle* or *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*? Questions, questions: that's what you get when you start talking about Philip K. Dick. Let's spend the weekend entering that extraordinary world, the mind of Philip K. Dick, writer.

— Bruce Gillespie, February 2005

Lenny Bailes

Notes for my talk about *A Scanner Darkly*

In each year in the 1960s, we find that in his novels Philip K. Dick is one or two years ahead of the rest of American culture, especially its pop culture:

1963 *The Man in the High Castle*; *The Games Players of Titan*
1964 *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*; *Martian Time Slip* (plus *The Simulacra*; *The Unteleported Man*; *The Ganymede Takeover* (Buddhist, 1968 sensibility)
1965: *Dr Bloodmoney* (in the wake of Kubrick's film *Dr Strangelove*)
1966: *Now Wait For Last Year* (in the time of LSD and Trips Festivals
1968: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*
1969: *Ubik*; *Galactic Pot Healer*
1970: *Our Friends from Frolix 8* (the precursor of *A Scanner Darkly*)
1971
1972
1973
1974: *Flow My Tears the Policeman Said* (written in 1970; a precursor to William Gibson's *Neuromancer*; I think it also provided some of the ambience for Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*
1975
1976: *Deus Irae* (co-author: Roger Zelazny)
1977: *A Scanner Darkly* (probably written in 1972 or 1973).

A Scanner Darkly extends the tropes used by Philip Dick in the 1950s, especially the alienated nonconformist: the working men and middle-class managers who don't fit into the gestalt of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* or *The Organization Man*. He extends these ideas into what is now our near future. (The date is nominally 2010.)

In contrast to what happens in some of his earlier novels, the protagonists of *A Scanner Darkly* are hopelessly crippled by the drug culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike his earlier protagonists, they become incapable of fighting back against the forces of society that have alienated them.

The characters in this book have the same sceptical, rebellious attitude as some of Dick's earlier protagonists. But in this book, the drug experience deadens and destroys them. They are incapable of rebelling, as did Ragle Gumm (the protagonist of *Time Out of Joint*, who saw through the *Life of Riley* façade of his 1950s life and entered the complex, violent, multi-ethnic 'real world'), Jack Bohlen of *Martian Time-Slip*, who successfully battles his own schizophrenia, or Louis Rosen and Pris Frauenzimmer, the protagonists of *We Can Build You*, who similarly struggle with their own mental illnesses. Walter Dombrosio, the protagonist of the mainstream novel *The Man Whose Teeth Were Exactly Alike*, concocts a scientific hoax after being fired from his job and estranged from his wife. The novel deals with the hoax, which is similar to Piltdown Man hoax, but also tells of the conflicting emotions of an entrepreneur with a demanding, high-maintenance wife.

Jason Taverner, the protagonist of *Flow My Tears*,

Lenny Bailes at Potlatch 14, 2005 (photo: Bruce Gillespie.)

deals successfully with the plot development of being robbed of his identity and forced to survive without his fame and credit cards. Joseph Fernwright, the protagonist of *Galactic Pot Healer*, is called to a hero's journey by an omnipotent, four- dimensional alien.

The ambience in *Scanner* has some resemblence to a late-period Coen Brothers movie, especially *The Big Lebowski*, but with a darker worldview, akin to that of William Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch*.

Notes on style in *A Scanner Darkly*

Dick does not engage in the stylistic flights of fancy that Burroughs uses in *The Naked Lunch*. Sentences and descriptions are simple and colloquial, but cleverly barbed.

For instance, here is Arctor/Fred, the main character, pondering the dual nature of his role as a narcotics agent:

> You put on a bishop's robe and miter, he pondered, and walk around in that, and people bow and genuflect and like that, and try to kiss your ring, if not your ass, and pretty soon you're a bishop. So to speak. What is identity, he asked himself. Where does the act end? Nobody knows.

This is Dick writing (in 1972 and 1973) before his 'pink beam' experience. His writing retains a powerful lucidity and wry 'objective' insight into the personality tics of the addicted mindstate.

Here is Arctor's introspection after temporarily succumbing to the confused paranoid logic of his roommate, Paul Barris:

> My God, Bob Arctor thought. I was into that trip as much as they were. We all got into it together that deep. He shook himself, shuddered, and blinked. Knowing what I know, I still stepped into that freaked-out paranoid space with them, viewed it as they viewed it — muddled, he thought. Murky again; the same murk that covers them covers me; the murk of this dreary dream world we float around in.

Arctor goes along with Barris' scenario that the sudden appearance in the house of a hot roach stub indicates his house has been invaded by narcotics agents. They should immediately call the police and report the incident, to disclaim all knowledge of planted narcotics. (Of course, they must also get rid of their personal stashes, which they do know about.) The 'plant' turns out to be a false alarm, since the roach was actually left by Donna Hawthorne, who had come into the house and proceeded to take a nap:

> 'I'll edit myself out,' he said. 'So you won't see me. As a matter of conventional protection.'

Later in the 1970s, ironically, Philip Dick's brain-chemistry issues compelled him to turn his powerful intellect inward to explain the things he saw and heard. But in *Scanner*, Dick still exhibits a strong ability to distinguish between the thought-patterns of an 'abnormally disturbed' individual and the thought patterns of what we (and he) would refer to as a 'normal individual'.

When Barris decides to inform on Robert Arctor he (correctly) perceives that the distribution of Substance D is the result of a large, secret conspiracy. Barris believes that it's a conspiracy by the Soviet Union to overthrow the US. Dick's larger point, as Arctor discovers at the end of the novel, is that the US is a willing co-conspirator. The production of Substance D is actually a conspiracy to cripple the capabilities of people such as Dick's protagonists: any and all of them who rebel against the mechanised, corporate culture of The System.

A central theme is Arctor/Fred's gradual realisation of his own neural impairment and the fallout of his schizophrenic dual life as a drug addict and a narcotics agent. Dick uses a meme that was becoming popular at the time of writing, about the independence of the left and right hemispheres of the brain: that they represent independent thought systems, which are fused in a 'normal' person by constant synchronisation and acknowledgment.

> 'How come, Fred grated, 'that even if both hemispheres of my brain are dominant, they don't receive the same stimuli? Why can't the two whatevers be synchronized, like stereo sound is?'

To his superiors at the narcotics bureau, who are trying to explain the effects that substance D has had on him:

> 'Maybe it's you fuckers,' Fred said, 'who're seeing the universe backward, like in a mirror. Maybe I see it right.'
>
> 'You see it both ways.'

In Dick's afterword, he tries to come to terms with the meaning of the book:

> There is no moral in this novel; it is not bourgeois. It does not say they were wrong to play when they should have toiled; it just tells what the consequences were ...
>
> If there was any sin, it was that these people wanted to keep on having a good time forever and were punished for that. But, as I say, I feel that, if so, the punishment was far too great.

Maybe Dick lost something through his own drug experiences: the ability to provide fire and ammunition for his protagonists (and himself) to combat the forces that consistently punish the nonconformist, the outsider.

Josh Lukin (English professor at State University of New York at Buffalo) points out, in 'This Sense of Worthlessness: Ideals of Success in Philip K. Dick's *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland*', *New York Review of Books*, April 2001, that 1950s sociology has the habit of 'falsely universalizing a white, male middle-class experience of economic and social change'.

Scholars in the mid 1970s began pointing out the disparity between fifties discourse and fifties realities.

> A powerful synthesis of [these] critiques of '50s literature appears in a 1957 lecture given by novelist Robert Bloch. Bloch begins by waxing nostalging over the great protest fiction of the '30s by the likes of John Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis, and James T. Farrell. He then denounces the popular literature of the '50s, with its message that 'we must adapt, we must conform to the rules instead of wasting our time and energy asking a lot of foolish questions or putting up a bunch of stupid arguments'.
>
> [Quoting Gregg Rickman, one of PKD's biographers]: Dick might have been able to get away with a qualified pessimism in his genre work ... but such pessimism as Dick expressed had no place in mainstream American publishing.
>
> In the world of Dick's novels, the 'independent' people constitute far less than a quarter of the population. Even the science- fictional heroes who suspect that reality is very different from what's presented to them only begin to act independently when they find some form of outside validation for their suspicions. Consensus reality — what Dick called the *koinos kosmos* — has an immense impact on nearly all of his characters.

Dick is involved with hands-on labour, but does not always idealise the lone craftsman:

> In the science fiction realms that Dick frequented, hands-on labor is indeed often idealized in the form of the lone tinkerer who builds a teleporter out of his grandma's sewing machine and a few radio tubes. But to say that Dick consistently idealizes the isolated craftsman is to oversimplify his values. A Dick hero involved in collaborative labor (*Ubik*), administrative work (*The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*), or even sales (*The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*), may find that work fulfilling. Other factors are involved in distinguishing a good job from a lousy one ... such as the pride Jim Fergusson takes in treating his customers better than a large-scale operation might.

The central issue

The issue of perceiving authentic value is a favorite theme of Dick's, closely allied to his interest in the capacity to see reality ...

> Dick was later to idealize the products of creative work for their ability to mediate among people and help them to realize their shared humanity: Frank's jewelry in *The Man in the High Castle*, and Ella's aerosol can of reality in *Ubik* perform such functions.
>
> [Quoting Thomas Scheff:] Low-status persons must not only face lack of deference in the outer world. In order to get through each day, they must very often take the view of the dominant group and thus view themselves through the eyes of a scornful other, a powerful source of self-generated shame.

Dick insisted on depicting such a ruthless world.

Dick to Goran Bengston (his Swedish translator) (4 May 1973):

> For me the big news (besides me and Tessa getting married) is that I have sold *two* new novels to Doubleday, the first of which is FLOW MY TEARS. I have said to you that I considered it perfect and finished; it was neither — I had to do a total rewrite before sending it off at last. Ten rewrites, the last of which was monumental! Anyhow now it is bought and will be coming out. But for me the later one, A SCANNER DARKLY, which is only finished in rough, is the one now. TEARS, when I reread it early this year before typing it up, turned out to be sentimental; so much for what I called 'the perfect' novel ... Only in the final draft did I get any bite into it, any grit. *But with SCANNER — it is all bite, all grit; it is a great tragic anti-dope novel, an autobiographical account, set as science fiction, of what I saw in the dope world, the counterculture, during the two years after my wife and daughter left me. I believe nothing in fiction matches it in the hell it portrays ...*

— Notes prepared by Lenny Bailes, February–March 2005

The Book of Honour panel, Potlatch, 4 March 2005: Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*

Ian Carruthers' transcription of his own notes

Bruce Gillespie (moderator), Howard Hendrix, Lenny Bailes and Grania Davis

Bruce Gillespie opened with the talk already transcribed above, and fielded the questions. He also remembers answering some of them, but his comments don't seem to have made it to the transcription.

Grania Davis:
Bruce covered most of points she would want to make about *A Scanner Darkly*. She'll talk about Phil himself during the seventies. She had just re-read the book for the first time in nearly 30 years. Not his best book: the language seems dated. But immediately we're drawn into a world of gloom and despair — and dark humour.

The book has no outside characters beyond the immediate scene. It shows Philip Dick working on himself: both his drug issues, and the two sides of the personality. There were at least two Philip Dicks, maybe more. At this time, he was starting to reintegrate himself.

In 1971, Phil gathered around a group of misfits and ne'er-do-wells. Grania was one of them. She described a visit to Phil's house in 1971 in Santa Benicia. He would say to visitors, 'Let me show you around my garden. This is my dead lemon tree. This is my dead rose bush. This is my dead lawn. And the unwelcome wagon is coming next week to take me away.'

Nancy and Esa (his wife and child) had already left. After the garden tour, he would tell visitors about the problems he was dealing with. He was very concerned about his house being broken into, so he gave Grania a complete set of his books for safekeeping. *A Scanner Darkly* brings back that period very vividly.

Grania offered to answer any questions about Philip Dick as a person during that period.

Question from audience
Was Chester Anderson one of the characters in *Scanner*?

Lenny Bailes
Chester was an SF writer and hippie. He was best known as the author of the novel *The Butterfly Kid*. Later, he moved to LA and worked on alternative newsletter. He shared a love of the I Ching with Phil. Very convincing with it.

Chester was much more flamboyant than the people depicted in *Scanner*.

Grania Davis
Chester was too much of his own person. The folks that are in the novel are more the kids that were around him a lot after his wife and kid left; Philip Dick took in strays.

Lenny Bailes
We are still talking about the book. Why now, thirty years after it was published? It is helpful to place it in context with other novels.

A number of his books are about fake reality and the investment in it.

But he also wrote quite a few mainstream novels. *Scanner* resembles in many ways his novels of the 1950s about nonconformists who are trying to survive in the bigger society. Because of drugs, the folks in *Scanner* can't fight — they are too messed up.

In *Time out of Joint* (published in 1959), the protagonist sees through the 1950s suburban crap, but he's actually living in a much later era, being used for something else. In *Martian Time-Slip*, Jack Bohlen battles his own schizophrenia, but survives.

The books before *Scanner* are full of characters like this — damaged folks who win. In *Scanner*, the main characters are up against something they can't fight.

The purpose of *Scanner* is the beginning of his exegesis to understand himself and meet himself: Philip Dick trying to look at his own conflicts and schizophrenia.

Howard Hendrix
'I am an English Professor!'

Howard reads *Scanner* as text. He has an upbeat interpretation of the novel's end — or at least, more of one than that offered by the other panelists. 'No one should have to suffer that much to create that beauty', said Howard. He calls it a 'narco-novel of social commentary'.

The only obvious SF element is the scramble suit — but it's just as strange as the SF elements in his other novels. We see here another example of 'the trapdoor effect' found in all of Dick's SF novels. At some point in the narrative, the trapdoor opens, and there's another world! The descent is usually vertical. But in *Scanner* it's horizontal — a 'slide across the corpus callosum' — from Fred to Bob to Bruce (Fred Arctor's three identities in different parts of the novel).

The novel offers some wonderful social commentary for postmodernists; for instance, the fabulous brand names; the description of Anaheim; selling the McBurger back and forth from our living rooms. 'Welcome to the internet, by the way', said Howard.

We find different parts of the personality spying on itself; the idea of the surveillance state. Doper talk and the atmosphere of paranoia are presented wonderfully. Philip Dick really catches the conversation of the period.

Scanner provides an example of a particular kind of terrorism: the description in the text of slow, deliberate sabotage. The sabotagee never knows whether she or he is being sabotaged.

A wonderful thing about the book is that the author loves dopers. Philip Dick can both portray them and their situations, and is profoundly compassionate towards all the characters. This is a novel where philosophical conundrum meets metaphysical reality.

We follow the path of the mad detective in his search for the true source of substance D. It proves to be as natural as death always is, living inside life. 'Not wanting to live is identical to not wanting to die.'

Fred, who becomes Bruce, will bring back information in his own weird way. He's looking for the font of the death of the spirit. Despite all his suffering, he manages to smuggle out to us his part of the truth.

Question from audience
The non-SF novels — Grania had said she had read them in manuscript form before they were published — how did they fit in with *Scanner*?

Grania Davis
What struck her is that *Scanner* seems to be a very personal novel. The non-SF novels are very personal novels compared to some of the other books, such as *Palmer Eldritch*, *Martian Tim-Slip*, and *The Man in the High Castle*. He doesn't bare himself as strongly in those SF novels.

Why is his writing becoming more and more and more impressive and important? An example: he had folks talking to computers. Now it's real.

Question from audience
How did someone whose grip on reality seemed so tenuous produce so well?

Grania Davis
During this period, he wasn't more and more out of touch; he was episodically in and out. He loved domestic life: cooking, kids, puttering, etc. Other times, he was a mad mystic; other times, just mad. He suffered severe episodes of paranoia, which is how we would now diagnose his condition.

Question from audience
What was function of German poetry in the book?

Grania Davis
One of Phil's obsessions was German cultural poetry: German composers to highlight mood — Mozart when cheerful, Schubert's Leider when he was feeling down. He quoted *Faust* in the German; maybe he misquoted it, as he didn't speak German. Free association, to a certain degree.

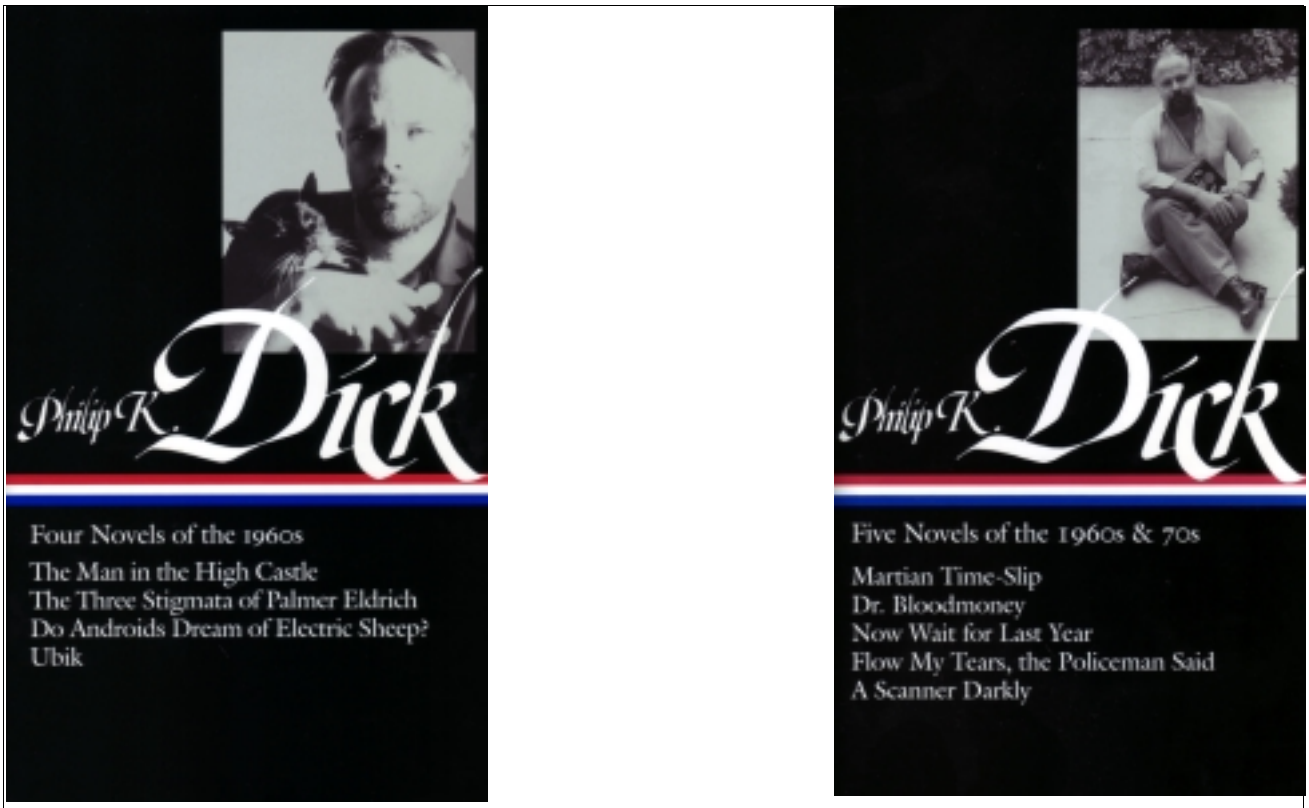
Lenny Bailes
It is a mistake to say he got further out of touch with reality. He had so much more inner reality in his own brain that he had to contain and contend with. When he became susceptible to his problems, instead of looking outward, he looked inward with his intellect to explain what he was hearing in his own head. He retained this ability for clarity of communication, to explain what was happening to him.

Question from audience
What's the pink beam experience?

Lenny Bailes
During the pink beam experience in 1974 — which is described in *VALIS* and *Radio Free Albemuth* — a woman knocked on his door, and showed him a picture of fish on it. He felt that this was very important: that God was talking to him and that he had been struck by a pink beam from the sky.

Question from audience:
In *Scanner*, there are many levels of betrayal. If we take book at face value, it seems that the level of paranoia is appropriate.

Lenny Bailes
What if we step back from the sense of paranoia? Take the scene where Barris has placed a tape recorder under couch, when the narcotic agents are supposed to invade the place. Arctor is merely trying to help his own position. But he steps into the same paranoia that he and his housemates were living in. He steps into the worldview of paranoia, and then steps back.



The first two Library of America editions of Philip K. Dick's work. Library of America reports that the first PKD volume has had the greatest sales (28,000 copies) of any of its editions.

Howard Hendrix
Scanner is about going into and out of that paranoid space.

Comment from audience
Dick's art in the novel is being able to understand what makes the characters tick. We are watching the characters watching themselves and each other, and end up able to understand what's going on there.

At the point where they get to installing scanning devices in the household — multiplying the layers of observation — Dick invoking reality TV — the watcher watching the watched and the boundaries blurring and the madness results from that. Is it art that I'm watching someone else perform? What's going on here?

Howard Hendrix
We find in much of Phil's work the blurring of lines, especially between living and non-living things, which keep exchanging properties, so Philip Dick's work becomes a mirror of a mirror.

Grania Davis
So incorporating the madness of the book. That was very much the experience of being around PKD himself — he was very 'schizophrenogenic': everything became very dangerous and suspect, over a period of time. You can see why he went through so many wives; no one could sit it out for long. Maybe a whole weekend exploring the mind of Philip Dick is not the best idea: a distressing and disturbing to do. True horror, in that sense.

Lenny Bailes
The other side of Philip Dick's work is his power to expose what's false; to try to find the kernel of what's true under the illusion. He was a challenger of common perception. Josh Lucan wrote that in the novels of Philip Dick, fewer than 25 per cent of people are independent. Consensus reality has an enormous impact on characters.

Bruce Gillespie says:
That's all that Lenny and I, with Ian Carruthers' help, have been able to retrieve from that weekend. Howard Hendrix was going to send me his own notes prepared for Potlatch, but if he sent them, I cannot find them in my records.

What has been obscured in the notes is that the centre of the debate focused on whether *A Scanner Darkly* is really as bleak as I asserted. Howard made out a very strong argument that the power of Phil Dick's mind reflecting on this experience makes the novel into an uplifting experience. The last page of the narrative, which hit me like a train all over again when I read it in 2005, can be interpreted as a sign that Bruce, the brain-dead Bob, knows that he has imparted the right message to the right people.

The work of Philip K. Dick: The debate continues

In the years since *SF Commentary* appeared last, a huge number of articles, reviews and viewpoints about Dick's work have been sent to me. Here are the most interesting contributions:

Rosaleen Love

P. K. Dick: The exhilaration and the terror

Most of this article was first presented at the book launch of Christopher Palmer's *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern*, at Latrobe University, 25 May 2004. The following version first published in *Borderlands*.

The book launch is one of the great Australian inventions. People from overseas say they have them too, but I reckon they got the idea from us. Write a book, get it published, collapse with relief, have a party, get someone along who likes your work and will say a few nice words about it (preferably for no more than five minutes) and some books are sold, mostly to family and friends. After the party is over, the book lurches off on its independent voyage. The writer waves a fond and fearful goodbye.

I was asked to launch a book by Christopher Palmer, *Philip D. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2003). The book launch was held in the English Department of Latrobe University, Melbourne; the book is the latest in the Liverpool Science Fiction Texts and Studies series; the writer is a Latrobe academic. The book is a critical discussion of the work of US science fiction writer Philip K. Dick (1928–1982), in relation to the historical predicament of postmodernity. The scramblesuit of academic respectability shimmers upon Dick, albeit posthumously.

I first started reading Philip K. Dick's books in the 1970s when my adolescent son brought them home from various libraries and read one every night for a couple of weeks. I too, got hooked, reading them one after the next, as fast as my son relinquished them, the details blurring in my head in quite phildickian fashion, as shimmersuits of words. I was stunned by the wild ideas and the plurality of imagined worlds. (My son recommended the books to his school librarian, and when she, doubtfully at first, ordered the books for the library, she was delighted to find boys started to read them avidly. Dick was the J. K. Rowling of that era.)

In the entry under Philip K. Dick in the *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* (1993) the editors state: 'the literature on Philip K. Dick is enormous and daily growing'. One word in particular in this statement would have delighted Dick: the word 'literature'. Dick desperately wanted literary respectability, and here's Palmer giving it to him, in a most thorough and respectful way. Except, Palmer is giving literary respectability to the science fiction novels, while Dick himself might have expected long-overdue accolades for his early realist novels of the fifties, unpublished in his lifetime. Dick certainly wouldn't have been pleased at Palmer's critical evaluation of the realist novels, which is confined to one chapter accurately titled 'Mired in the Sex War'. Gender politics was never Dick's forte. Dick would have been stunned that the best part of Palmer's book is devoted to the literary analysis of his science fiction. Posthumous fame comes with unanticipated consequences. The author so often gets it wrong, and will never know.

One consequence of the enormous secondary literature on Philip K. Dick is to find something new to say. Christopher Palmer rises to the challenge, with the subtitle: 'exhilaration and terror of the postmodern'. What might Dick have made of this? I think he would have been thrilled at being bracketed with exhilaration and terror, and once Palmer had explained the conditions of post-modernity to him, Dick would have nodded in

pleased agreement. According to Palmer, 'Dick's fiction constitutes a critique of post-modernity', exemplified in 'the regime of images and simulacra, the fading of the natural, the possibility that social institutions and ruling conditions are imaginary, fabricated things, and that there is no objective ground of reality' (p. 7). Again, 'Dick makes fictions of the disintegration of the real in contemporary society: the action of perpetual change both on what has previously existed, and on what is existing now but has no stable reality, because it is already marked by its inevitable dissolution' (p. 32). Dick's characters are mostly ordinary people pounded by the forces of history, characters who react and try to change things, even as what they are reacting against is dissolving before their eyes. Through the medium of science fiction, says Palmer, Dick sought to sublimate the dreadfulness of twentieth century history.

What if P. K. Dick were still alive and writing, here and now? Say there's been a time warp from the 1960s into our time, and here he is, courtesy of some proton beam deflection malfunction. Dick might decide to enrol in a research degree in creative writing at university, relishing the scholarship money, in which time he'd probably turn out a host of short stories as well as several novels. Say he's writing *The Man in a High Castle* for his creative writing thesis. Then, in addition, he'd have to write an accompanying critique, perhaps along the lines of Palmer's Chapter 6, 'The reasonableness and madness of history'. Say Dick mind-swapped with Christopher Palmer for the duration (and who knows what phildickian novels Palmer might then write, with this arrangement)? Dick would stand back from his work and say, this is what I'm doing with history; this is what I'm doing with ideas of what makes us human, as humanity retains what is essential to it as androids evolve to dream of electric sheep.

I am intrigued by the relationship between Dick's fiction and Palmer's criticism, which is itself a subset of the relation of fiction to fact, the novel to history, the image to the abstract idea. In his introduction, Palmer argues that Dick's fiction is more than a depiction of, and a response to history; yet ways of understanding post-modernity inform the reading of Dick's fiction. Palmer writes: 'I view literary criticism as an active dialogue between the critic and the text, which is best regarded as an intelligent piece of discourse about (in the case of Dick) the conditions of contemporary society, one that practices its own disciplines of truth production — a discipline that is necessarily supple to the point of elusiveness' (p. viii).

I take as a point of departure a quotation from a text on the creative process: 'Creative writers develop the habit of thinking concretely, in images rather than abstract ideas. They show the readers an imaginative facsimile of the world instead of telling them about the world, and this choice, paradoxically, makes their writing both more subtle and more potent, less coercive yet irresistible' (Carol Burke and Molly Best Tinsley, *The Creative Process*, p. 74). In his science fiction Dick uses concrete images of abstract ideas in ways generations of reader have found exhilarating and entrancing. As he writes about what is means to be human, his nonhuman characters include robots, mutants, androids, aliens, elves, speaking taxis, intelligent dogs and Ganymedian slime moulds of impeccable ethical principles. The other worlds they inhabit are, variously, Mars, alternative Earths, underground earth, other planets or the world within the head. His plots are wildly inventive. Through the devices of fiction — pace, staged revelations, foreshadowing, climax — he shows readers multiple imaginative facsimiles of the world.

If, in so doing, his choices makes his writing 'more subtle, and more potent, less coercive, yet irresistible', the next question is, than what? Than the nonfictional critical study of Dick's work? This is not to reject criticism, or Palmer's work. It is to point to the difficulty of the task of reading literary criticism, and the awkward power relation of reader to writer. Dick shows us imaginative facsimiles of the world, using relatively clear and simple story-telling techniques. Palmer tells us about Dick's written worlds, using language and concepts that are far from simple.

Often the reason for the technical difficulty of literary criticism, we are told, is that the ideas are difficult, therefore the language reflects that difficulty. As a reader, I know Palmer has read more widely in both the fiction of Philip K. Dick, and in twentieth century intellectual history than I have. Criticism is coercive: because the language is difficult, the reader is propelled along the path of partial comprehension, knowing she hasn't read nearly as much as the critic, knowing she doesn't know nearly enough to argue back. I've read some of Dick's work, but by no means all, and a lot of that reading was done some time ago, when I could cope with Dick's often fairly woeful characterisation of his female charac-

ters in terms of the shape of their breasts. If one of the aims of literary criticism is to encourage the reader to go back to the sources, I'm certainly grateful to Palmer for sending me back to re-read Dick (and I must check whether Ganymedian slime moulds also have conical breasts, or it they are coded masculine even if that's a biological improbability for a single-sex species). The relation of reader to writer in literary criticism is that of humble, half-informed but sometimes crotchety reader to expert.

As I re-read Dick, I am struck by his brilliant exemplification of the writing-workshop adage, 'Show, not tell'. Dick is the master. Palmer writes, about *A Scanner Darkly*: 'it is extremely easy to interpret. Thematic material (the notion of brain death, for instance) or imagery (reference to machines, for instance) proliferates' (p. 198). It is through techniques such as these that the fiction writer takes the reader on a journey into ideas which, expressed through the medium of non-fiction, are much more difficult to grasp. The subjects Dick explored include psychiatry, aerospace science, philosophy of mind, philosophy of time, theology, communication theory, theory of rubbish, counterfactual histories, media studies, and so it goes. Palmer necessarily uses a certain density of critical prose in his analysis of what Dick is up to.

If, at the end of reading Palmer's book, my head is still spinning, it's because it's been a great mind-stretching exercise and it's done me a power of good. Philip K. Dick would have loved the serious attention his work has provoked.

References

Christopher Palmer, *Philip D. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern,* Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2003.

Carol Burke and Molly Best Tinsley, *The Creative Process*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1993, p. 74.

Colin Steele

The great Philip K. Dick novels

Five Great Novels
Philip K. Dick (Gollancz; 841 pp.; $45)

The reputation of Philip K. Dick (1928–1982) continues to rise despite the abysmal nature of most of the movies made from his fiction. The five novels collected in this omnibus include some of his best work from the 1960s and the 1970s , namely *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Martian Time-Slip*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (the basis of the superb Ridley Scott move *Blade Runner*), *Ubik* and *A Scanner Darkly*, which was made into an animated movie in 2006 by Richard Linklater. These novels reaffirn Dick as the master of paranoid fiction, with his characters struggling to ascertain the nature of personal and societal reality. Dick's wild satire, free-wheeling plots and darkly prophetic insights are all fully on show in ***Five Great Novels***.

Human Is?; Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?; The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch; Dr Bloodmoney; Flow, My Tears, The Policeman Said; Martian Time-Slip
Philip K. Dick (Gollancz; $22.95 each)
Philip K. Dick: Four Novels of the 1960s
ed. Jonathan Lethem (Library of America; 830 pp.; $US30
Archaeologies of the Future
Fredric Jameson (Verso; 431 pp.; $63.00)

Paranoia, propaganda and a state of perpetual war are the defining characteristics of the twentieth century, according to the results of a *Guardian* survey announced at the Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival in May 2007. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell's dystopian vision of a totalitarian future, topped the poll.

American SF writer Philip K. Dick filled his 40-plus novels and more than 100 short stories with themes of paranoia, identity crisis and personal manipulation. While Ursula Le Guin has called Dick 'our own home-grown Borges', for many, he is only known through Ridley Scott's movie *Blade Runner*, based on Dick's novel ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*** (1968; now incidentally a first edition of considerable value).

To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dick's death, Gollancz has repackaged five of Dick's classic novels, along with a selection of his best short stories, ***Human Is***, although all sadly without introductions. Gollancz publishing director Simon Spanton has commented that the success of movies such as *Blade Runner* and *Minority Report* have accelerated interest in a writer whose themes of 'paranoia, media manipulation and drugs' are even more relevant today than when Dick was writing.

Dick was included in May 2007 in the literary canon of the Library of America series with ***Philip K. Dick: Four Novels of the 1960s***, edited by Jonathan Lethem. This reflects that the 'literary world' is now acknowledging Dick's hallucinatory creations. Lethem, in his Introduction, says Dick 'wielded a sardonic yet heartbroken acuity about the plight of being alive in the twentieth century'. Lethem adds: 'It's hard to believe in a Dick who's been domesticated into a life of literary prestige the way we

are currently domesticating him. His books revolve around one grand truth: namely, that things are not what they seem'.

Dick, ironically, yearned for mainstream literary acclaim, and once derided his readers as 'trolls and wackos'. Dick, who once took over 1000 amphetamine pills in a week, was notably unstable both in personal and literary relationships. Dick told his third wife (out of five), 'The words come out of my hands, not my brain, I write with my hands.' Dick wrote his share of bad novels, particularly some of the Ace paperbacks, written in less than two weeks in the 1950s, but his best books will stand the test of time.

One such book, the Hugo Award winner ***The Man in the High Castle*** (1962), which describes an alternate world in which Japan and Germany win World War II, is included in the Library of America edition, but is surprisingly not included in the Gollancz package. ***The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*** (1965), which depicts a future in which drugs offer different brands of virtual reality, does, however, make it into both collections. John Lennon was so impressed by *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* that he wanted to make a film of it. In a typical Dickian alternate universe, maybe he did.

The other three Gollancz novel reissues, ***Martian Time-Slip*** (1964), ***Dr Bloodmoney*** (1965) and ***Flow, My Tears, the Policeman Said*** (1974), explore the nature of identity, corporate intrigue and the nature of time, to mention only three topics. There is now an adjective 'phildickian', which covers Dick's themes generically.

Fredric Jameson, a leading Marxist literary critic, is Professor of Literature and Romance Studies at Duke University. Jameson's ***Archaeologies of the Future***, subtitled ***The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions***, is a dense academic work, divided into two sections. The first provides a detailed analysis of utopia, ranging from Thomas More through Marx and Engel's analysis of the socialist utopia to the present day, where Jameson covers, in the second section, some of the main SF 'imaginations' of 'the future as disruption.'

Jameson uses SF authors, such as Dick, Le Guin, William Gibson, Brian Aldiss and Kim Stanley Robinson, to examine 'the utopian dialectic of identity and difference'. It is therefore only appropriate, given Dick's themes, that Jameson devotes considerable space to Dick, whom he terms 'the Shakespeare of Science Fiction.' Jameson believes, however, 'the most ineffectual way to argue Dick's greatness is to claim his books as high literature'; rather, one should appreciate 'Dick's capacity to render history'.

Jameson ponders, 'What difficulties must be overcome in imagining or representing utopia?', and links authors as diverse as Robert A. Heinlein and Slavoj Zizek, Kim Stanley Robinson and Jacques Derrida. Slovenian philosopher Zizek is quoted that it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Jameson laments in his introduction that 'Late capitalism seems to have no natural enemies ... undoing all the social gains made since the inception of the socialist and communist movements ... offering to dismantle whatever stands in the way of a free market all over the world.'

'Anti-anti-utopianism' is the phrase Jameson coins as a rallying point against the present perceived torpor. Jameson argues that we now need 'to develop an anxiety about losing the future which is analogous to Orwell's anxiety about the loss of the past and of memory'. The Orwellian wheel turns full circle.

Robert Mapson

The speaking light: Philip K Dick and the shamanistic vision

> In certain cases, a man blind from birth may have an operation performed which gives him his sight. The result — frequently misery, confusion, disorientation. The light that illumines the madman is an unearthly light. It is not always a distorted refraction of his mundane life situation. He may be irradiated by light from other worlds. It may burn him out.[1]

Philip K. Dick was a modern visionary in the visionary field of science fiction writing. The nature of his vision was not the standard repertoire of standard science fiction, where everything is simply bigger (empires, buildings, bombs and so on) or faster (spaceships, telepathy and so on), or any other such extrapolation from the situation today — though these elements often appear in his writings — but rather the human reaction to these marvels and mysteries. In his work the important thing was not prediction of things to come, but an exploration of the individual's place in the cosmos from the individual's point of view. Philip K. Dick wrote as a philosopher, not as a scientist.

In many ways Philip K. Dick existed in the same relation to our society as the shaman did, and does still occasionally, exist in relation to his or her society, as someone who has travelled further along the path of a spiritual crisis than most of us would choose to do, and

who has returned to act as an intermediary between us and the macrocosmos, as a translator (in the sense of the original Latin meaning of *carried over)* between the spiritual and the mundane realms. This is not simply to mean that he wrote from a philosophical viewpoint — Frank Herbert is an example of a writer who did this — but that this philosophical viewpoint has been tempered by a deep personal longing.

This is also the nature of the shaman. This is also one of the possibilities inherent in science fiction, though it is not always realised. As Philip K. Dick himself said:

> SF presents in fictional form an eccentric view of the normal or a normal view of a world that is not our world ... The function of SF psychologically is to cut the reader loose from the actual world that he inhabits; it deconstructs time, space, reality.[2]

Let me explore, for a moment, the idea of the shaman, and bear in mind the Philip K. Dick quote above while I do so. Joan Halifax has written an excellent volume on the shaman, collecting shamanistic visions from many primitive societies across the globe. The shaman, she writes, is:

> a mystical, priestly and political figure emerging during the Upper Paleolithic period and perhaps going back to Neanderthal times ... A specialist in the human soul but also as a generalist whose sacred and social functions can cover an extraordinarily wide range of activities. Shamans are healers, seers, and visionaries who have mastered death ... Shamans are technicians of the sacred and masters of ecstasy ... The shaman is one who has traversed and explored the thresholds as well as the territories ... of human, natural and supernatural interaction. This complete vision of the society is the fruit born of a profound life crisis ... The crisis of a profound illness can also be the central experience of the shaman's initiation. It involves an encounter with forces that decay and destroy ... The shaman is a healed healer who has retrieved the broken pieces of his or her body and psyche and, through a personal rite of transformation, has integrated many planes of life experience.[3]

While there are many pathways to the initiation as a shaman, all involve some deep crisis as the trigger. In Philip K. Dick's case, I believe there are two such incidents that precipitated him, if not fully into the world of the shaman, certainly far enough that there are many deep resemblances.

The first (chronologically the second) is the most well known, and the crisis that he spent the last part of his life trying to comprehend and integrate. This is the series of visions that he saw and voices that he heard in 1974, and which he sought to understand in *VALIS,* and his other late works, but also at great length in his *Exegesis* notebooks. In one entry he describes a common image of the shamanistic initiation:

> I passed through the narrow gate in mid-74.[4]

The other major crisis in Dick's life, and possibly the more important, is also often worked out in his writings, but at a much less obvious level. This crisis was the death of his twin sister Jane at the age of one month. This was an event of which he had no conscious memory, but which affected his family and his childhood so strongly, leading him to feel guilty that 'Somehow I got all the milk.'[5] Subsequently, one of the major concerns of his literary work is dualist systems. Examples of this are manifold: the Manichaean conflict in *The Cosmic Puppets,* the gnostic cosmology in *VALIS,* the father and the anti-father in 'The Father Thing'.

To bring this personal crisis as a trigger to the visionary process into focus, consider the case of the medieval mystic, Hildegard of Bingen, and her own account of how her visions commenced:

> And it came to pass in the eleven hundred and forty-first year of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, Son of God, when I was forty-two years and seven months old, that the heavens were opened and a blinding light of exceptional brilliance flowed through my entire brain. And so it kindled my whole heart and breast like a flame, not burning but warming ... But although I heard and saw these things, because of doubt and a low opinion (of myself) and because of the divine sayings of men, I refused for a long time the call to write, not out of stubbornness but out of humility, until weighed down by the scourge of God, I fell onto a bed of sickness.[6]

Compare this with Dick's description of his 1974 crisis:

> Then ... while lying in bed unable to sleep for the fifth night in a row, overwhelmed with dread and melancholy, I suddenly began seeing whirling lights which moved away at such a fast speed — and were instantly replaced — that they forced me into total wakefulness. For almost eight hours I continued to see these frightening vortexes of light ... I felt as if I were racing along at the speed of light, no longer lying beside my wife in our bed. My anxiety was unbelievable.[7]

Compare this further with a vision of Black Elk, a North American Oglala Sioux shaman:

> Now suddenly there was nothing but a world of cloud, and we three were there alone in the middle of a great white plain with snowy hills and mountains staring at us; and it was very still; but there were whispers.[8]

The visionary breaks through the mundane template and is vouchsafed a view of the eternal verities:

> This is *natures nest of boxes* the Heavens contain the *Earth,* the *Earth, Cities, Cities, Men.* And all these are *Concentrique;* the common *center* to them all is *decay, ruine;* we can *imagine,* but not *demonstrate,* that light, which is the very emanation of the light of God ... only that bends not to this *Center,* to *Ruine;* that which was not made of *Nothing, is* not threatened with this annihilation. All other things are; even *Angels,* even our *soules,* they move upon the same *poles,* they bend to the same *Center,* and if they were not made immor-

> tall by *preservation,* their *Nature* would not keep them from sinking to this *center, Annihilation.*[9]

Illness plays a major part in the shamanistic transformation; it is the catalyst that releases visions and opens the visionary's mind. For example, Hildegard of Bingen, it has been suggested by Dr Oliver Sacks, suffered from migraine:

> A careful consideration of [her] accounts and figures leaves no room for doubt concerning their nature: they were indisputably migrainous, and they illustrate, indeed, many of the varieties of visual aura ... Hildegard's visions ... provide a unique example of the manner in which a physiological event, banal, hateful, or meaningless to the vast majority of people, can become, in a privileged consciousness, the substrate of a supreme ecstatic inspiration. One must go to Dostoyevski, who experienced on occasion ecstatic epileptic auras to which he attached momentous significance, to find an adequate historical parallel.[10]

This last comment may well provide a clue to Dick's own visions. Lawrence Sutin in his biography speculates that Dick may have suffered from temporal lobe epilepsy, and that this was the source of his visions:

> For those seeking a reasonable diagnosis, temporal lobe epilepsy does the trick. One can even go so far as to group writers who may have been influenced — in their spiritual concerns — by the *possible* presence of temporal lobe epilepsy. Dostoevsky, who suffered from epileptic seizures, is one prominent example. But how far do such speculative diagnostics and groupings take us? William James draws the line this way: 'To pass a spiritual judgment upon these states, we must not content ourselves with superficial medical talk, but inquire into their fruits for life.'[11]

Did Philip K. Dick suspect he suffered from epilepsy? Given the large numbers of ailments listed in the index in Sutin's biography it might not prove anything even if he did, but it is interesting to note the level of fear Dick expresses in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*:

> He held out, reluctantly, a small plastic tube. A container. Chilled, Barney said, 'What's this?'
>
> 'Your illness. Leo believes, on professional advice, that it's not enough for you merely to state in court that you've been damaged; they'll insist on thoroughly examining you.'
>
> 'Tell me specifically what is in this thing.'
>
> 'It's epilepsy, Mayerson. The Q form, the strain whose causes no one is sure of, whether it's due to organic injury that can't be detected with the EEG or whether it's psychogenic.'
>
> 'And the symptoms?'
>
> Faine said, 'Grand mal.' After a pause he said, 'Sorry.'
>
> 'I see,' Barney said. 'And how long will I have them?'
>
> 'We can administer the antidote after the litigation but not before. A year at the most. So now you can see what I meant when I said that you're going to be in a position to more than atone for not bailing out Leo when he needed it. You can see how this illness, claimed as a side-effect of Chew-Z, will —'
>
> 'Sure,' Barney said. 'Epilepsy is one of the great scare words. Like cancer, once. People are irrationally afraid of it because they know it can happen to them, at any time, with no warning.'[12]

Given such a visionary crisis occurring, there are a number of possible solutions. The recipient might try to ignore it, but given its intensity that would often seem difficult. We have already seen how Hildegard of Bingen tried this, until she was overcome by sickness from her efforts. A less confrontationist manner is to try and integrate such a happening into the person's *Weltanschauung*. In a medieval society it was easy to assume that such visions emanated from divine sources, and to interpret them accordingly. Hildegard of Bingen, who was a nun and eventually abbess, wrote and drew her visions as expressions of the Holy Ghost, and it was within the safe confines of such orthodox canon that they were accepted by the Church.

In the twentieth century the most modern of virtues is doubt, and we are left with fewer such preconceived structures within which to subsume and control the supernatural. Philip K. Dick never fully understood his visions, but his writings explore many varied ways of interpreting them, and indicate attempts to assimilate them — as a public discourse in his published work, and as a private Platonic dialogue in his notebooks.

> The songs and chants of the shaman ... emerging from the limitless depths of the human spirit that have been opened to the territory of the sacred through the experience of crisis and suffering, mark the very moment of creative illumination.[13]

> And I heard that light who sat on the throne speaking.[14]

None of this lessens the literary originality or importance of the Dick *oeuvre*, nor is it intended to, but it does provide a basis for interpreting the origin of Dick's originality. All his writing is still open to varied readings as to their purpose and ultimate worth in terms of literature *qua* literature.

It is the shaman who, as a result of his life-shattering experience, is empowered to heal, and to repair that which has been broken. This is perhaps the opposite pole of the two major concerns of Dick's writings, the counterpoint to the terrible fear that we are living within a delusional world-system — the importance of someone who repairs and mends. In the novels it is often someone who literally repairs (witness 'The Variable Man' or the much underrated *Galactic Pot-Healer*), though sometimes it is someone who spiritually repairs, particularly in the late works (*The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, for example). In a world that has been shattered, and thrown from its foundations, the ability to make whole what was broken becomes overwhelmingly important as a part of the understanding process (and, unconsciously, does this admiration for those who can make things

whole relate to the possibility that Philip K. Dick and his twin sister could be made whole once again?). As part of the shamanistic vision the terrors of the collective unconscious are not only encountered, but often frighteningly released in all the incomprehensible fury; yet the shamanistic vision also provides the power to contain and channel this psychic energy so that it becomes a powerful force of healing. In the tragedy of Dick's suffering there remains the broken fragments of the speaking light that opened itself up to him, which we can mend and make whole.

> Nay, *compassion* it selfe, comes to no great degree, if wee have not *felt,* in some *proportion,* in *our selves,* that which wee lament and condole in another.[15]

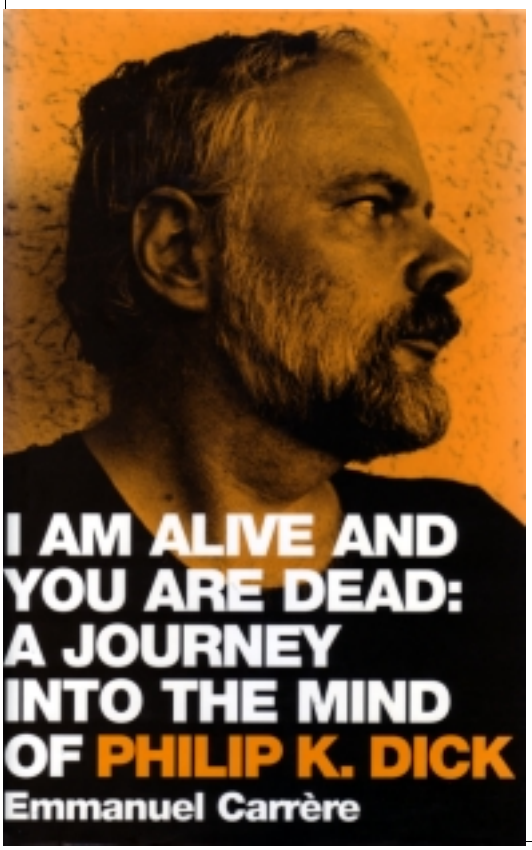
> We are the creation of some famous maker, in his way a kind of Stradivarius, who is no longer there to mend us. In clumsy hands we cannot give forth new sounds and we stifle within ourselves all those things which no one will ever draw from us — and all for lack of someone to mend us.[16]

Notes

1 R. D. Laing: *The Politics of Experience* (Penguin, 1967).
2 Interview conducted by Frank C. Bertrand in January 1980 published in *Niekas* 36.
3 Joan Halifax: *Shamanic Voices* (E. P. Dutton, 1979).
4 Philip K. Dick, quoted in Lawrence Sutin: *Divine Invasions* (Paladin, 1991).
5 ibid.
6 Hildegard of Bingen, quoted in Sabina Flanagan: *Hildegard of Bingen* (Routledge 1989).
7 Philip K. Dick, quoted in Sutin, ibid.
8 Black Elk, quoted in Halifax, ibid.
9 John Donne: *Selected Prose* (Penguin, 1987).
10 Oliver Sacks: *Migraine* (Pan, 1985).
11 Sutin, ibid.
12 Philip K. Dick: *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (Jonathon Cape, 1966).
13 Halifax, ibid.
14 Hildegard of Bingen, quoted in Flanagan, ibid.
15 Donne, ibid.
16 Chopin, quoted in Jerzy Kosinski: *Pinball* (Michael Joseph, 1982).

Harry Buerkett

PKD and the analyst



Harry Buerkett reviews:
I Am Alive and You Are Dead: A Journey into the Mind of Philip K. Dick
Emmanuel Carrère (Bloomsbury; 315 pp.; 17 pounds 99/$A45)

This book is just what its subtitle purports it to be. Apparently working from the notebooks, and interviews with close associates of Philip K. Dick, Carrère recreates the state(s) of mind of his subject from one dizzying episode to the next in his tortured life, with sympathy, but without holding back or pulling any punches.

What comes across, finally, is the painful and unpleasant realisation that Phil Dick was a borderline paranoid-schizophrenic mama's boy with delusions of grandeur. His fictions were barebones plots (which he seldom resolved — but that's one of his charms) upon which he hung all his psychological and interpersonal difficulties-of-the-moment, ending only when he'd reached the requisite 60,000 words or the life/mind problem had been (temporarily, most often) resolved.

Carrère does a good job of entering into the mindset of PKD's many meltdowns and epiphanies, and through this uncanny technique, in which you feel as if Carrere almost believes Dick's reality-spinning (but with the distancing effect of third-person narrative), gives you to

understand that Phil Dick the man was one for the analysts. You come away thinking that Dick should have been committed, and would have been if he hadn't been so damned smart and cunning that he could run circles intellectually around all the analysts he met, making them believe about him what he wanted them to believe.

This is an entertaining and agitating book. I lost respect for Phil Dick, as I did for Borges when I found out the particulars of his dull and lonely, mama's-boy life; but the fiction still has power, and PKD's psyche invested the fictions with more than he knew, and that's the interesting stuff. Certainly the bulb glows, but cutting into the conduit that supplies it may shock you.

Maybe the text *is* everything, as Derrida has it. In PKD's case, the text *contains* everything (and anything) precisely because it contains *nothing* — the nothingness of a shattered psyche, the scattered shards of a mirror reflecting bits of everything, and therefore in effect a Rorschach test in words.

One for the analysts, indeed.

Ralph Ashbrook

The beaming paradox

Reviewed:

What If Our World Is Their Heaven?
The Final Conversations of Philip K Dick
Edited by Gwen Lee and Doris Sauter (Overlook Press; ISBN 1-58567-009-X; $US26.95; 2000)

What If Our World Is Their Heaven? is less a book than a documentary: an unedited transcript of a series of talks with some friends months before Philip Dick's death. While we could wish the interviewers were sharper, we can be grateful for some of the gems that emerge. We see Phil in the process of plotting a book about an alien invasion/metaphor for life. We also hear more about his 'experience' that led to *Valis*. People who are uncomfortable with this sort of talk should read *Angels and Aliens* by Keith Thompson or *Passport to the Cosmos* by John E. Mack, MD. They suggest that the universe would be nice if it were simple, but it isn't.

Even the squeamish should enjoy seeing Philip Dick play with story ideas. His aliens don't understand sound, and see heaven as a place full of a 'music' imagined by their mystics. Their world is full of light and peace. An alien volunteer gets transferred to a biochip and implanted into a human brain. At first it listens (for the first time), then it influences the human (a hack composer), and finally communicates with him.

The comments about the composer's self-esteem are a fascinating and unintended look at Phil's view of himself in the early days of SF pulp stories. (He doesn't notice the connection.) When the human starts to die and needs to be condensed onto a biochip himself to be transferred to an alien brain, a story snag arises. The transfer of brain/mind to biochip is not actually a physical migration, but an informational one. When you copy the file, the original is still there. This is the *Star Trek* beaming paradox. The pattern-information does not need the original molecules to re-create the person in a new location — a concept played with in many SF stories independent of *Star Trek*.

Phil doesn't know what to do with it. He sees his story to be a reworking of *Flowers for Algernon* — a dull guy gets smart. I see it as a variation of Henry Kuttner's 'Mimsy Were the Borogroves' in its playing with symbolism of a non-traditional-human variety.

I found one especially fascinating moment in the conversation. Gwen Lee says, 'A happy ending!' Phil responds, 'More than happy ... For him this would be

heaven.' I am reminded of a line in *Listening To Prozac* by Peter Kramer, who asked a formerly severely depressed patient if Prozac made her feel normal again, and she said, 'Oh, no. Much better than normal.' It is these ideas pushing consensus reality that cause me to love science fiction — and the unexpected in life, for that matter.

We are left with Philip K. Dick, steeped in his imagination, turning from the interviewer to his not-to-be-written work-in-progress — a beaming paradox in his own right.

— Ralph Ashbrook, February 2002

Tim Train

Explaining his explanation: Two mainstream novels by Philip K. Dick

Mary and the Giant **(Gollancz 0-575-07466-3; 1987/2005; 232 pp.; $A24)**
In Milton Lumky Territory **(Gollancz 0-575-07465-5; 1985/2005; 213 pp.; $24)**

'I wish he would explain his explanation,' wrote Byron of Coleridge, mocking the opium-addicted poet's maddening and mystifying philosophy. If Byron never saw the prophetic verse of his colleague William Blake, then perhaps this is a good thing. While there is a simple beauty to Blake's opening epigram from *Auguries of Innocence*

> To see a world in a grain of sand,
> And a heaven in a wild flower,
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
> And eternity in an hour.

much of what comes after is perplexing, mind- bending, far from obvious. Blake and Coleridge were, in fact, mystics writing in an age of scientific enlightenment. They recognised but rejected (at least in part) the achievements of Newton; they chose, instead, imagination and revelation. Their works are abundant with the supernatural, messengers from other worlds and times, dreams and visions. Poetry rushed in to find new worlds where scientists feared to tread.

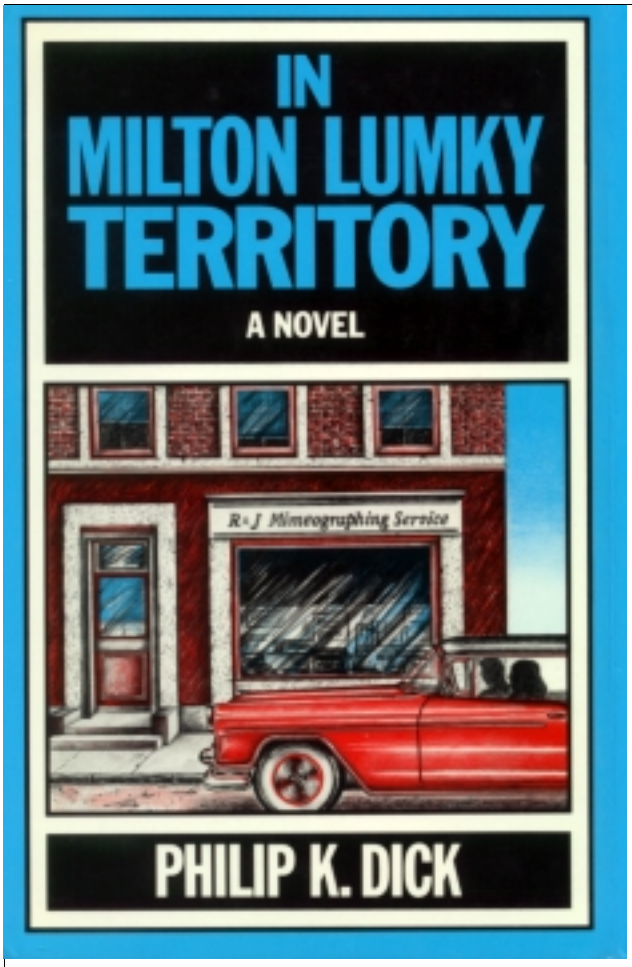
So, too, in his own way, was Philip K. Dick a mystic; though he wrote in the language of science, and the genre of science fiction, his fiction is full of stunning and outrageous possibilities. In 1980, he wrote: 'This is why I love SF. I love to read it; I love to write it. The SF writer sees not just possibilities but wild possibilities. It's not just "What if" — it's "My God; what if" — in frenzy and hysteria.' It's a good quote, hinting at the manic theology that appears in Dick, in full-blown speculative mode.

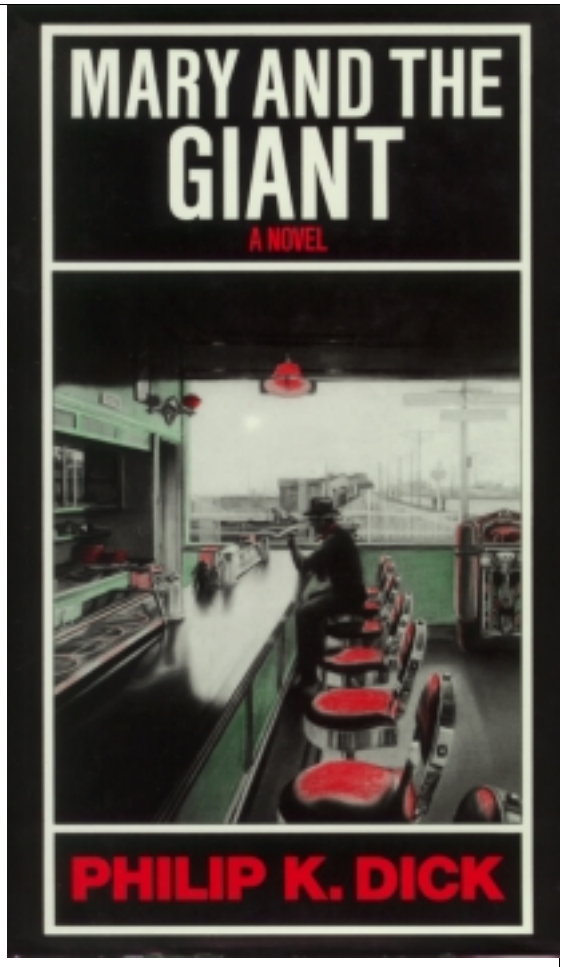
At his best, he doesn't just write simple tales of rockets or war. Dick creates and destroys whole universes. In *Time out of Joint*, he writes an utterly simple parable about a character living in a perfectly normal 1950s universe, a universe that turns out to be an utter sham. Characters in his novels swallow drugs that not only give them hallucinations, but allow them to enter into the hallucinations, to be subsumed by them, as if those hallucinations were the reality, and not the dream. And what should happen if a character, while in that hallucination, takes another pill and enters a second hallucination (as happens to a character in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*)? Would they become trapped, or would they find out more than the other characters? Would they know just a little more about themselves and about reality? Would they become, in a word, more *free*? Dick dared to ask these questions: the Oh My God, What Ifs really did happen to his characters.

So it is surprising to open a mainstream fiction novel by Dick, a novel set in a world much resembling ours in all its normality and banality. Here there is precious little 'Oh my God', and not much 'What if', either. Several such mainstream novels have now been published. Two I have seen, *Mary and the Giant* and *In Milton Lumky Territory*, were published following his death. A third, *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, appeared during his lifetime.

Taking the *Confessions*, then, as a kind of representative of this sub-sub-sub-genre, we find a simple, fable-like story about comic innocent Jack Isidore, a boy who collects conspiracy theories and apocalyptic warnings from newspapers and magazines. As the novel continues, Jack's parents and carers fade out of the picture, and he finds himself less and less able to deal with the minutiae of real life — bills and taxes and food — and starts wandering the streets like a kind of hermit. A similar sort of pattern occurs in the other two novels; characters in both *Mary and the Giant* and *In Milton Lumky Territory* find themselves unable to deal with reality. The facts of life seem less and less factual as the novel progresses; but at the same time, their mysterious power increases. Blake might have called them 'mind-forged manacles'.

In ***In Milton Lumky Territory***, a salesman, Bruce Stevens, quits his job working for a chain of middle American department stores, and takes up in business as a typewriter salesman with Susan Faine, who he discovers





Covers of the covers of the first hardback editions of these non-SF novels of Philip K. Dick, published after he died in 1982.

is his former high-school teacher. He drives around the countryside looking for a deal on new Japanese-manufactured typewriters to buy in bulk, and thus outsell the competition. He secures the deal, but when he gets back is told by Susan that the typewriters are worthless — they do not work on standard US-size paper — and that he has blown all their cash. The Japanese typewriters are in fact manufactured for a size of paper used in Latin America.

In ***Mary and the Giant***, the title character, Mary Anne Reynolds, changes jobs and moves from her house to escape an alcoholic, sexually abusive father. She spends the rest of the novel shifting jobs, moving from apartment to apartment. One house she shares with a flatmate who is never present and who she clearly dislikes; another has 'a presence of coolness and silence'. She throws this up after a day and moves to another with 'a view of — neon signs and garbage cans'. In the closing chapter she has moved from small-town California to San Francisco.

There is much to like in these novels, especially the way they have of throwing many of the characteristic Dick techniques into relief. It is fascinating to see how Dick sees the world. Faded remnants of commercialism and capitalism become part of the natural scenery (from the opening paragraph of *Mary and the Giant*: 'On the side of the barn an old Coca-Cola sign was vaguely visible'). The same occurs in Dick's science fiction; in *Time out of Joint*, a character, Ragle Gumm, encounters a tattered picture of Marilyn Monroe. In the 1950s universe that has been constructed as a trap for him, Marilyn Monroe has of course not come into popular view yet. But Gumm is fascinated with her, encountering a sensation of déjà vu when looking at the picture: it seems to imply a whole different world.

In both *Mary and the Giant* and *In Milton Lumky Territory*, characters live in large, ramshackle old houses where the ghosts of past residents and landlords are implied. One thinks of John Isidore in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, living in a world where machines are everywhere, and animal life is almost extinct. Towards the end of the novel, in his high-rise apartment, Isidore suddenly encounters a brief, baffling mental collapse where he finds himself surrounded by the forms of dead animal life forms: 'In the depression caused by the sagging of the floor, pieces of animals manifested themselves, the head of a crow, mummified hands which might have once been parts of monkeys. A donkey stood a little way off ...'

And typically in Dick, the people he writes about are not so much fully formed characters, or caricatures, but ciphers. (What does 'Ragle Gumm' really mean?) It is natural that the character Joseph Schilling (in *Mary and the Giant*) should be a small businessman. In the same novel, the exotic name Carleton Tweany signifies, or implies, a distance — in this case, the obvious distance

between Mary and Tweany is that of race. But at the same time there is another distance between Schilling and Tweany, on the one hand, and Mary, on the other — they all in their own way stand in as a kind of archetype to Mary, both in turns acting as father-figures and lovers. Dick is at pains to describe Mary as small, girlish, childish. Neither of the two men are, in themselves, 'the Giant' implied in the novel, but they represent this unnamed 'Gigantic' thing. They are important not for what they do, but what they are. And again, the mind goes back to other Dick novels, where characters often forget their own identity, or unknowingly assume new identities, or are unaware of important aspects of their own nature — think of Deckard's anxiety in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* as to whether he is an android or not.

And in the same way, there is an unequal but ambiguous relationship between Bruce Stevens and Susan Faine in *In Milton Lumky Territory*. Is Bruce attracted to Susan as a lover because she is a childhood teacher of his? Does he see her as a mother figure? This is never explained, but Bruce and Susan once joke about the parent–child relationship in front of other characters in order to scare them. It is a mystery they are aware of, and never able to explain for themselves.

In this described universe, where change is dangerous, things are less than they seem, relationships are perpetually falling apart, and where characters have little character, where can safety be found? There is always the option of stasis, accepting the way things are, living an apathetic but unchanging life. But stasis brings with it perpetual ennui and insatiable curiosity. Some characters do manage to accept their lot in life, like the shipping clerk in *Mary and the Giant*, who spends his days idly hammering a cheap product called 'California Ready-made Furniture' together to be put onto a waiting van:

> He wondered if anybody else in the world was assembling chrome furniture. He thought over all the things people could be imagined doing

And later:

> One gleaming leg slipped from his fingers and fell to the concrete. Cursing, the shipping clerk kicked it into the litter under his bench.

But conspicuous by its absence in these novels is the wild satire, the extravagant flights of the imagination. It is all very well saying that Joseph Schilling and Carleton Tweany in their own way represent a kind of cosmic archetype. Why not simply introduce the cosmic archetype itself into the novel? In Dick's grand, expressionist, hallucinatory science fiction, this sort of thing could happen, and frequently did. There is the lugubrious end to Charles Freck's life in *A Scanner Darkly* (his attempted suicide concludes with a bug-eyed alien reading him a list of his sins for all eternity). Or, in *Nick and the Glimmung* — a children's novel, published some time after his death — there is the mysterious 'Glimmung', a semi-demonic presence that the child protagonist, Nick, has to confront. Or the totemic manifestation of animals before the eyes of John Isidore in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*.

Dick's conspiracies may have created and destroyed universes, but it is odd that at the same time he seems to have struggled with character, and to have his characters wrestle fretfully with small matters like typewriters or the electricity bills. Maybe that's why *A Scanner Darkly* is his most successful novel; it begins with a guy who sees bugs everywhere, who is driven to distraction by these bugs that may, in fact, be hallucinations (Dick is unclear on this point). We do not in fact know whether these bugs are more or less than the problem they seem to be. The novel concludes with another deadly ambiguity — after having suffered an almost complete loss of mind and mental faculties, Bob Arctor/Fred/Bruce is put to work harvesting crops from an American farm; and he spies the flower from which the drug is made that causes his mental breakdown:

> Stooping down, Bruce picked one of the stubbled blue plants, then placed it in his right shoe, slipping it down out of sight. A present for my friends, he thought, and looked forward inside his mind, where no one could see, to Thanksgiving.

It's all very well seeing the universe in a wildflower, as does Blake. You should probably start with seeing the wildflower first.

— Tim Train

Further tales of Tucker

including a wide range of response to *SF Commentary* 79, the Tucker Issue, including responses from **Bob Tucker** himself, before he died of congestive heart failure at the age of 92 in 2006, and begins with the wonderfully succinct tribute from **John Hertz**, publisher of the weekly *Vanamonde*, recent Worldcon Fan Guest of Honour, and 2010's DUFF (Down Under Fan Fund) winner.

John Hertz

Arthur Wilson ('Bob') Tucker (1914–2006)

His father was a circus man, with Ringling Bros. and with Barnum & Bailey; he was a motion-picture projectionist and a stage electrician. Visiting Los Angeles for the 1946 World Science Fiction Convention, he dropped by the union hall to ask if there was work, and spent six months at 20th Century Fox, a name which could not have been more suitably chosen. His name was Arthur Wilson, but somehow we called him Bob; somehow he called himself Hoy Ping Pong, too. I tried to get the local Hoy Ping Benevolent Association to make him an honorary member. His first fanzine was *The Planetoid* (1932); most celebrated, *Le Zombie;* first appearance of Pong, *The Fantasy Fan* (1933). Arthur Wilson 'Bob' Tucker (1914–2006) published a million words of fanwriting. As another hobby he published sf and mysteries; of his first novel, *The Chinese Doll* (1946), he later said, 'Tony Boucher paid me the highest compliment of my writing career; he wished he had written it'; there and elsewhere so many characters had fans' names that putting one's friends into one's books came to be called tuckerising.

Toni Weisskopf has the best picture of him, in a sweater and tie, rolled-up striped shirtsleeves, and a pipe, printing fanzine covers at a mimeograph, behind him wallpaper and pin-ups. Okay, the pin-ups aren't pinned up, they're framed. So is the monster. This is the picture in Harry Warner, Jr's history of fandom during the 1950s, *A Wealth of Fable* (1992); since it shows Tucker during the 1940s, Joe Siclari put it in his posthumous edition of Warner's first volume of history, *All Our Yesterdays* (1969, rev. 2004). Tucker wrote the introductions to both those unequalled books. He coined the phrase 'space opera', which he meant pejoratively — he also thought Warner, who loved classical music, had a marked weakness for opera. Bruce Gillespie put the picture in *SF Commentary* 79, the Tucker issue, also the wonderful Diane & Leo Dillon cover for Tucker's 1970 sf novel *The Year of the Quiet Sun*.

The comedian Red Skelton, son of another circus man, in a mock television advertisement promoted a fictitious brand of gin. He said it was smooth. Tucker drank Jim Beam bourbon. That was smooth. He got us all saying so. On his way to Melbourne for the 1975 Worldcon he got a whole airplane saying 'Smooooth.' He had never flown before. A conspiracy of women, including Joni Stopa, brought him there. Next year at Kansas City he was Toastmaster, with Pro Guest of Honour Robert A. Heinlein, Fan Guest of Honour George Barr. We knew the man who could introduce them could introduce Warner.

He brought us the Society for the Prevention of Wire

Arthur Wilson (Bob) Tucker in the 1940s (photo supplied by Toni Weisskopf).

Staples in Scientifiction Magazines and *A Neofan's Guide* and the Tucker Hotel. The Society brought us the Staple War and a hoax that he had died. There were more of those; Art Rapp in *Spacewarp* published a calendar with September 8–15 as Tucker Death Hoax Week. The Hotel was supposed to move from one con to the next; he told us 'Save your roller skates'; people started mailing him bricks, and at least one Bible scholar sent straw, with which Tucker eventually built a cathouse. He discovered that the centre of the universe was a bar in Columbus, Georgia. He had an endless two-man act with Bob Bloch. He lost at a pun contest to Harlan Ellison and at poker to Sprague de Camp's teenage son. Of himself he said he was a greedy reader; he went round the neighbourhood gathering news, then trying to sell it to the people who'd given it to him; he prized Frederik Pohl's advice, 'If a character is walking down the street to mail a letter, don't describe the street and the mailbox before he leaves the house'; he liked the 1938 film of *Pygmalion,* with Leslie Howard and Wendy Hiller.

At the time he arrived, said Weisskopf, the bright possibilities were infinite, but only certain people could see what that meant. He was Fan Guest of Honour at the 1948 and 1967 Worldcons. He was given the Big Heart Award in 1962. He won the Campbell Memorial Award and three Hugos for fanwriting, and in 2003 was placed into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame. He is survived by children and grandchildren. He had the grace to live past September. I drank a shot of Jim Beam. *RIP.*

— John Hertz, *Vanamonde* 704, 8 November 2006

Responses to the Tucker Issue: *SFC* 79

BOB TUCKER
late of Bloomington, Illinois

Guess what arrived in my mail? Eureka! what a publishing jiant you are. Many, many thanks for the two copies, and now I have a treat awaiting me — yes, I like reading about myself. My cup of egoboo runneth over.

31 January 2004

The intense discussion about Abe Lincoln and slavery brings to mind the research I did for my Lincoln book ca. 1958. Some local historians were in the habit of claiming that the Republican Party was birthed in Bloomington in l858, and I was one of those who believed it because a lack of interest in the subject. Researching *The Lincoln Hunters* taught me many things.

The Republican Party of Illinois was organised here on a date in May 1858; there was a large crowd in town for the event and Lincoln was asked to give what would today be called the keynote speech. And so he did — a rabble-rousing sockdolager that would come to be known as 'the Lost Speech'. He fiercely attacked slavery but today no one knows what he said — it was 'lost' because none of the reporters present wrote it down. (And today the hall is also lost — the building was torn down to make way for a parking lot.)

Me, I got a book out of it. To the best of my knowledge now the national Republican Party was organised somewhere in New England during the previous year, and the Illinois party was organised and accepted at that Bloomington convention — but Abe's speech is still among the missing.

I'm beginning to think that I should re-read some of my own books. I had forgotten the House of Games in *The Lincoln Hunters*.

20 February 2004

EARL KEMP
Box 6642, Kingman AZ 86402

I spent over 20 minutes waiting for Adobe to load *SFC* 79, and all that time I was cursing both you and Adobe for 56K hell. It would help if Adobe had a task bar or something visual to see while waiting those 20 minutes. But then, after the wait was over, goshwow, Bruce, you really did it.

Tucker has been a pivotal force in my life for most of it and I've considered him a friend for over half a century so, naturally, I was impressed and proud of the way you did him up real good.

The cover was really smashing; so were most of the artwork and visuals throughout. Only one thing: I sure wish you had switched to color jpegs for the PDF version. I realise you can't print that much colour, but the visuals would be so much better had you switched them for PDF.

I am really proud of what you, and they, did and mostly the way you did it. Just in case you were going to mail me a copy, please don't. Save the postage for someone else.

Believe me, I know about these hard times and lean days.

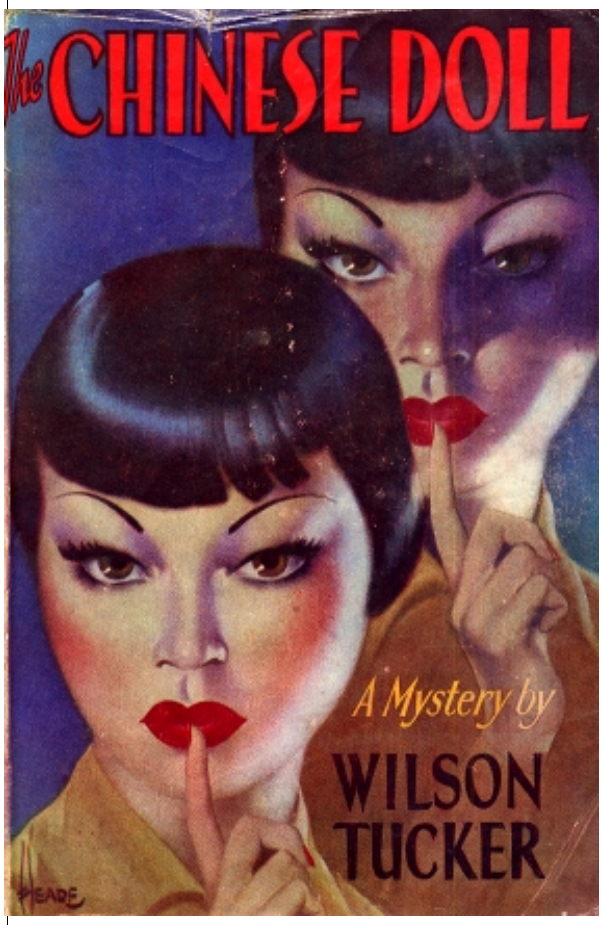
13 February 2004

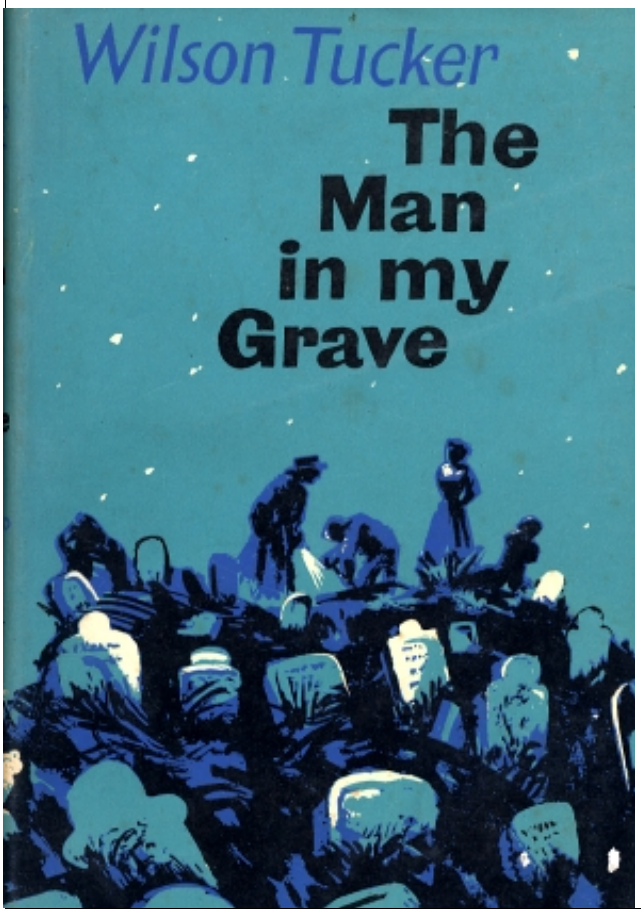
DENNIS LIEN
3149 Park Avenue South,
Minneapolis MN 55407-1524

Got two copies of *SF Commentary* (the new Tucker issue) a couple days ago. They look beautiful, and I'm especially delighted to see my name on the cover — I don't think I've every seen that on any publication before. Don't imagine it will sell a lot of extra copies for you, but anyway ...

Haven't had time to read it yet, but did look at the bibliography, which looks fine; glad you and Phil were able to update it (and were able to make use of stuff from my old one).

Photos of book covers of Tucker mysteries, sent with a letter of comment by JOHN BAXTER





Somehow I'd forgotten that you might be interested in listing critical sources on Bob's works. Some can be detailed (along with a few bits of his fanzine writing) in Hal Hall's *SF Criticism* database at: http://lib-oldweb.tamu.edu/cushing/sffrd/ and of course I (or Phil) could come up with a decent list of book reviews for the various books. There's also possibility of listing entries on Tucker in various SF encyclopedias, at least a few of which are sizable enough to count as critical analyses (Bleiler's and the *St James Guide* at least). I can make a start at pulling this together if you decide to do a third edition in another 29 years or so. (Half my life. Gulp.)

21 February 2004

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

Thanks for the fanzines. You managed to accumulate an impressive amount about Bob Tucker. Who would have thought the old man had so much blood on him? I'm sorry I didn't know you were doing this tribute, since I could have supplied you with some rare covers (see attached — in case you plan a third edition).

24 Febuary 2004

PHIL STEPHENSEN-PAYNE
25A Copgrove Road, Leeds,
West Yorkshire LS8 2SP, England

Further to Denny's e-mail I have also received two copies of *SF Commentary* (the new Tucker issue) and, while I agree it looks beautiful and appreciate that my name is spelled correctly, I am appalled at the way you have responded to the effort I put in on your behalf to produce a Tucker bibliography for this issue.

1 I requested (and you agreed) that the piece would mention that this was merely an extract of my larger bibliography of Tucker; you neglected to do so.
2 I requested (and you agreed) to mention the Galactic Central website so that readers could, if they wished, purchase the complete bibliography (and/or any others); you have neglected to do so.
3 You have publicly undermined my (and Denny's) reputation as a bibliographer by saying 'there were gaps in both versions [that] I've tried to fill'. As far as I can tell, sections A through D are a word for word copy of the bibliography I sent you with the addition of a single fanzine. I would appreciate a detailed list of other areas in which you found (and filled) gaps.
4 You have further undermined our reputation by including a section labelled 'Tucker scholarship' and saying 'A big blank here' when the bibliography I sent you contained 39 articles on Tucker and 88 book reviews. If you recall, you explicitly said you did not *want* to include material in these sections ('Thanks very much for the effort you have put into the bibliography so far, but please — no more!').

This is not the sort of treatment I expect from somebody I counted as a friend for whom I had just done a favour. I would be grateful if you would issue a public apology to both Denny and myself, explicitly addressing the above four issues, and publish it electronically on FictionMags and in print in the next issue of *SF Commentary*.

21 February 2004

Erratum

brg In a last-minute rush to finalise the contents of *SF Commentary* 79 ('The Tucker Issue') I inadvertently forgot to update the 'Editor's introduction' to the Wilson Tucker bibliography therein, which had been written when I only had access to the original (1985) version of the Galactic Central bibliography. Subsequently, Phil Stephensen-Payne sent me a copy of the later (1994) and much-extended edition that he had produced, along with a series of updates to 2003, and I decided (with Phil's permission) to discard the original draft I had pulled together in favour of an extract of this bibliography. Similarly, the absence of any 'Tucker scholarship' was ultimately down to space constraints on my part (Phil's bibliography contains over 100 such items) and again I forgot to amend the note accordingly.

My apologies to Phil for any misunderstanding this may have caused, and for failing to mention that the full bibliography (which runs to some 29 pages) is available from him for a mere $2.50 — see http://www. philsp. com/pubindex.html#gcp for more details.

— Bruce Gillespie, 23 February 2004

Now, back to Phil's letter:*

No need for pounds, particularly as I thought I'd sent you this before anyway. I've listed below what there is in the current biblio, but it's mainly encyclopedia entries and fanzine pieces. There is also a Tucker issue of *Lan's Lantern* which I have acquired since doing the biblio if you're interested in that.

Missing material from the Tucker bibliography, *SF Commentary* 79

K. Articles on Wilson/Bob Tucker

K1 Biographical Sketch {of Bob Tucker}
Worlds Beyond 1–51
K2 Biographical Sketch (& photo)
New Worlds #26, 8–54
K3 Biographical Sketch (& photo)
New Worlds #41, 11–55
K4 'Bob Tucker Marries'
Fantasy Times (fnz) #189, 11–53
K5 'Tucker Breaks, Bares Foot at Chattacon'
SF Chronicle (fnz) 3–83
K6 'Wilson Tucker: A Bibliography'
Midamericon Program Book, Reamy, MidAmericon, 1976
K7 Entry by Brian Ash
Who's Who in Science Fiction, Ash, Taplinger, 1976
K8 'Wilson 'Bob' Tucker Fan Writer: Part 1' by Sam J. Basham
Books Are Everything (fnz) #17, 3–91
K9 'A Wilson Tucker Checklist' by Sam J. Basham
Books Are Everything (fnz) #18, 6–91
K10 'A Fan for All Reasons' by Robert Bloch
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K11 'Wilson 'Bob' Tucker' by Robert Bloch
Midamericon Program Book, Reamy, MidAmericon, 1976
Out Of My Head by Robert Bloch, NESFA, 1986 {as'Wilson Tucker — the Smo-o-oth Operator'}
K12 Entry by John Clute & Peter Nicholls
The Encyclopedia Of Science Fiction, Nicholls, Granada, 1979
The Encyclopedia Of Science Fiction, Clute/Nicholls, Orbit, 1993 {revised}
K13 'A Touch o' Tucker' by Ed Connor
SF Commentary (fnz) #43, 8–75
K14 'Tuckerize the Stories' by Buck Coulson
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K15 'Tucker and Me and the Fireman Makes Three' by Howard De Vore
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K16 'Hidden Heroes: The Science Fiction Novels of Wilson Tucker'
by Bruce Gillespie
SF Commentary (fnz) #43, 8–75

K17 '*The Long Loud Silence*' by Bruce Gillespie
Survey Of Science Fiction Literature Vol 3, Magill, Salem Press, 1979
K18 'Where We're Arriving' by Bruce Gillespie
SF Commentary (fnz) #24, 11–71
SF Commentary (fnz) #43, 8–75 {revised}
K19 '*The Year Of The Quiet Sun*' by Bruce Gillespie
Survey Of Science Fiction Literature Vol 5, Magill, Salem Press, 1979
K20 'Smoooth Customer' by Alexis Gilliland
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K21 'Bob Who?' by Dean A. Grennell
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K22 Introduction by Harry Harrison
The Year Of The Quiet Sun (1992) {Easton Press edition only}
K23 'Whose Utopia is It, Anyway? II: *Resurrection Days*' by David G. Hartwell
The New York Review of Science Fiction (fnz) #43, 3–92
K24 'Roasting Bob: A Gallery of Tucker Snapshots' by Andy Hooper
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5-93
K25 'My Fannish Godfather' by Robert Lichtman
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K26 'The Works of Wilson Tucker' by Denny Lien
The Really Incompleat Bob Tucker, Locke, Coulson
SF Commentary (fnz) #43, 8–75 {revised}
K27 'The Mysterious Wilson Tucker' by Lesleigh Luttrell
SF Commentary (fnz) #43, 8–75
K28 Entry by Sandra Miesel
The New Encyclopedia Of Science Fiction, Gunn, Viking, 1988
K29 Entry by Sandra Miesel
Twentieth-Century Science-Fiction Writers: 2nd Edition, Smith, Macmillan, 1986
K30 Introduction by Sandra Miesel
The Year of the Quiet Sun (1979) (Gregg Press edition only)
K31 '*The Year Of The Quiet Sun*' by David Pringle
Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels, Pringle, Xanadu, 1985
K32 'Robert Arthur Wilson Tucker: Medium Rare' by Art Rapp
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K33 'A Remembrance of Bob Tucker' by Roger Sims
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K34 'Not Yet, Tucker' by Leah Zeldes Smith
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K35 'Bob Tucker ... and More' (poem) by Shelby Vick
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K36 'Bob Tucker' by Harry Warner, Jr.
All Our Yesterdays by Harry Warner, Jr., Advent, 1969
K37 'Bob Tucker' by Ted White
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K38 'There is No Truth to the Rumer...' by Art Widner
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93
K39 'My Life with Bob Tucker' by Walt Willis
Corflu 10 Program Book, 5–93

1 March 2004

GREG PICKERSGILL
3 Bethany Row, Narberth Road, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA61 2XG, Wales

[Email comment on the Wegenheim e-list:] Already reading bits of the Tucker re-run has convinced me that I ought to get out my copies of *Ice and Iron*, *Year of the Quiet Sun*, *Long Loud Silence* and *The Lincoln Hunters*. I certainly liked the first on initial readings long back, never quite took to the second, positively disliked the third, and never read the last; Bruce's compilation of reviews and comments convinces me, even given the light reading thus far, that they might all be re-read with benefit. And that's what *SFC* is great at — it makes you want to read books.

Actually what's amazing about this issue is that it points up the fact that Bruce has been carrying out sf fan activities of this high level for well in excess of 30 *years*! That's fantastic. He has a lot to be proud of.

21 February 2004

GENE WOLFE
PO Box 69, Barrington IL 60011

There should be two twenties in here. That photo of Bob Tucker as a young man with a pipe is worth the full amount.

I applaud you for putting out your Tucker issue while Tucker is still with us and can enjoy it. I've told the story many times, but what the heck. Severian came to me, a character begging for a story, while I sat in a masquerading panel I would never have attended if Tucker had not asked me to go to it and sit with him in the audience.

Bob, I owe you.

23 February 2004

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER
P.O. Box 8093, Silver Spring, MD 20907

Many thanks for *SF Commentary* 79. I hate to question a project on which you spent so much time and money — and which I will save as part of my permanent collection (which I would not have done if I had read the zine as a collection of loose pages printed from an electronic file). But I find it hard to understand why you did not simply reprint *SF Commentary* 43, and add some supplemental material on *Ice and Iron* and *Resurrection Days*. The new material, for the most part, does not add much to the original issue. While I enjoyed the issue, I thought of it as more of a historical artifact, a reprint of a fanzine that I would certainly have enjoyed had I read it in 1976.

Moreover, by leaving the articles unrevised, one wonders how the authors' opinions would have changed over time. For example, you say on page 35 that 'few sf writers other than Tucker have so little respect for religious trappings and dogma, and so much religious respect for human values.' Do you still agree with this statement?

I can report on at least one novel Tucker wrote which is now lost. In an interview with Darrell Schweitzer that appeared in the Summer 1979 *Squonk* (reprinted in *Science Fiction Voices 5* (San Bernardino, California: Borgo

Press, 1981, pp. 55–60), Tucker said that he was working on rewriting a novel about 'fans at a convention ... it was about a science fiction convention, with a science fictional background, and it was a people story, about what the people did at the convention. They decided to get into politics and take over the United States, a dictatorial takeover, which is sort of science fictional.' From emails exchanged in the summer of 2003, I learned that Tucker loaned what was apparently his only copy of the manuscript to another writer in the mid 1990s, and the other writer had lost the manuscript. It's not clear from the context of the interview when Tucker wrote this book, but it appears that it was written (or at least rewritten) between *Ice and Iron* and *Resurrection Days*.

I also offer evidence that 'Tuckerisation' has entered the American language. At the 2001 Bouchercon, I overheard two mystery fans talking about Tuckerisation. They had no idea who Tucker was. They thought he was some obnoxious fan who begged pros to put him into their books! I set the record straight, and reminded them that Tucker is a very good mystery writer.

And in your rush towards electronic publication, consider this: would Tucker's revival of *Le Zombie* attracted more attention if he had issued it as a traditional paper fanzine?

25 February 2004

LESLEIGH LUTTRELL
Madison WI 53703

It's very nice to hear from you. I haven't been ignoring you, just too busy to sit down and write an appropriately long answer. So I have given up on that idea, and will do the short answer. Things are okay in my life, still really like Madison, love my job (one of many I've had over the years at the University, and this is my favorite so far) and am very happy in my personal life. I don't mind being over 50 (it will be 52 next month) as I spend my days with people much younger than myself (undergraduates) and at least some of my free time with people much older (I work with a Senior Center). So I get to be the grown up during the day, and the youngster at my volunteer activities. The sad part of getting older is that people you love die, and others have health problems. I guess that happened when we were younger too, but it seems more frequent now.

I have no clear memory of what I wrote about the Tucker mysteries, but if you want to reprint it and you think Bob Tucker would enjoy seeing it, go right ahead.

I don't know who was sighted at the Worldcon, but it wasn't me. I have no contact with fan events at all, and really no interest in them. Most of the dearest friends I had, Terry Hughes for example, have died. I'm sure there are still delightful people at conventions, but that's not my world now.

Do let me know if you reprint the Tucker issue. I'd like to see it.

17 April 2003

I wanted to let you know that I did receive the copies of the Tucker issue you sent. I had actually completely forgotten about your request to reprint a piece by me, but recognised your handwriting immediately when I found the package in my mail box. Funny how some things never leave visual memory.

The issue looks great. I certainly enjoyed seeing the pictures of Tucker but have not had the nerve to read the articles attributed to me (I say attributed, because at this distance I can't remember one word I wrote, nor very much about the books). I did read through and enjoyed some of what you had written. I haven't been in touch with anyone who has seen Tucker in years, but I remember what a wonderful presence he was at conventions and how much my parents enjoyed having him as a friend. (He shared some great stories with my dad about cataract surgery at a time when that was what my dad needed.) So I am pleased to contribute in whatever small way to your putting together such a lovely publication in honor of Bob Tucker. I hope he appreciates it.

I was sadly struck by the quote from my email message you included in your introduction to my piece. At the time I answered you, my comment about loved ones with health problems was actually about my dear mother-in-law (who died within a week after I wrote you) and my husband, Dave Schreiner, who was then undergoing chemotherapy. Unfortunately the chemo didn't even slow things down, and Dave died in August. So I am much less happy in my personal life now than I was when I emailed you last spring. But I don't mind leaving fandom with the impression that I am happy in what will quite possibly be the last time my name appears in a fanzine (other than in a list of DUFF winners). (It is a frightening experience to Google myself and see how many times references to DUFF show up, along with the odd variety of other things I have done in my life.)

My brother Chris is thinking about taking his daughter Mora to the Worldcon this year. She will be 15 by then, just the age at which I attended my first worldcon. So there may yet be another generation of the Couch family in fandom.

Well, as I tell myself every day now, life goes on ...

9 February 2004

brg Thanks, Lesleigh, for updating your story for the many people who remember you well from your days in fandom. Thanks also for the memorial for Dave Shreiner, and other emailed information, that you have sent me in recent years.*

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

What an absolutely splendid preface to 'Where we're arriving'. I wish I could do stuff like that.

You'll have gathered that *SF Commentary* 79, The Tucker Issue, Second Edition, has arrived.

One of the pleasures of fandom is seeing interesting and informative essays and articles about authors and books I haven't encountered. (Those on books and authors I have read can be a rather more mixed blessing, too often eliciting Homeric cries of 'Doh!', and 'Why didn't I realise that?')

I am chagrined to admit I know little or zero of Tucker. He's not, as far as I know, featured in any of the Gollancz Classic/Collectors' reprints. I ought to have a look at the book of SFBC hardbacks in the shed to see if there is anything by him there.

Have only read the first two pieces — 'a brief history' (and what a great photo that is of BT 'pubbing his ish' on p. 5. Love the fannish artwork on the walls — though not so sure about the wallpaper. Trying to work out just what Tucker is rolling off the duplicator there as well. It looks like full page artwork, not text) and Paul Walker's interview, and dipped in and out of various other articles and letters. I need to sit down and give this a serious read (for which I shall ignore your warning about not reading the review until I have gone out and read the book).

I wish you and Elaine well. (I have an unshakable cold, which suddenly floored me — almost literally — at work yesterday after I thought I'd beaten it, so the arrival of *SFC* cheered me. I just hope it wasn't temping disaster to read it in a very hot bath. One of my memories of Acnestis is Mark Plummer's startling announcement '*The Female Man* has gone all soggy.' Luckily no disasters here, although I have previously given Stephen Fry's *The Hippopotamus* a slightly wrinkled spine.)

Whoever your 'American Friend' is, he or she is a saint.

10 March 2004

Ghoodminton. I haven't heard that in ages — since Ken Cheslin passed away in fact, and the flow (nay, flood) of Stourbridge old time *Marauder* and *Olaf* fanzines stopped.

Definitely it betrays Tucker's fannishness, cropping up in the middle of *The Lincoln Hunters* in the visit to the House of Games. (I love the one where you pull four aces in a hand and a referee dressed as Wild Bill Hickok immediately shoots you in the back.)

What is Tucker's apparent fascination with the Gilgamesh? That's twice it's turned up, in passing in *The Lincoln Hunters*, and far more centrally in *The Time Masters* (which is, as you point out, a very strange book).

17 March 2004

DOUG BARBOUR
11655-72nd Avenue,
Edmonton AL T6G 0B9, Canada

I remember Tucker only as a writer, and don't think I ever met or even saw him at the few cons I've been to. But certainly *The Time Masters*, which I read when a young teenager in the early 50s, the first paperback, was one of those books that stayed with me, as did his book about the post-atomic-war life in the US. More than many other books of the time. I look forward to reading through the issue.

I guess there aren't any Tucker books in print right now. I think I have them somewhere, but am no longer sure where. I did read the Ace Specials, yeah, quiet but powerful. Of course, I read the early novels when I was really young and they did make an impression. I wonder if *The Time Masters* wasn't one of the earliest works to start me toward agnosticism/atheism ...?

24 February 2004

RACE MATHEWS
123 Alexandra Avenue, South Yarra VIC 3141

Thanks for *SF Commentary* 79. As usual, the magazine is full of good things, but what was striking in particular was the batch of letters from Bob Tucker in 1972. Tucker puts his finger on an attribute of yours that I have always — or rather at least as long as I have known you and been reading *SF Commentary* — admired and envied, namely, as he writes here, 'your ability to read between the lines, plus an ability to understand what is not being said'. I've been puzzled from the start by what exactly it is about your critical writing that makes it so consistently useful a guide to the quality and intent of writers and their entitlement to be taken seriously, and it's good now to have in these letters the explanation that I've been too obtuse to identify clearly for myself. Among other things, the quality of the criticism explains why nobody following the guidance of your lists would ever be likely to end up feeling that their time had been wasted, although they might miss out on some otherwise enjoyable SF — not to mention other genres — that falls short of the rightly exacting standards the lists express and embody. And it's not only your own insights for which readers are endebted to you, but those of the numerous other critics for whom *SF Commentary* has been a outlet and source of support and encouragement over so may years. The SF community is a much more richly interesting place for the Gillespie contribution, and, like I'm sure so many others, I hope you'll never tire of providing it. Thanks again, and all good wishes.

7 February 2004

TONI WEISSKOPF

I've been proudly showing them off to all my friends here. Beautiful job, great cover: well done, all around. I'm very proud to have been a part of it.

23 February 2004

RICH LYNCH
PO Box 3120, Gaithersburg MD 20885

I was very much interested in the new issue, because of its Tucker theme. Bob Tucker has been a friend of Nicki and me for more than a quarter-century, and I think he is really an underrated writer, far overshadowed by Bob Tucker-the-fan. I see that Denny Lien and Phil Stephensen-Payne have listed two publication-length tributes to Tucker in their bibliography, but there's one they missed: George Laskowski's *Lan's Lantern* 46 (dated November 1997), which is titled 'A Bob Tucker Special'. It runs 34 pages, with articles/vignettes by Bob Bloch, Nicki and Rich Lynch, Bill Breuer, Andrew Offutt, Maia Cowan, Dennis, Fischer, Mary Lou Lockhart, Roy Lavender, Tom Sadler, David Gorecki, Roger Sims, Howard DeVore, and Ross Pavlac. The cover was a nicely drawn portrait of Bob by Greg Litchfield. Strange that Denny, who travelled in some of the same fan circles as George, missed this one.

23 February 2004

DAVE LOCKE
32 Providence Drive, Apt 15, Fairfield OH 45014

* brg* The bibliography in the issue says that *The Really Incompleat Bob Tucker* was edited by Dave Locke in 1974. I dimly remember that I thought it was edited by Bill Bowers and was published in 1976. (I know Bill was

selling them.) How many editions were there?*

Edited by Dave Locke and Jackie Causgrove (though her name was not given editorial credit in the colophon), published by Buck and Juanita Coulson. Jackie was the primary seller, with proceeds going to the Tucker Fund. Somewhere roundabout the mid '90s Jackie and I found a spare box of them in a bedroom closet and Bill Bowers' only involvement was that he handled selling those, with proceeds to go to the SF Oral History group.

24 February 2004

LLOYD PENNEY
1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2, Canada

Some years ago, Yvonne and I made the arduous trip from Toronto to the Cincinnati area of Ohio to go to Midwestcon and hang about with the older cognoscenti of fandom. Twice, in fact. Both times, we hoped to meet up with Mr Tucker, and both times, we were disappointed; Tucker was ill both times, and couldn't make it. We did meet once at the 1991 Chicon, talking about fannish traditions on a panel together, but that's been about it. (We smoooooothed there, too. Had to teach the younger generation, back when fandom *had* a younger generation.)

It is good to see that even after all this time, Bob Tucker was willing and able and eager to put out modern-day issues of *Le Zombie/eZombie*. They got the loc treatment as well, and I got some great feedback. His intent with *Le Zombie* was to give fandom the jolt of humour it so badly needed ... fandom needs that jolt again, and it needs it bad.

Tuckerisations are a lot of fun, and the feelgood takes a long time to fade, if ever. Yvonne was Tuckerised as a crewperson in charge of damage control in a *Star Trek* novel, *Rules of Engagement* by Peter Morwood, and I was a psychologist in Robert J. Sawyer's *Illegal Alien*.

I can't say that I've read a lot of Bob Tucker's writings, either fannish or professional. Both have been a little difficult to find. I have *Ice and Iron* and *The Year of the Quiet Sun*, both of which were picked up through library sales, and thoroughly enjoyed.

25 February 2004

TOM WHALEN
Herweghstr. 4, 70197 Stuttgart, Germany

Many thanks for SFC 79 — a treat for me to return to Tucker. I had only read, decades ago, *The Lincoln Hunters* and *The Year of the Quiet Sun*. Your overview is a tremendous aid, and your essay on *Quiet Sun* the kind of essay more critics should be writing.

1 March 2004

MICHAEL W. WAITE
105 West Ainsworth, Ypsilanti MI 48197-5336

SF Commentary 79 arrived last week with bands playing and heavenly voices singing its praises. A bit of an exaggeration but a most welcome sight in my mailbox, as I arrived home from a long and tedious day at work. *The Tucker Issue: Second Edition* rejuvenated my spirits. When I sat down to peruse its contents, my cat went ballistic. She was expecting to be fed and wouldn't leave me alone until I took care of her needs first.

The photograph of Tucker producing fanzines in the 1940s is priceless. Some of the wall pictures in the background are 'hot'. It makes me want to turn the clock back to the 1940s, a time that holds wonderful memories for me. I wish I had discovered fandom back then.

Dick Jenssen's cover work is inspirational. I assume the object in the top right corner is a space shuttle coming to take Bob home and not an inter-galactic bullet.

Wilson 'Bob' Tucker is well represented in my fanzine collection. I have a complete run of *Le Zombie*.

8 March 2004

CY CHAUVIN
14248 Wilfred, Detroit MI 48213

I enjoyed reading (or rather mostly re-reading) the special Tucker issue of *SF Commentary*. My favourite article was Tucker's own article, his autobiography: the details of his early life as a movie projectionist are fascinating and amusing. I find the details of everyday life of fans in the 1950s and 1940s quite absorbing; I've been reading some of Walt Willis's memoirs with the same interest. (Although I hate the term memoirs: somehow it seems to imply that someone does not expect to do anything interesting again.) But I've always been interested in slices of life, in any capable writer's hand.

I enjoyed rereading your own article on *The Year of the Quiet Sun*, except my memory of it made it seem more autobiographical than it actually is. But I also shockingly found that I could not recall a single detail of the novel (this came home to me particularly as I read your description of the ending), just a warm glow of satisfaction at what seemed at the time a really excellent book. It was enough to make me doubt if I had read the novel. (I had for years thought I had read Graves's *Seven Days in New Crete*, but then realised it was a quite detailed article by Fritz Leiber that I was remembering.) I do remember Jeff Smith's complaint about some reviewers revealing the main character's ethnic origin in their reviews (he thought that, since it wasn't revealed until the novel's end, it shouldn't be revealed and thus spoil a reader's surprise).

I have read two of Tucker's other books, during my time off of work. *The Lincoln Hunters* seemed disappointing to me. The eccentric character at the beginning, and certain of the novel aspects of the future world, seemed to promise more than was delivered. I suppose because I was expecting something more serious and substantial (like *The Year of the Quiet Sun*), since several sources called it a classic. I was surprised at 'Bobby Bloch', the time travel who fouls up the quest for the lost speech by Abraham Lincoln. (So why should I be surprised by Tuckerisms in a book by Tucker?) There's a lot of lecturing in the novel (fashionable in that time period's sf), and while it's played for laughs I guess I just didn't find it funny enough to be satisfied by the book.

I was better surprised by his short story collection, *The Best of Wilson Tucker*, 1982. Tucker autographed this to me on 28 January 1982, and I waited this long to read it! Good grief! My favourite stories: 'The Tourist Trade' (which sort of reads like a *Far Side* cartoon), 'To the Tombaugh Station' (a mystery space opera), 'King of the Planet' (last

survivor on a planet — he's a bit of a crank — is interviewed by aliens), 'My Brother's Wife' (he's never seen his brother's wife but she appears to be three different people). Tucker's humour seems to work best in this short fiction (and it's not all humorous), or maybe it's just that you really can't beat a good 1950s sf short story.

6 July 2005

HARRY BUERKETT
705 S. Anderson, Urbana IL 61801-4301, USA

Just finished the Tucker Issue. What an amazing fellow. Sad to say, even though he lives only 60 miles away, and I've visited Bloomington–Normal quite often, I've never met the man. He may have been in the audience or the projection room at the Normal Theatre, which shows vintage films. I may have brushed past him at Babbitt's Books, a wonderful used bookstore there in Normal. Odd.

Then again, I was in Bob Burr's Sherlockian society, out of Peoria, which also boasts Philip Jose Farmer as a member, and I never met or corresponded with him, either (though I'd asked Bob Burr to mention my thesis on the transdimensionality of Dr Watson in the person of Sir Arthur, so he may have once heard of me).

I have some notes on the Springfield of Bob Tucker's *Tomorrow Plus X* (*Time Bomb* as published by Avon), as Illinois' capital city was the nearest city (12 miles) to my boyhood home in the Salisbury–Pleasant Plains area. (I've also done archaeological work on Lincoln's New Salem, some six to seven miles from my family's centennial farm.) My great-grandfather (whom I knew and visited often) lived out at Lake Springfield, on Hazel Dell Lane (I don't think there's a Linden Lane — just as there's no Kingman or Monument Street, either — but the streets *are* called 'lanes' out there). His name was Gilbert Hall Hennessey (though his wife's name was not Shirley, but Moneta), and he was a 'whiz at checkers' (*Tomorrow Plus X*, p. 124). His next-door neighbor was the *only* 'owner of a theater chain' in Springfield in those days (*Tomorrow*, p. 22), George Kerasotes, and the Kerasotes Theater chain still exists in Central Illinois, represented in Champaign–Urbana by the Beverly Cinemas. My maternal grandfather, Arthur Clyde Irwin, the son-in-law of Gilbert, worked throughout the 40s, 50s, and 60s as the night manager of Springfield's City, Water, Light & Power: it is he who would have been called up to shut off the gas and electrical service when Sec. of State Simon Oliver's mansion imploded. He had bright red hair, like Boggs (*Tomorrow*, p. 28), and sometimes went by 'Red', though more often he went by 'Sunny'. The paper Danforth picks up in the morning after he's fired (*Tomorrow*, p. 84) would have been the *State Journal*, the morning paper in those days (it later joined with the afternoon paper to become *The State Journal–Register*, which still publishes today out of One Copley Plaza, I believe off Ninth Street, across from Lincoln Library — not to be confused with the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library).

It seems to me that Tucker was an influence on Dick — that PKD was trying to write novels like Tucker's Time novels in his Early and Fusion periods — but it could have just been the times they were living in. I'd like to claim Illinois as an influence, but while PKD was born in Chicago, I think we'd have to say he was a California writer. (Of course, we can definitely claim Tucker and Philip Jose Farmer for Central Illinois. Timothy Zahn lived here in Champaign–Urbana during his heyday, and Richard Powers lives here now (*The Goldbug Variations*; *Galatea 2.2*). And there's a strong Chicagoland contingent, including Ray Bradbury, Frederik Pohl, Gene Wolfe and Fritz Leiber. Edgar Rice Burroughs was from the Chicago area).

I have four of Tucker's novels (*YQS*, *Time Masters* and *Tomorrow Plus X* (*Time Bomb*) and *Tombaugh Station*), but I've never read *The Lincoln Hunters*, oddly enough. I'll have to look for a fine paperback first edition to add to my collection. Sounds right up my alley.

2 October 2005

All I can say is, I'm pretty much a loner. I'm not very clubbable, as Tolkien would have it, though I've tried to join several. I'm more high-minded than those usually associated with the clubs in the area, they being more intent on selling key-rings and cheque-book covers with the club logo imprinted on them. Years ago, I tried to unite the the Sherlockian clubs in Central Illinois, but they were hesitant to forsake local power to the regional, though by doing so they would have increased their power and influence to that of the Chicago area. I'm not sure I can characterise Central Illinois fandom: it's fractured, and incohesive, and suspicious of 'outside' influence. In one sense, we're wide open; in another, we're very insular. Of course, I'm disappointed with this.

When I see the photos of the Melbourne fans, clowning it up for the photographer, enjoying the camaraderie of Science Fiction fandom, I am saddened, because I have never experienced that. Except through email.

As to the 'spectacular landscape', God bless you, most people don't characterise it that way. Most people see it the way Dickens did, as monotonous and deadly dull, even those who live here. I demur (and always have). The great open sky, the ability to see where you're going for eight to ten miles all about — that aspect I value above all others. Though I was born in the mesquite desert of Texas, I was raised in the river valleys and the prairies and plains of Illinois. This is my home.

And as that is true, Wilson Tucker speaks to me. I feel he is overlooked. But, then again, I know where he's coming from. Same with Edgar Lee Masters, with his *Spoon River Anthology* (which he had thought to call *Pleasant Plains Anthology*) and *The Sangamon*, a wonderful evocation of Menard county (named after Pierre Menard, which name you may know from Borges).

Believe it or not, Central Illinois is not the Centre of the Universe (though Philo, six or seven miles southeast of Urbana, claims just that on its water tower). Despite Chicago, and Tucker, and Farmer, we're still considered pretty much the middle of nowhere. Like Forster's Kuno, I work in isolation.

In fact, when you think of the United States, think of isolationism. Think of Roger Zelazny living in the same neighborhood as Paul Linebarger and never meeting him.

3 October 2005

318 Poplar Street, Heywoerth, home of Bob and Fern Tucker and family until they moved to Bloomington in the 1980s. (Photos: Harry Buerkett.)

BOB TUCKER

Thanks very much for passing along Harry Buerkett's letter. It is obvious that he likes my books and that he appreciates the wide open skies of Illinois — the local airport tower usually tells incoming pilots that visibility here is ten miles. It is comforting to know that you and I both have an appreciative reader in this part of the world.

6 October 2005

Harry Hennessey Buerkett is an independent science fiction scholar living in Urbana, Illinois, USA, where he earned his degrees in Anthropology and Rhetoric from the University of Illinois. He has ghost-written articles for *Magill's Guide to Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature*, and has won a dishonourable mention in the Detective category for the Bulwer-Lytton Bad Writing Contest for 2003. Currently his interests include studies of Wilson Tucker, Jorge Luis Borges, Flann O'Brien and Jane Austen. He earns his crust as a carpenter.

Introduction to the writing of Harry Buerkett's article on *Ice and Iron*

HARRY BUERKETT
705 S. Anderson, Urbana IL 61801-4301

The characterisation in *The Stalking Man* is strong; and even though it may be classed as a sub-Chandlerian novel, it's still quite good. Horne and Willie (his girl Friday at the local rag) come off as having a real friendship, with no awkward Heinleinian sexual tension like that found in *Ice and Iron*.

I found a copy in a trilogy of detective fiction published by The Detective Book Club (New York, 1949), at my local library. *The Stalking Man* is the second of the trilogy, which starts off with a fix-up piece by Margery Allingham, and with a short novel by Margaret Scherf to anchor the book.

Lesleigh Luttrell gives a good synopsis of the novel in *SFC* 79, and though she gives the plot twists away, the novel is not really about the plot so much as the wonderfully evocative scenery, time period and dialogue that Tucker evokes. I found myself laughing out loud at some of the Chandlerian wisecracks (similar to that most Chandlerian of Dashiell Hammett's works, *Red Harvest*), especially between Horne and Willie, and Horne and Wiedenbeck, the police lieutenant who is Horne's confidant on the inside (also given as Wiedenback on p. 125). The locale interested me because of the proximity to my own environs growing up in central Illinois, and the mention of Willie's articles on the soybean crop really hit home (how many rows of soybeans I walked, roguing weeds, I don't like to think about even to this day; I can hardly drive past a field of beans without remembering those summers). The railroad names and lore: the history has also been a special study of mine, as well as the moraines that garner a mention in this novel and play such a central role in *Ice and Iron*. In fact, the phrase '[t]he stalking man' begins an *Iron* chapter in the latter, which led me to investigate the former novel; the use of a bolo plays a prominent part in both novels (a special study of Bob's, no doubt). Bob's use of the weapon and his characterisations in the detective novel far outstrip the work he did in the science fiction novel written nearly 15 years later.

Someday I'll make a pilgrimage to Bloomington–Normal and the Babbitt's Books there to see if they have

any copies of Tucker's works, stopping off in Forsyth, north of Decatur, to check out the Book Barn there — they specialise in local authors (I used to know the manager there, Troy Taylor, who wrote a book on Haunted Illinois, and was a fellow Sherlockian).

7 March 2010

Just an addendum: Lesleigh Luttrell says in her survey of Tucker's detective novels that 'Boone ... is obviously Bloomington,' but it could not have been, because in *The Stalking Man* Horne mentions to Willie that his grandmother lives in Bloomington (unless he meant Bloomington, Indiana, home to Indiana University Hoosiers).

If the real Bloomington is the fictional 'Boone', then Horne would not have mentioned that town as a separate town. My guess for the real-world counterpart to 'Boone' would be Lincoln, Illinois, through which the Chicago & Alton and the Illinois Central railroads ran. 'Boone' as in Daniel, another legendary frontiersman-politician like Abraham Lincoln (there is no known town named Boone in Illinois). Those railroads also ran through Springfield, if a larger small city is needed, which would also be a good bet, as that town is dedicated to the memory of Lincoln, but I'd need to know if Springfield, or 'the capital', were ever mentioned in the Horne novels, over and opposed to Boone. 'Arksville', mentioned in *The Stalking Man* (Ch. 5) for a possible sighting of the killer, might be a conflation of Arthur and Arcola, the latter of which was on two separate branches of the Illinois Central railroad. Otherwise, Sullivan (though I don't get the reference to 'Arksville' with this designation) is just about 25 miles exactly SE of Decatur on that branch of the IC (and not 22 miles, as stated in the novel; Arthur is further, about 27 miles, and Arcola further still).

8 March 2010

I visited Heyworth today and did a little research at the library there. The librarians were very helpful and pleasant; I copied several articles from Illinois papers from the Wilson Tucker file (*The Pantagraph* from Bloomington, the *State Journal-Register* from Springfield and the *Journal-Courier* from Jacksonville); I also copied a letter to Vivian Mouser from Bob on her article 'Heyworth's Resident Author' in the *Heyworth Sesquicentennial Book* (2006), of which I now have a copy purchased for $10 from the City Building just today. The articles have a bunch of great photos of Bob.

I took digital photos of Poplar Street and the house at #318, said by the librarians who knew him to be the house he lived in there, by the High School (Home of the Heyworth Hornets). I took a photo of the street signs (Poplar & Vine) and the 'Dead End' sign right next to it (do you think Bob would have enjoyed the juxtaposition?). I also took a shot of the old motel and sign across Vine Street, and the incredibly large grain elevator just down the way a bit — it's truly impressive. I then traveled up Rt. 51 to Bloomington and visited my old pals at Babbitt's Books in Normal, and had a good conversation with Kathleen (a fellow poet and writer) and the owner, Brian. A very nice day trip. Along Rt. 9 heading east out of Normal there's a wind farm of hundreds of giant rotor-bladed windmills (turbines); as they turn about and gleam in the sunlit fog you can't look at them too long or they'll mesmerise you. Bad for driving. Absolutely 21st Century Science Fictional look to them. They truly awed me!

10 March 2010

I did an interview with the librarian, Vivian Mouser, who had written the sesquicentennial piece on Bob Tucker (and it turns out was a close neighbor on Poplar Street), but she didn't really have a lot to say, other than that Bob and Fern were very nice down-to-earth people, and that Fern had a lovely singing voice. Fern volunteered at the library in Heyworth from time to time, as did Bob and the boys (David, Brian and Bruce). She's an elderly woman now, and couldn't recollect any specifics as to Bob and his career, or as to their correspondence.

10 March 2010

Here's an excerpt from the letter to Vivian Mouser Bob wrote on 'May 17, 1982' from his home on Jacksonville, Illinois at 34 Greenbriar Drive: 'We still take the *Heyworth Star* and I read the library column published on April 8th, but I was out of town and missed the follow-up article on May 6th. The reviews published by the *Booklist* are encouraging, as I have gotten some really adverse reviews on the novel.' This, presumably, would have been the novel *Resurrection Days*, published in 1981.

Bob writes: 'Some reviewers, mostly those in or around New York, misread the novel and misconstrued my purpose. I tried very hard to recreate the midwestern scene of the 1940 war years as I remembered them, and to recreate the male–female relationship of that time. But some reviewers, living only in 1982, thought that I was being a male chauvinist pig in my treatment of the women and they berated me for that. I can only conclude that they weren't alive forty years ago and don't know how poorly women were treated at that time.

'But it doesn't upset me. I've started work on a new novel but as always I write so slowly that the book won't be finished for at least a year.'

This novel did not materialise. Who is Bob's literary executor? Might there be a fragment of an unfinished Wilson Tucker novel tucked away in a file somewhere?

11 March 2010

Here's what I found out from *Locus* magazine, who had done an article on Malcolm Edwards.

Wilson Tucker's estate is handled by Curtis, Brown, though we're not sure which agent in particular looks after his affairs.

16 March 2010

brg Here Harry sent me a near-complete draft of his article about *Ice and Iron.**

I couldn't have imagined a more encouraging response to my query! If I weren't so fatigued with working on the paper, as well as having a nasty head cold (we're just coming off a long, cold winter here) I'd be practically ecstatic.

The work really is complex like Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, and therefore maybe neither can be classed as *sui generis*, together comprising a genre of psychobiographical

culturo-literary critique — none of which I will be including in the present paper, of course, though I intend to touch on it cursorily. More works to fit the category may be found in future, I would surmise at or near the end of a practitioner's literary or public career, typically, when they have grown out of their genre and essentially retired from public life, with nothing else to lose from biting the hand that has fed them. The category could not be confined to fictional autobiography, but might well include books of poetry, film criticism and films of auteurs, themselves. I could even imagine a cookbook (such as Grant Achatz's *Alinea*) or a music album in such a genre.

I've attached some of my Heyworth photos. I would like to donate an *SF Commentary* 79 to the Heyworth Public Library, if you have any left. Please let me know the cost. I think Heyworth should take a more active interest in promoting themselves as the hometown of Bob Tucker.

16 March 2010

I've got a good handle, now, on the meaning of the name Fisher Yann Highsmith, 'the Fisherman', which works neatly with the thesis of the piece, and his peculiar cryophobia and recursive paradox fixation which tie in to the complex theme of the book. I've also figured out what the 'curvilinear polygon' weapons represent, and why the future 'Women of Wonder' chapters are designated as 'Iron'. The key to this makes the men's inability to figure out how they work and why anyone would make them in that shape a delight to re-read (you might have parsed this out already yourself).

16 March 2010

I had had in mind a more thorough explication of Bob's thoroughgoing critique of culture and literature, and have an overwhelming deskful of notes and post-its on same, but I think I'm now looking at a more general 3–4-page essay on each aspect of pseudoscience and paraliterature, with concentration (say 1 full page) on just one telling example of his critique of each (but even as I write this, I'm too fully aware of the complexity of these symbols in their connectedness to every other aspect of the work). If I am successful, the entire article should come in at near 6000 words.

Now that I have the time, I'll be looking to do a final edit to weed out extraneous thoughts which may have inhered through the tumultuous palimpsest-like production of this article. I like where these thoughts have led me in regard to *Ice and Iron*, and how it can be seen as both a shallow adventure–mystery tale and a deeper critique of the culture and subculture Bob had found himself in. But the article needs to be clear on where it's going, and why I find the examples necessary to explicate that argument. So: a little more focus, and a little more polish, and I think this could be an excellent article for *SF Commentary*.

30 March 2010

Harry Hennessey Buerkett

Ice and Iron: Wilson Tucker's fiction experiment in critique

> We fear the cold and the things we do not understand.
> But most of all we fear the doings of the heedless ones among ourselves
> — Loren Eiseley, 'The Winter of Man', 1970

Wilson Tucker's *Ice and Iron* (Doubleday, 1974) doesn't work as a novel: it's a cobbled-together piece, a Frankenstein's monster of a work. It garnered generally enthusiastic notice in such contemporary publications as *Vertex*, *Science Fiction Review*, *SF Commentary* and *Analog*, and solicits praise still on the internet (Rahmel); and yet, it is a profoundly difficult work, and on its surface hide the artefacts that doom it to failure as a novel. As a sub-Heinleinian pastiche or parody, its characters come off as caricatures even more puerile and embarrassing than in that master's late works. As an examination of cultural climate change in the form of a new, aggressive glaciation, it's myopic and sensationalist. As response to the Equal Rights Amendment of 1972 and in anticipation of Marija Gimbutas's Old Europe matriarchy, of Laura Mulvey's 'male gaze', it reads as reactionary and chauvinistic and ludicrous in an almost humourless way. And as an evocation of Charles Fort it is pointedly insulting and involuted. Tucker attacks the issues of his day with such abandon and from so many angles that he ends up getting caught in the crossfire and in the process shooting himself. That process brings to mind his main character's floundering about with an otherworldly 'quartergun' with which he succeeds only in punching holes through a roof and an aircraft's tail section, in essence weakening the vital structures of his environment — a perfect metaphor for a hapless metanovel.

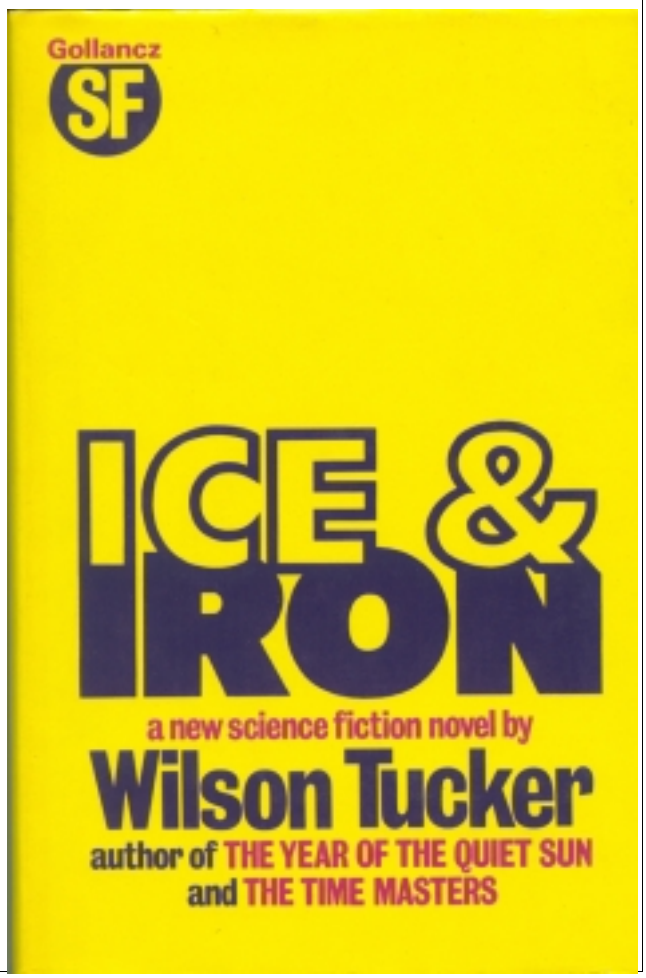
From this a reader might conclude that Tucker did not design the work as a novel, exactly, but as a *quid alia*, a something different. The author who could produce

The Warlock (1967) and *The Year of the Quiet Sun* (1971), as well as *The Stalking Man* (1949) and *The Lincoln Hunters* (1958), surely has shown he has the ability to construct an engaging novel. I'd like to suggest, given the work's form, that Wilson Tucker constructed *Ice and Iron* as not a novel but an illustration of pseudoscientific and paraliterary 'hogwash' and an exposé, if not exactly Menippean satire, then at least as gently prodding critique of its many and varied practitioners. To fully appreciate Tucker's achievement in *Ice and Iron* it would be good to come to an understanding of at least some of the symbols and appropriated tropes of the genre, and how Tucker uses them and supplants their original meaning to form the intricate web of his own design and purpose, in a work I hope to show is not so much a 'text' as an 'anti-text'.

Character drives the plot

Let's start with the 'protagonist', for all intents and purposes a 'monagonist' as the only real actor in the work, and the only one privileged to have a full name, an antihero improbably named Fisher Yann Highsmith. The complexity built into the work shows itself in this one character, who works both as a caricature, a parody of Heinleinian (and other) *puerile* characters typical of SF (Disch, 183), but also as symbol of the work's complex thematics. On the outside he looks like another Bob Tucker stand-in: he's 'too tall, too thin, and too bony to cast a decent shadow before the sun' and has 'persistent problems [with] getting his long legs and big feet in and out from under desks and workbenches and standing upright outdoors in gale[force] winds' (1); he drinks bourbon, which he pronounces 'smooth' (9, 149, 175); and he's interested keenly in archæology and glacial till, the effects of glaciation on the landscape (*passim*). But the strange designation 'Fisher Yann Highsmith' leads us to look for some hidden meaning, something behind the extravagance.[1] Tucker tells us pointedly in the first sentence that his central character's nickname is 'the Fisherman', though 'he wasn't all that godly' (1), pointing us away from a biblical interpretation and leaving us with the idea of 'the fisherman' as someone who fashions tall tales, a smith of high-flown hypotheses, who spins yarns ('Yanns' — say it with a Boston accent) into whole cloth, and from out of that prosyllogism constructs an edifice, a blind, a façade, like his mud-brick ravelins, behind which his 'straw men' can hide (43). That is the crux of his name as well as of the book, unifying the many disparate pieces into a cohesive whole. Think of the work as one big fish story: Tucker gives the reader a hook in the Fortean falls, and a 'Bob' who dips and spins and teases us that we may have something beneath the choppy surface after all, and a lead weight sinker in the 'Iron' chapters, which gives us our first real key to the 'story'. In the end, though, it leaves us with nothing really to eat, a phantom of a fish, 'the one that got away' — leaving us nothing but flotsam to chew on in our own ruminations (and an ultimately unsatisfying meal).

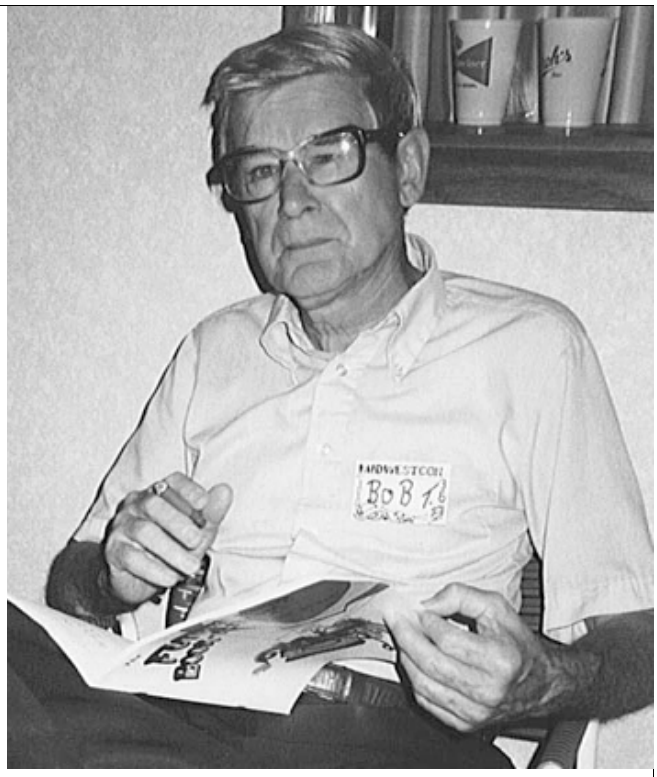
As Fisher Yann Highsmith is a caricature of Arthur Wilson Tucker, so the rest of the personnel at the base camp near Regina, Saskatchewan, come off as caricatures and not characters. Highsmith is not the easygoing, congenial Bob Tucker stand-in: he's vain, self-important, browbeating, adolescent, sophomoric and obtrusive, as well as sexist. We have no sympathy for him. We have none for the incredibly annoying and echoicly emphatic Harley, either ('We don't!'), the knitting doctor who invites and challenges our prejudices, nor for the 'poly-librarian', Jeanmarie, who has a Frenchman's name and all the personality of a mud brick.[2] Only two other characters warrant names, though they play minor rôles: recovery team leaders Busby and Massenet.[3] The former is surely named for Busby Berkeley [please read note 3], an American film director and choreographer who had a penchant for displaying women (for example in *Golddiggers of 1933*) covered in coins or as tin can commodities to be opened and consumed by the male lead (Monaco, 55), which naming supports the general theme of sexism in society and the arts. The latter, Massenet, his coequal team leader, points up the same, as many of Jules Massenet's popular operas — especially *Manon*, *Werther* and *Thaïs* — deal in the objectification of women and the complications that that mindset brings to all involved. In line with this theme is Fisher Yann Highsmith's adolescent ardour for Jeanmarie ('the woman' [16*ff*], or one of them, anyway), who does not return his affection (85*ff*, 95*ff*, 127*ff*); Highsmith's wistful expression that 'he wanted to believe the [mutilated] woman had been pretty in life' (180), the men's lustful desire for 'nurses!' (60, 113, 122, 128), as if nurses' only rôle were to satisfy the men's carnal desires, and Highsmith's assumptions regarding Jeanmarie, that she must need a man (97).



In a complex interplay with the sexism of the males in the work, we have Fisher Yann Highsmith's cryophobia (11, 28, 54), which works its way into his fascination with the frigid Jeanmarie (113) and the expression of the women in the 'Iron' chapters as unavailable to the men, cold, distant, scientific (except when ball-breaking, castrating or involved in lesbian sex or illicit sexual activity with castrated male slaves). *Women* are the 'enemy' (23, 73, 85, 96, 174), as Highsmith states repeatedly to Jeanmarie and Harley, but also the glacier, the cold, is 'the enemy' (28 *et alia*), and is treated by Highsmith as an equal menace. The repetition of these assertions — all from Fisher Yann Highsmith's point of view, if the 'Iron' chapters represent his final report to Washington South (he intuits occurrences precisely from these interchapters, either retroactively in the text or anticipatory to it) — shows a certain recursiveness in our antihero, which is not only repeated throughout the work, but in the suggestion that it's endemic to our culture, our thought processes, even our environment with the recurrence of the ice ages. The text itself, mainly but not exclusively in the 'Ice' chapters, has strange, almost word-for-word repetitions of phrases and whole sentences,[4] as if it were written serially (to my knowledge Tucker never serialised the work), with some iterations coming mere pages apart, while others occur whole chapters removed. As an evocation of the recursive paradox — where new possibilities and ways of thinking are closed off, creating a repetitive feedback loop — the 'technique' is telling. The cryophobia and the recursiveness that haunt Fisher Yann Highsmith, and the isolation they foster, also play into the themes and setting of the work, as I hope to show.

Setting as metaphor and metonymy

Ice and Iron is as deeply informed by Loren Eiseley's essays, cited in the text twice (33, 64), in which he returned again and again to the formative influence of the great glacial epochs on humanity, as it is shallowly and perfunctorily informed by the works of Charles Fort (cited 32, 100, 156). Eiseley once lamented the lost annals of the ice ages, four of which mankind had endured without record, yet which must be locked somewhere in the depths of our collective unconscious ('The Long Loneliness', 1960). Glaciers are generally acknowledged as time machines, but of a *past preserved* and not a *pre-served future*. Falls from the future, and not the past as may have been natural, especially if the ice was receding and revealing old captures, point to the overarching theme of repetition, of recursiveness in all forms of nature. Tucker points to the future — especially a future redolent in the 1970s, and informed by this one Eiseley essay, which included the intelligence of dolphins, mentioned by Harley (42), and asks what if the apocalypse comes as ice from the North, and not fire from the sky? What knowledge might we, isolated here in our present, not gain from the future occurrence of glaciation? The answer, sadly, is more of the same. Locked in our recursive struggle with nature's own recursiveness, we find only an endless loop of the same structures, the same responses to the same stimuli. A look back at the concerns of the 1970s in such magazines as *Harper's* and



Arthur Wilson (Bob) Tucker. (Photo: Toni Weisskopf.)

American Scholar, two main outlets for Eiseley's essays, shows the same sorts of problems confronted in ecology, biology, sociology, race relations and political science that haunt us even today in the twenty-first century.[5] The same war of the sexes, with savage, wild men and sophisticated, clannish, earth-centred women, rages there as it does and did here, perhaps simplified — but the reification points up the hidden realities 'here and now', in the 1970s as in the twenty-first century. The Cold War between the Arctic states of Brezhnev's Russia and Nixon's America still rages, reified by the ice sheets that had already ground Canada into rubble and crushed most of Siberia as well (61), with the continued efforts 'to topple the Cuban People's Republic' with commando dolphins (42) redolent of the Bay of Pigs fiasco and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1961–1962.

But the text deals with these events not literally, though reified, but figuratively, thematically; it does not deal with the ideas seriously except as symbolic commentary. The glacier, the new ice age, as the Luttrells rightly note in their review, 'Tucker's Two Futures' (Luttrell 60), plays little into the *novum* as driver of the story. Tucker does not explore the implications of such a climate change fully in the chronotope of the 'novel'. It serves as atmosphere and as metaphor for the frigidity Fisher feels from the women in his life, the recursiveness of nature in the glaciations that shaped humanity's psyche, and the cognate effects of dread on that psyche engendered by the dire threats of the Cold War.

In the isolation of the military and scientific outpost on the southwest edge of Regina we find a curious artefact, left there by a previous tenant: a 'chair stuffed with ostrich feathers' (4–5, 112, 180). Its 'anachronistic' qualities (8) commend themselves to Fisher Yann Highsmith's sensibilities, as he '[rocks] back in [...] easy relaxation [...] [t]he chair moved with him in an equally

easy motion, gently depressing itself to accommodate his spine and bony shoulders. They rocked together for a time. [...]' (4, 180). These sentences frame the text, word for word; and the chair that had been left at the station before Highsmith got there will be left behind when he leaves. Highsmith, having inherited the chair, cannot know what batting the upholsterer stuffed the chair with, without his doing damage to the upholstery. When Harley informs him that 'Ostriches have been extinct for fifty years', he retorts, 'Imitation ostrich feathers' (5). Why the insistence on 'ostrich feathers'? And why the framing repetition? Obviously the chair *signifies*, and as symbol embodies many of the complexities of plot and setting, mood and atmosphere tied up with our one real actor, Fisher Yann Highsmith. Milliners, dressmakers, even upholsterers used to use the showy plumes of ostriches, especially in the late nineteenth century ('anachronism'); the ostrich cock practices polygamy, is fiercely territorial, but incubates the eggs at night to relive his hens ('a ladies' man'); the eggs' shells find use as bowls, like pottery, and broken resemble *ostraka*, potshards used by ancient Greeks to banish unwanted citizens — and Hyperbolus, a demagogue ('hyperbole'), is said to have been the last Athenian ostracised (Columbia 2028). As you can see, it's not really all that far from 'ostrich feather' stuffing to being stuffed full of 'horse feathers'; nor is it that far from 'ostrich' to 'ostracism'. Highsmith's 'ostrich feather' chair also signifies male power, the power of the air. And 'the pilot', one of the *core team* (9) always present with Highsmith and the chair, gets power from lifting off the ground (27), into the air (32: 'feathery trembling of the aircraft'), in contradistinction to the women of the 'Iron' chapters who get their power from the ground, from Mother Earth.

In the claustrophobic world of the research station, where sleeping quarters are tight (42), and the communications sergeant participates silently in every call (7), everyone knows everybody else's business — everyone, that is, except for Fisher Yann Highsmith. He has served at the station for three weeks, but knows nothing of Jeanmarie nor of Harley except their given names, no soldier's name at all (calling them by their ranks or job descriptions), while recovery team leaders Busby (18) and Massenet (170) introduce themselves. Highsmith is isolated within his own head in one of the most isolated places in the world; and yet how intricately tied into the subculture of the station, and by extension into the greater culture at large. Through Highsmith we see all the fears and hopes of a people played out in cramped isolation, through one man in one moment of time. Like Eiseley, he carries within his makeup the entire history of the race, of life on earth, of the exploded stars that forge our elements. And yet unlike Eiseley (and unlike Fort), his imagination carries him away into his own recursive depths and there abandons him: a pseudo-scientist trapped in a paraliterary hell.[6]

1. Critique: pseudosciences

In the work's overarching yet cursory, epigrammatic critique of the social sciences, including political science and economics, Tucker saves his most brutal (and brutally funny) attacks for archæology and anthropology in his caricature of Fisher Yann Highsmith. As a 'reconstructionist' (read: *archæologist*), Highsmith must piece together a scenario for the Fortean falls of debris found at the leading edge of the glacier. It's not so much that Highsmith successfully posits the future episodes we see in the 'Iron' chapters but that he is creating them, making them up out of whole cloth — much the way Charles Fort himself spun theory after theory from scant evidence, and Loren Eiseley saw in the limited experiences of his own life the universal experience of all mankind down through time. The evidence, such as it is, could support many 'theories' and be explained a myriad number of ways, which approach might have played better in a traditional 'novel'.[7] Highsmith fixes on *one* and one only answer (63), without good evidence or good scientific practice, and carps on it until he's no longer gainsaid. The evidence is sparse, and Highsmith lets his scientific imagination run rampant.

Highsmith is said to take 'pride' in his imagination (177), a supposed 'trained scientist' with 'superior reasoning powers' (85), a 'reconstructionist' who spins out fantastic yarns. His pronouncements and 'theories' really can't be taken as serious solutions to the problem: the problem itself is silly — a hook for readers, and unsolvable — and invokes the name of Charles Fort, who spun out scenarios himself in a very speculative, almost manically inventive way, but I think not seriously. The 'Iron' chapters could be seen as Highsmith's final report to Washington South, a glamourised War of the Sexes in which the pseudo-author finds himself immersed, mainly through his infatuation with Jeanmarie. He's a storyteller, a 'reconstructionist', much like Marija Gimbutas, who was accused of spinning out matriarchal societies from scant evidence for 'Old Europe'. Her *Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe* (1974) came out the same year Tucker published *Ice and Iron*, but she had popularised and played on the thesis of a pre-patriarchal European society which others had proposed before her, and which Andrew Fleming had attempted to put aside with his 1969 paper 'The Myth of the Mother Goddess' (Fleming). Tucker reified this trend and applied to it the practice of *reductio ad absurdum*.

Highsmith's greatest find, an artefact found on the surface and dropped into his world, must be the 'quartergun', which Jeanmarie describes as '"a curvilinear polygon with a handle on the apparent top side"' (66). Tucker tells us '[t]he artifact was fashioned of an almost-black rubbery material and was about the size of a whole brick; it had a hefty, solid feel to it and weighed about half a kilogram [about one pound]; there were no visible seams and despite the relative warmth of the cabin it felt cold. Four fingers could be fitted snugly around the handle, leaving the thumb free. The smallest end of the polygon [note that] contained an opening vaguely like a muzzle, but then again it looked like the blunt spout of a water pitcher. There was no rifling within the muzzle, if it was a muzzle, nor was there a lip to catch the dripping if it was a pitcher' (66). Highsmith's perorations on the discovered 'curvilinear polygon' — a good old-fashioned raygun knocked on its 'butt' (88, 90) — give us much to go on. The savage men of Highsmith's reported 'future' have no use for them — they toss them away, careless with them, counting them as nothing. Of

course, Highsmith himself has no idea how it works, wonders at its odd shape, why anyone would make it that way: '"Why not a box or a ball or a rectangle or a length of piping? [!] What kind of genius had played with a polygon?"' (118–119). These surface artefacts come to the present day in the twenty-third century (17) from the world of women, which we find in the 'Iron' chapters. And that's the ultimate clue to their identity, those 'curvilinear polygons'. What Highsmith has discovered is: an iron! Tucker is describing a *clothes iron*, specifically the old charcoal irons with the vent on the front end for evacuating smoke and vapours [see illustration]. This must be Tucker's supreme joke on us. Watch Highsmith once you have this key: he 'peer[s] into the maw' but finds no 'spark', no 'glowing coal in the pit of the weapon' (84). And note that Jeanmarie, a 'polylibrarian' with eidetic memory, calls them 'polygons', a two-dimensional representation, and not 'polyhedrons' or 'polytopes', three-dimensional shapes. A Reuleaux Triangle, the simplest curvilinear polygon known in two dimensions, spun in space marks out a nearly square hole, with rounded corners; when the 'quartergun' fires, it makes not a 'round' hole, but a 'rounded hole', its cutout 'a neat rounded section' (88, 90).[8] It's bad science, but that's in keeping with the critique of such in SF literature, and is therefore of a piece. Once you realise it's an iron, a clothes iron, these passages read as quite funny; its use, its very design and purpose, baffles men! Said to feel like rubber, these *irons* 'rub out' unwanted wrinkles; as weapons they 'rub out' men. Another appellation for an iron is a 'smoother' (OED). These 'quarter-guns' — guns used in quarters — smooth the fabric of space and time, the chronotope of the Women of Wonder, by removing troublesome, savage men. This one artefact, in the inept hands of our 'reconstructionist', tells us more about the theme of this work than all the 'Iron' chapters together. The breaking down of sexual rôles, the inability of men to understand women and their mysterious and terrible appurtenances, the coldness of the iron and yet its ability, when activated, to burn men badly, all, once again, entangled with the mind and personality of Fisher Yann Highsmith.

'What kind of genius had played with a polygon?' Highsmith wonders (119). The kind that writes funny hardboiled detective novels and postmodern Menippean science fiction anti-texts: Wilson 'Bob' Tucker' — that kind of genius.

I can't do justice to the many critiques in *Ice and Iron* given the space I have. The subject matter is so intertwined it certainly gives the impression of being broadly critical, and touches on many topics of concern in the social sciences; but the work cannot be said to be exhaustive of the topic, as in Menippean satire. So I think we have something different here — not altogether different, but different in scope and intent. But I have one more aspect I'd like to examine before I declare for 'anti-text'.

2. Critique: paraliterature

Tucker, a projectionist, must have been aware of the prevalence of the 'male gaze' in Hollywood films (such as those by Busby Berkeley), and in *Ice and Iron* he anticipates Laura Mulvey's essay, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975), which introduced the phrase to the lexicon. Fisher Highsmith lectures 'the woman' on screen at the beginning: she's frivolous, fawning, whining, trying to cajole Highsmith to join her at a party. What's her name? She doesn't have one. She's only ever referred to as 'the woman', an appellation that transfers to Jeanmarie once she has been introduced and 'the woman' dismissed. 'The Male Gaze' is illustrated throughout the work, and taken to its *reductio ad absurdum* critical conclusion by necrophiliac *cavemen* in the 'Iron' chapters (who — horrifically — feel up the female corpses, women they had just killed, and become sexually aroused (!)). Tucker here, through Highsmith, is dead on, and pulling no punches. Mistreatment of women, seen as subservient in both chronotopes, prevails throughout the text: cavemen beat 'their' women, assume bowing Amazons are paying obeisance (much to their detriment), and use a cavewoman as 'bait' to hunt a lynx,[9] which the 'Ice' chapters mirror in Highsmith's suggestion that Jeanmarie pose as bait to study the reaction of caveman #17 — to which suggestion she incredulously declines (99). Highsmith's insensitive request shows the sexist nature of the culture, and would be best seen as a critique of that culture. Viewed in any other light the sexism of the work is truly too blatant to stomach. Highsmith is drawn as adolescent and sophomoric in the extreme, mooning over a less-than-enthusiastic Jeanmarie, vain, overly sensitive, and yet easily cowed by strong male characters (the pilot; Massenet; the bearded man trying to sleep in the dormitory while Highsmith importunes a laid-up Jeanmarie; and the male nurse in the infirmary); otherwise, he browbeats his victims (mainly Jeanmarie, 'the woman' on the 'pictophone' (2), and the effeminate Harley). We shouldn't take him seriously; certainly his compeers don't, and Tucker didn't or he wouldn't have given him such a goofy name and frivolous personality: that's part and parcel of the grotesquerie of Menippean satire. In the 'present' chronotope of the twenty-third century, Jeanmarie remarks on Highsmith's 'theory' as he willy-nilly spins it out, that the 'superior force' of the 'future' women must in fact be because they are physically weaker and so must rely on their sophisticated weapons to fend off man (71) — another assuaging of the delicate male ego. The Women of Wonder fend off the cavemen, of course, with their Super Science charcoal irons (hilarious!) that blast them with an ultraviolet 'bluing' that sends them back to a more primitive chronotope appropriate to their sexist behaviour — to Fisher Yann Highsmith's time, the 1970s, in twenty-third century garb. I suppose a rolling pin or a cast iron pan would have been too obvious.

Including the inept puerility of *character*, we find clichés such as 'as far as the eye could see' (78) and passive construction in action sequences ('The goal was sighted' (79)), along with pointless *adventure plotting* illustrated in the reified Battle of the Sexes, tied back to character (frigid females, unsophisticated males). In Fisher Yann Highsmith and 'polylibrarian' Jeanmarie, Tucker parodies Heinlein's Jubal Harshaw and 'Fair Witness' Anne (from *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) and later works). And Tucker has gone on record to say

that he just couldn't read Heinlein anymore: '"I've tried and I've tried, but after about 1965 he became unreadable"' (Pantagraph, 23). We're subjected in the text to scenes of Highsmith's lovemaking to Jeanmarie, who is as cold and asexual as can be (noted by the watch sergeant who wants the nurses: '"a polylibrarian would rather read a book"' (113)) which Highsmith does not wish to believe, like that inept fourteen-year-old again fumbling about with his first crush — Tucker's comment, no doubt, on the level of maturity in the SF readership (see Thomas Disch's *The Dreams Our Stuff is Made of* for further study of the juvenile nature of SF as a genre).

Tucker wrote to Bruce Gillespie in 1972: 'fans are too quick to point to imaginary flaws, but they really mean to say they wouldn't have written a given book in the same manner an author wrote it.' Exactly so: take the book as written and find the value in it. If it seems not to work, discover how it does work, through attentive reading and good critical analysis. Tucker continues, 'I guess fans are in a rut. They want the same fiction presented in the same old ways, at the same time crying for something new. Bob Shaw offered an exciting new twist to *The Palace of Eternity*, but how did the fans accept it? They wanted stock space opera' (SFC 79: 66).

In 1974, in *Ice and Iron,* Tucker certainly gave us something quite new.

The text could certainly be fit into the expansive category of Menippean satire as characterised by Mikhail Bakhtin, with its fourteen points, as enumerated by Howard D. Weinbrot; but Weinbrot goes on to dismantle such 'a baggy genre into which almost any work can be made to fit' (16), noting 'Bakhtin's broad and sometimes contradictory [and overlapping] definitions' (15). M. Keith Booker, in his work on Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, which ties that text into the Menippean tradition through the works of Rabelais, quotes Rosalie Colie as noting (of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*) 'Anything in the book may mean just what it appears to mean; or it may mean something else altogether, or, best of all, it may mean both what it appears to mean and something else altogether as well' ... The relevance ... to *Finnegans Wake* should be obvious'(27) — and to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, oft-cited Menippean texts. Philip Stevick, quoted in the same article, notes that '"[i]deas in anatomy [Northrop Frye's designation for Menippean satire] ... can also occupy a devious middle ground that eludes description"' (29). Such could be said for *Ice and Iron*, with its complex interweaving of grotesque characterisation and metaphoric setting and recondite tropes and broad but cursory critique of culture, society, pseudoscience and paraliterature. As Derrida has said of his own work, *Glas* (1974): 'It circulates between ... two genres, trying meanwhile to produce another text which would be of another genre or without genre' (Booker, 29). He sees his work as fitting into the Bakhtinian definition of Menippea, but as that *genre* has clearly become both attenuated and overburdened, it seems to me Derrida was working toward something like 'anti-text' without naming it as such. Once again, Tucker anticipated the most trenchant literary and cultural criticism of his day.

The work under present consideration is not particularly enjoyable to read (and very little attention has been paid it after its initial release). Tucker succeeds so well in writing a cliché-ridden, statically plotted, annoyingly characterised, sexist potboiler piece of juvenilia that no one would mistake it for a work of genius and puckish humour, a postmodernist Menippean anti-text. It really is a stinker as a novel. So in that way, it fails: but like its artefacts delivered in slow motion from the future, recovered on the surface, the text hides its true brilliance in the light.

Conclusion: 'text' as 'anti-text'

Some readers 'want everything spelled out for them', Bob Tucker once complained in a letter (SF Commentary 79, p. 68); and this very fact points up the difference between literature and paraliterature (the latter descriptor applies to most science fiction and fantasy). A Jane Austen or a Philip K. Dick comments on the customs and mores of their time and society within the characters and actions of their plots, without resorting to lectures and didacticism. Tucker does that as well in *Ice and Iron.* Unfortunately the caricatures as parody of stock science fiction characters work so well they're as annoying and obnoxious as the works they comment on. The mimesis is too good, and therefore the impression becomes the subject. Without definite keys to the work — such as the 'curvilinear polygons' as clothes irons — reading through the parody can become galling. Tucker gives us the keys, but he doesn't unlock the doors for us; he leaves that pleasure to his readers, if their inclinations run that way, and the work becomes deeper and more meaningful with their use.

Still, to those expecting a potboiler science fiction tale of little sophistication, the text can be read as such: it gives them what they have come to expect — unwarranted emotional outbursts, adolescent sexual shenanigans, 'exciting' action sequences in grotesque and gruesome detail with little or no justification, meaning or purpose, pointless explication at length of the outré fall of men near the glacier. In this, it partakes of the grotesqueries of the Menippean satire. 'If you like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you'll find you like,' as Lincoln once so eloquently reported — but it's not sophisticated literature. It's paraliterature. And yet that's the uneasy dichotomy of this work of parodic literature, this 'anti-text'. It's sophisticated without looking it; it's recondite; it's a hidden text. And as such it's a work of near genius. It's a critique of culture, but that culture is primarily the subculture of science fiction writers and fandom.[10]

How can we tell the difference between bad writing and parodic writing? It's a fair question. I'd say in the awareness of the writer evident *in the text*, and the awareness level of the reader *to the text.* A truly amazing text can function on many levels (Russ, 51; Booker, 25 'the *concordia discors*') and achieve effect on all without sacrificing contiguity on any of the levels. Tucker *almost* accomplishes this, and that's what's so amazing about the text. Early reviewers and almost all reviews (all I've seen) accept the work as a serious science fiction text and applaud its inventiveness, its 'fresh'-ness. I didn't experience that in the twenty-first century, of course. I felt the

same disappointment that I often feel in reading science fiction, not in the invention but in the quality of the prose, the caricature-ness of the characterisations. The best fiction — including science fiction — doesn't stall the reader in this way.

Can a *text* be an *anti-text*? Or put another way, can text be 'against text'? Anti-text is not 'not text', but is rather 'over and against' text, or 'opposed to' text in the sense of 'opposite of text' and, like a mirror image, is indistinguishable from text — until you try to interpose it, or overlay it upon 'text'. *Anti-text* can be a critique of genre tropes and practices, and I think consists of three major aspects: (1) transposed tropes are hidden within clear view, in that the work is mimetic, non-didactic and non-explicatory; (2) expectations are thwarted, leading to a reexamination, in that the 'story' told is not the story 'meant', as the work breaks with genre expectations and traditions; and (3) it carries within itself the opposite notion of 'text', much as Saussure's *signifier* encodes the *signified* (or another *signifier*, à la Derrida), as Kristeva's *phenotype* is haunted by the *genotype*, and Barthes' *paradoxa* disrupts and is disrupted by *doxa*. Many have noted the process; how anti-text differs is in its indistinguishability from text. But like antimatter and matter, the two cannot coexist; anti-text and text may look identical, but they can never really touch.

Wilson Tucker's *Ice and Iron* is a profoundly deep work, much in the vein of Joyce's *Wake*. Yet Menippean satire seems inappropriate to contain the former work, however much it may describe the latter. A category or genre can hardly be called such if represented by just one work; but I think to 'anti-text' could be assigned some of the works of Philip K. Dick, especially from his Brilliant Middle Period style (1964–1968), certainly works such as *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, the 'pataphysique *Ubik,* and *Counter-Clock World*, but also possibly *Now Wait for Last Year*. Bob Shaw's *The Palace of Eternity;* the Strugatskii's *Roadside Picnic* (a beautiful and desperate evocation of the science fiction field itself); and Stanislaw Lem's *Fiasco* and *The Investigation* might also benefit from reassignment. From outside the recognised genre of science fiction I would suggest that Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* and *At Swim-Two-Birds* might bear looking at in the light of 'anti-text', as well as Thomas Pynchon's *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49*. As this short list shows, far from being *sui generis*, *Ice and Iron* fits into a tradition of 'anti-text' and may very well be Wilson Tucker's *magnum opus* and crowning achievement.

Endnotes

1 It doesn't appear to be a Tuckerisation; did Bob know a John Highsmith from Fisher, a town just 32 miles east on Rt. 136 from his hometown of Heyworth? Could be [see also Note 5]. Or Bob could have found the name 'Patricia Highsmith' on the back flap of the dust jacket to his own book, *A Procession of the Damned* (Doubleday, 1965), advertising her book, *The Glass Cell*, and liked the sound of it. Some interesting anagrams of FISHER YANN HIGHSMITH include: FINE HIGHSMITH RAN SHY; HE GRANTS HIS HI-FI HYMN; IN HIS HYMN HIGHT FEARS; FAR HEIGHTS IN HIS HYMN; I HEAR FISH HYMN THINGS; I'M A FRESH SHINY THING, H.; IN MY FINE HIGH STARS, H. H.; FRESH MYTH INSIGNIA, H. H.; HI! HI! THRESHING MY FANS; FISHY HEARINGS THIN HIM; THIN HA'F- HISSING RHYME.

2 If Jean d'Arc and Mother Mary or the Magdalene are indicated, or Madame Curie, the text gives us no clue; near Regina rests a small hamlet named Montmartre, but that's hardly relevant.

3 Tuckerised F. M. Busby, fan and author; Hotels in Nice, France; Busby surely not Horace Busby, LBJ's speechwriter, nor Matt Busby, the Liverpudlian footballer immortalised in the Beatles' song 'Dig it' off *Let It Be*, nor again the Alberta town of Busby, NW of Edmonton, though this is an intriguing possibility.

4 6 and 7–8: '[bureaucrats] sit/sat around on their fat wallets and bask ...'; 6 and 13 'communications [...] tower just above/directly over the ready room'; 20 and 21 'game trail ... a rich trail as well as an old one/ rich trail showing age'; 55, 56 and 57 [Highsmith] 'had forgotten that he was disconnected from the aircraft heating unit', 'remembered he was unplugged', is reminded '"you're not plugged in"'; 105 and 106 '[t]he remaining half of the spear clung between the animal's ribs' and 'his only spear was broken, with half of it dangling in the cat's hide' — as if we'd forgotten from one page to the next); (14 and 55 [of the glacier] '"rate of sixty-one meters per year. That almost sets a new record"' and '*Only* sixty-one meters per year: that was almost a record'; 4 and 180 (FYH in his ostrich-feather chair: see text under 'Setting'); 4–5 and 112 (chair) 'stuffed with ostrich feathers'; 5 and 123 'cushy/plushy ... chair [123: some] officer had left behind [123: for him] when the airfield was abandoned'; 9 and 149 'The pilot was sleeping and snoring on a/his cot wedged into a/the corner [9: of the room] and the two [9: adjoining] walls of that corner seemed to amplify the sounds; he slept in his clothing with his boots [149: waiting] beside him on the floor'; 9 and 171–2 [Harley knitting (or not) beneath the] 'one really bright light'; 27 and 18 'The pilot [27: was half] turned [27: in his seat] and glared/glaring at him for his tardiness/as he clambered in'; among other instances).

5 A sample into the era's magazines is very enlightening. In one issue of *Harper's* (Aug. 1971) we find an essay by Lewis Lapham, 'The Longing for Armageddon' (10); a story by Loren Eiseley in which he finds a mysterious artefact, 'The Gold Wheel' (68); 'Letter from a Cold Place', an article by Don Mitchell on the youth conference in Estes Park, Colorado, which strongly resembles the 'GlowParty' in Billings in *Ice and Iron* — right down to the author preferring bourbon to other drugs; the editor John Fischer ('Fisher Yann?') inveighing against 'righteous ... proclamations instead of reasoned arguments' (4); even a 'Music in the round' column by 'Discus' which discusses Massenet.

6 I meant to show three aspects of setting in this section, starting with the ice age and working into

isolation, then ending with culture and society as affected by same; but we can see now that trying to separate character from both plot and setting is nigh on impossible, the character — our monagonist — so defines the static plot structure and cryophobic, insular setting through his own neuroses.

7 In a historic sense, *Ice and Iron* does, in fact, work like a novel: it's a narrative piece that employs both mimetic and romantic/fantastic elements in tension with regard to the protagonist's perceptions and desires; as an 'old-fashioned' novel, then, it illustrates the anachronistic aspect of Fisher Yann Highsmith's personality. In a more contemporary way, however, the text does not follow a progressive arc, nor as a science fiction work does it include even remotely plausible scientific speculation or extrapolation. Once again, we find that this work does not fall easily into categorisation, neither 'novel' nor 'science fiction', and therefore must be something *beyond*.

8 Twenty miles SSW of the airbase at Regina lies the hamlet of Rouleau.

9 This wild cat is more probably a cougar, which has a long body and attacks larger prey. Lynxes are nocturnal and live on hares and rabbits almost exclusively, intrinsically tied to their rise and fall in population. The lynx is thought to have excellent sight, connected to the Celtic god Lug; their gut was used to string harps; the symbol ties into the Concord Lynx of Thoreau mentioned by Eiseley, an anachronism in New England ('Thoreau's Vision of the Natural World', in *The Star Thrower*, 223*ff*); the lynx is a northern Bobcat (Bob Tucker).

10 This is Tucker tweaking the nose that fed him.

Sources

Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. New York & London: Routledge, 2000.

Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact. March, 1975: Review of *Ice & Iron*, by Lester del Rey.

Blanchard, W. Scott. 'Menippean Satire in the Renaissance'. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1995.

Bly, Robert. *Iron John*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1990.

Booker, M. Keith. 'Western Culture in the Wake of Joyce: From Egypt to Derrida (By Way of Nietzsche)'. NCTE, Urbana, IL: *College English*, 53 (1), January 1991 (pp. 19–33).

Columbia Encyclopedia. New York & London. Columbia UP, 1975 (fourth edition). 'Ostrich' and 'Ostracism', p. 2028.

Disch, Thomas M. *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of*. New York: Free Press (Simon & Schuster), 1998.

Eiseley, Loren C. *The Immense Journey*. New York: Modern Library, Random House, 1957. 'Skull [was] not spirited back from the future' (p. 128).

——. 'The Long Loneliness'. *The American Scholar* 30 (1) (1966): 57–64.

——. *The Star Thrower*. New York: Harvest/ HBJ, 1979. Includes: 'The Long Loneliness', p. 37; 'Man the Firemaker', p. 45; and 'The Winter of Man', p. 202 ('"We fear the cold and the things we do not understand. But most of all we fear the doings of the heedless ones among ourselves"'); orig. publication in *New York Times* in 1970.

Fleming, Andrew. 'The Myth of the Mother Goddess'. *World Archaeology*, 1 (2) (1969): 247–61.

Fort, Charles. *The Book of the Damned*. New York: Ace Star Book K-156, 1962.

——. *LO!*. New York: Ace Star Book K-217, 1965.

——. *New Lands*. New York: Ace Star Book H- 74, 1968.

——. *Wild Talents*. New York: Ace Star Book H-88, 1968.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1957 (esp. 308–14).

Gimbutas, Marija. *Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe*. London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1974. Title changed in later editions to *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*.

Harper's Magazine. August 1971. Available online.

Heinlein, Robert A. *Stranger in a Strange Land*. New York: Putnam, 1961.

Luttrell, Hank and Lesleigh. 'Tucker's Two Futures'. *SF Commentary 79*, ed. Bruce Gillespie (Feb. 2004): 60–61.

Monaco, James, et al. *The Encyclopedia of Film*. Putnam, NY: Perigee Books, 1991.

Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 (second edition).

Pantagraph. Weekend *Preview* article, Sat. 19 Oct. 1985. Bloomington, IL.

Rahmel, Dan. 'Ice & Iron by Wilson Tucker'.

Russ, Joanna. 'The Wearing Out of Genre Materials'. NCTE, Urbana, IL: *College English*, 33 (1), October 1971 (pp. 46–54).

Science Fiction Review. November 1975. Review of *Ice and Iron* by Richard E. Geis (p. 18).

SF Commentary 79. February 2004. Edited and published by Bruce Gillespie.

State Farm Road Atlas. Bloomington, IL: Rand McNally, 2009.

Suvin, Darko. *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction*. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1988. For the concept of the *novum* in science fiction.

Tucker, Wilson ('Bob'). *Ice and Iron*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974.

——. *Ice and Iron*. New York: Ballantine, 1975.

——. *A Procession of the Damned*. New York: Doubleday, 1965.

Vertex: The Magazine of Science Fiction. April 1975. Review of *Ice and Iron* by William Rotsler.

— Harry Hennessey Buerkett 2010

Pinlighters

This letter column is a time capsule. Most of them were written in 2003 or 2004. I've used them either because they are still interesting today, or because they recall vividly events and opinions that remained unrecorded because this issue has been delayed for five years. I've left out many letters that were enjoyable to receive at the time, or been forced to relegate them to the 'WAHF' section. Correspondents tell of exciting ... and saddening ... events in lives that have turned out quite differently from 2004's expectations. What struck me during editing have been the constant references to the Iraq War, which hadn't even begun when *SFC* 78 was posted. Also, when most of these letters were written, the BBB (Bring Bruce Bayside) Fund, which took me to the American West Coast in February–March 2005 and is one of the most surprising and enjoyable events of my life, was just being organised.

The letters are in three parts: 'Pinlighters' below; the world-record-length 'We Also Heard From' section; and the letters about Bob Tucker that have already appeared in the Tucker section.

Some of my favourite people have died since they sent letters. **Greg Pickersgill** starts proceedings, mentioning the achievements of two favourite people we've now lost.

GREG PICKERSGILL
3 Bethany Row, Narberth Road, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA61 2XG, Wales

It's a genuine pleasure in every sense to get fanzines from you: great production, excellent design, always full of interesting stuff. I can honestly say I always feel a better person after reading them. And I am *not* exaggerating!

The only thing I've read in recent weeks — the only thing overall, including books and legit periodicals — to come close to the sheer pleasure I've had from *SFC* is the latest *Fantasy Commentator*, which I think is an absurdly undervalued piece of work, and people really ought to wake up to Langley Searles before its too bloody late — he must be getting on a fair bit by now and I don't believe he's ever had the praise he deserves.

22 October 2000

If it wasn't for magazines like these (and there aren't many others ...) I'd find myself thinking very strongly that there was little or nothing left to tie me to SF fandom, and that I had long outlived my connection with it. Apart from anything else the whole 'feel' and design of *SFC* is totally satisfying; it's solid stuff that absolutely radiates both enthusiasm and depth of feeling and thinking. It has Conviction. And it is easily readable, with no clever-ass design tricks. Fantastic!

The only bits I've read all the way through so far are your editorial piece on Dave Piper (excellent), the piece on *Carnacki*, which I was fascinated by, as I have a great enthusiasm for those stories, and Ditmar on *The Ship of Ishtar*, which again is one of those terrifically involving pieces of enthusiastic writing that, while it is unlikely to get me to read Merritt, does make me think again that Dick Jenssen is absolutely a Right Guy. Oh, and the letters from Brosnan; how wonderful to know that he's not only still alive but still in Ortygia House. I really must try and get back in touch with him (before he dies ...).

8 February 2003

Some famous last words: Letters from departed friends

A. LANGLEY SEARLES
who lived in Bronxville, New York

brg Langley Searles died on 7 May 2009, at the age of 88. As Greg Pickersgill says, *Fantasy Commentator* was one of those few magazines doing much the same good things as *SF Commentary*. Few people mentioned it, though, and I received it only during the last fifteen years. I still haven't seen a biography of Mr Searles. Perhaps not many people knew much about him.*

I had to write you a note acknowledging *SF Commentary* 78 for two reasons.

The first is that it is, as always, splendidly impressive. Even though most of the contributors are not familiar to me, they always seem to write interesting and often stimulating pieces, and I find that many of the genre works I enjoyed years ago are also appreciated by younger generations of readers.

Dick Jenssen's personal reaction to Merritt's *The Ship of Ishtar*, for example, recalls to me how impressed I was

with this novel when I first read it, and this must have been in late 1938 or early 1939, when I chanced on the *Argosy* issues that reprinted it. I confess there is little of Merritt's work that I can reread today with pleasure, but that certainly doesn't diminish the pleasure that his work once gave me. Some pleasures are repeatable, however, and a few lines and the illustration on page 68 named one of them, J. D. Beresford's *The Hampbenshire Wonder*, which I first encountered about the same time as *Ishtar*. I liked it then, though I thought it a little slow — why weren't there more of the dramatic scenes, like Victor Stott's examination? — but I appreciated it more when I reread it a couple of times in later years.

I am working on the next *Fantasy Commentator*, which like the last will be a double issue, and hope to have it in the mails a little later this year.

A tiny complaint. I find the type size in *SFC* is smaller than I feel comfortable with. Yes, I know it's my age, and that most readers probably handle it without difficulty. And I know, as an editor myself, that compromises have to be made between printing costs and including everything an editor likes, so I shan't expect changes.

17 February 2003

brg Some people still find the type face too small, both here and in *Steam Engine Time*. Many such people have migrated to the website versions, on http://efanzines.com. The layout for *SET* is quite different from that for the paper version: it is designed for screen readability. I'm not doing an alternate version of these issues of *SF Commentary*: I'll just have to ask people to turn up the magnification of their pages while reading them on screen.*

JOHN BROSNAN
who lived in Harrow, London

Good grief, you wait several years for an issue of *SFC* and then two turn up almost at once. I mean it was it was actually less than a year since you produced No 77!

I enjoyed No 78, even though parts of it resembled a hospital newsletter. I didn't help with my own doom-laden e-mails. I was intending to stay off the subject of death this time, but it's a bit difficult when you're confronted with it practically on your front doorstep, as I was earlier this morning. A serious accident involving a car and a motorbike. The motorbike rider didn't survive the encounter, despite the lengthy efforts of the emergency services.

On that grim note, I might as well mention the current situation regarding Iraq, a much bigger catastrophe looming over us. Just heard on the radio that Heathrow Airport is swarming with armed police due to an expected terrorist attack. Of course I find the Bush/Blair determination to start a war with Iraq completely absurd. Like so many others I've yet to hear anything approaching an actual reason as to why we should attack Iraq. Presumably these two committed Christian leaders believe they're doing God's work.

I don't think I ever met Dave Piper, but certainly felt as if I knew him thanks to reading his letters in fanzines over the years (mainly in your publications). Shitty deal for him and his family to be struck down as he was just as he was beginning to enjoy his retirement. The trouble with being an atheist as he was, and I am, is that you can't blame God for these cruel twists. Me, I blame quantum mechanics — but it's just not the same.

I'm still here at Ortygia House but I don't know for how much longer. As I've pulled out of the income support system, it was either that or get a job, or take a six-month course on computers. I don't think my rent is being paid any longer. There's also a For Sale sign out the front. It's been there for months but no one seems to be in a rush to buy the place.

I'm currently waiting for a reaction from my editor to the ms of my novel *Mothership* that I've finally completed. It's quiet, too quiet. I'm reasonably happy with it, but whether it works or not I don't know. It's a lightweight piece with, hopefully, a fair amount of humour (which the editor wanted), but it's not a spoof. Hard to categorise it. I said to a friend that it fell between two stools. He said, you mean it's between shit and shit?

Still going on periodic alcoholic binges, but have managed to stay out of hospital since I last wrote to you. Actually I should be in hospital today having a blood test — my blood pressure is creeping up despite the medication — but I can't be bothered. Famous last words?

The ConVergence report was interesting. I noted, cleverly, that everyone is looking much older these days. I shouldn't find that surprising, but for some reason I do. Rob Holdstock sent me a photograph he took of me with his new digital camera, and when I opened the envelope I thought I was looking at a photograph of my late father. Rationally I accept that I'm getting old, but there's obviously a part of the brain that can't come to terms with the fact.

Like you, I found Franz Rottensteiner's revisionist take on Stanislaw Lem more than a little ironic. All those annoying pieces over the years from Rottensteiner, in which he claimed that Lem was a literary giant compared to the SF pygmies of the US and the UK, used to irritate the hell out of me. Something else in his letter caught my attention: his conviction that it was impossible that a community of highly intelligent beings would have no concept of God. Correct me if I'm wrong but surely we only have one example of monotheism occurring in the world. True, it's now split into three major religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but it all began with the belief system of just one small community/tribe in one particular part of the world. Sophisticated civilisations like those of the ancient Greeks, Chinese and Romans didn't automatically become monotheistic.

It doesn't sound as if Lem is going to get much of a boost from Steven Soderbergh's version of *Solaris*. Advance word is that it's a bit of a dud, but as I usually like Soderbergh's movies, I might have a different reaction to it when I finally get to see it. Apparently Soderbergh has concentrated on only one strand of the story — the relationship between Kelvin and the replica of his dead wife. Actually that was the part I found most interesting in the Tarkovsky film.

Has John Baxter's book *A Pound of Paper* been published in Oz yet? Bruce, this book could have been written just for you. A book about book collecting mixed with dollops of amusing autobiographical stuff, including Baxter's involvement with Sydney SF fandom in the

sixties. It even has *lists*! And I have a walk-on part — as a drunk, naturally.

11 February 2003

I'm sure Baxter wouldn't mind if you reviewed *A Pound of Paper* as an extended fanzine article, just as long as you actually review it. He's had a good reaction to the book generally, which surprised him. He thought it was a minority interest project. He was also surprised that people have reacted favourably to the humorous content of the book, as he never thought of himself as a humorous writer. I found that odd because his letters, which I've judiciously collected over the last 20 or so years, are so often very funny.

Bloody hell, 45 dollars seems an awfully high price for a book. But then I've never understood the high mark-up of book prices in Australia. *A Pound of Paper* sells for £15 in the UK, which is reasonable for a hardback. The average price for a hardback is £16.99, or it was the last time I looked. Needless to say, I don't buy hardbacks these days. Or even paperbacks. I make a lot of visits to the local library instead. Had to sell off most my book collection a couple of years ago. Very painful experience.

I wouldn't describe my current mental state as 'chipper'. I would say I was manically depressed, except I seem to miss out on the manic phases. Just continually depressed. You said that I sounded in last year's email that I was about to take the Big Dive. I must admit that thoughts of throwing myself off the top of Ortygia House have occurred to me but, as the old joke goes, with my luck I'd probably miss the ground. Also I don't think the building is high enough for a successful suicide attempt.

But one's personal problems are all relative. For example, my editor at Orion is not only suffering from leukaemia but also has a serious problem with constant pain from the wrecked vertebrae in her neck, which means she's constantly on high doses of morphine. Yet she gets more done in a day than I do in a month. She's probably drafting a letter of rejection of my novel as I write.

I don't think you stayed in Flat 2 here when you visited Chris Priest in 1974. He lived in the bottom flat, which is on the ground floor, or the basement if you want to be pedantic. I remember your 1974 visit. You persuaded me to accompany you to an exhibition of Munch's work at, I think, the Hayward Gallery on the South Bank. I was, as usual, feeling pretty depressed at the time. The Munch exhibition depressed me even further but you found it positively exhilarating.

Alarming to see that photograph of my younger 1969 self in your ConVergence report. I don't see Gary Mason in that collective of comic fans, yet I'm sure he was present. I definitely remember an incident that took place in the Melbourne SF club room at that time. Gary suddenly grabbed my arm and whispered urgently, 'We?ve got to get out of here!' Outside in the street I asked him what the problem was. His reply: 'They're smoking marijuana in there! The police will probably be here any minute now!' Once again I was struck by the huge gulf that existed between Melbourne fandom and Sydney fandom.

15 February 2003

brg This letter alone would make you realise why John Brosnan's death in April 2005 broke a few hearts, yet nobody was surprised. John Baxter, Rob Holdstock and some other London people helped John Brosnan a lot during the last thirty years.*

BOB SMITH
who lived in Bradbury NSW

Lyn wanted me to come down for Aussiecon III, but we really had too many other matters on our plate at that time. All the photos I've seen since just make me yearn, of course. You may have heard of Freecon 2000, which I attended for one of the two days earlier this year, and actually appeared on a panel with Ron Clarke. I wasn't particularly impressed, and my comments were in Foyster's e-fanzine. I have just turned 70, and find difficulty communicating with the young science fiction fans, who seem mainly submerged in media sf. The ritualistic courtesies have probably changed with the Japanese now, although if one met Takumi Shibano, for example, one would respect his age (and BNF status!) and act accordingly.

Yes, I agree, the mystery of the Wodonga fans defies explanation, and that some signals from that region should have been heard. I wasn't aware that Don Tuck had — as you put it — disappeared totally from SF and fandom. Actually, I thought he had just died. I only recently discovered that my old contact, Roger Dard, in Perth, died a few years ago. But then, losing oneself in Gafia doesn't help.

Thanks for the updates on fan movements, although I guess Foyster is the only one that could be considered still a true blue fan, eh? Of Aussie Fannish Historical interest is the fact that John Baxter and Bob Smith have both appeared in the same letter column of a current and popular fanzine, and that hasn't happened in a very long time. Gives me a *very* strange feeling, I can tell you ...

4 September 2000

brg Not only did Bob die in February 2003, at the age of 72, not long before John Foyster's death, but his wonderful wife Lyn died not long after (in 2004, at the age of 60). Foyster's funeral was the last occasion when we met her.*

SYDNEY BOUNDS
who lived in Kingston on Thames, Surrey

Many thanks for *SFC* 78 and your fanzine about ConVergence; the photos are especially welcome, to match faces to names. But I hardly recognise the Bruce I met, so long ago, with these pics now. And congrats on your Ditmar.

I must be talking to my friends, indeed! I received an egogram from Sir Arthur C. Clarke, with the note: 'I spotted your address in *SFC* 78.' Before I finished reading this issue.

It is a fact that the older we get, the more of our friends and relations die; I find this depressing, but I do remember reading Wynne Whiteford's sf stories in Ted Carnell's magazines.

Dick Jenssen's article is the star turn this issue. It's a long time since I read *Ship of Ishtar*, but I have recently read Merritt's *Dwellers in the Mirage* and *Creep, Shadow!*

Both are recommended to fantasy fans fed up with endless repeats of Tolkien and Robert Howard.

Pleased to see Jimmy White being reprinted. As a friend, and sf reader, said, 'Charming stories.' Again, these are stories I can recommend to sf fans fed up with seemingly endless series of 'wars in space'.

As Dave Langford says, 'The ways of PoD are strange.' I've had one novel reprinted, and the first volume of *The Best Of* is now advertised on the Internet. A second volume to appear in two weeks' time.

21 February 2003

Thanks for *SFC* 79 and the John Foyster Tribute. It does seem that older fans are going in ever greater numbers. Staff Wright, my old friend from the White Horse days, died just before Xmas. So it is especially welcome that you remember Bob Tucker; past writers are so easily forgotten. I remember chatting with Staff one holiday, when we were trying to recall the name of a British sf author we both knew. We ran through every likely name we could think of and some not-so-likely before we gave up. Later we realised that neither of us had remembered John Brunner. Such is fame.

Toni's article was a good introduction; and I especially liked Bob's 'Bijou Nights'. I don't think I ever saw a Tucker mystery, so there's something to look for. I have unearthed from under a pile of books, *The Year of the Quiet Sun*, for rereading at an early moment.

And, as a bonus, a photo of Ted Carnell!

I am still continuing to write short stories for Phil Harbottle's *Fantasy Adventures*, and Western novels.

The house I live in sold last year and the new landlord wanted £200 a week rent. Luckily the rent office brought this down to something I can afford.

Good Reading Department: I suggest, if available, that you try Daniel Pennac, a French author in translation. One title is *The Fairy Godmother*. He has two others out.

5 March 2004

brg As I wrote in *Steam Engine Time*, Syd Bounds, who died in November 2006 at the age of 86, was one of those special people for whom I publish my magazines. He put up with me staying with him in January 1974. He always sent a letter of comment. He always encouraged me to return to writing fiction, but I never did. And he kept writing, and publishing, until the very end.*

We turn to letter writers who are still with us — although some people in the We Also Heard From column are a bit doubtful, as I haven't heard from some of them since 2003–2004.

First: a writer whose letters always cheer me up:

BRIAN ALDISS
Hambleden, 39 St Andrews Road, Old Headington, Oxford OX3 9DL, England

Very glad to have your email of 27 February. I hasten to respond before flying to Florida on Sunday for the 25th Conference of the Fantastic.

Life goes bounding genially on in Old Headington. Although I am busier than I may wish to be, the thought of doing nothing is even less attractive. I must tell you I am in touch with a lady called Margaret Gee. She was a literary agent and a publisher in Double Bay NSW, but has now relapsed into being just a literary agent. She seems a very nice woman and published a sort of autobiography entitled *A Long Way from Silver Creek*. I wonder if you know her, or know of her? I have given her a little book of mine to see if she can sell it in Australia. The memoirs of her family seems quite a typical one, with a really poor family farming poor land and the her father joining the Army and being taken prisoner by the Japs as soon as they hit Singapore. The poor chap had to work on the Death Railway. Then again, other members of the family were on HMAS *Perth* in the Battle of Sunda Straits, which of course was sunk in 1942. Margaret sounds like a feisty lady and has now made good. It's a nice story.

Of course I am still writing — to the surprise of many. Little Brown have proved to be disappointing publishers, although I do understand that the variety of books I write tells against me. To be a financial success, one should do what Agatha Christie did, and keep doggedly writing the same book over and over. But as you and I know, financial success is by no means everything in life. Readers seem to enjoy *Affairs at Hampden Ferrers* although I can't say it's selling particularly well. However, I am undeterred, and have two more novels appearing from small publishers next year, to celebrate my 80th birthday. That is *Sanity and the Lady* and *Jocasta*. I particularly care for *Jocasta*, which is the Oedipus Rex story told from his wife/mother's viewpoint. *Jocasta* will be published in an elegant limited edition from a new publisher, The Rose Press. The Rose Press is the baby of an Australian friend Phillip Rose, an elegant articulate man who has apparantly made enough money in the City to be able to afford to lose money on a small publisher.

Sorry I never responded to your generous article which appeared in *Tirra Lirra*. The journal is still lying here in a stack on my study floor. Work overcame me. I am of an age where I do introductions for various books. This earns a little ready money. Just to give you a sample, I have written introductions to *The Coming Race* (Broadview Press, Canada), *Around the World in 80 Days* (Penguin) and, best of all, *The War of the Worlds* (also Penguin).

Funny you talk about the crack in your east wall! The facing of my north wall is beginning to fall like the leaves of autumn and this bit of the house which contains my study was built only eight years ago.

You ask whether I can download PDF files from the internet. I guess I could if only I knew what PDF files were.

18 March 2004

SF Commentary 79 just in: The Tucker Issue! Many thanks. I have read it with interest since, although we have a name in common, I had almost forgotten Wilson Tucker.

He certainly became a good popular novelist. *The Long Loud Silence* and *Year of the Quiet Sun* I particularly enjoyed. (Did he have trouble with his hearing?)

By way of thanks, I'm sending you a copy of my new novel, *Affairs at Hampden Ferrers*. The cover is pretty cheerful and the contents are pretty cheerful too. There's a lot about love in it. All of which is because of the way in which my life has changed over the last five or so years, when I've been the subject of miracles — an evolution of mind and heart! I have ambitions to write about it, but dare not: good fortune is so often mistaken for hubris.

So I'll say something about this novel. It is the second in which I was consciously attempting a new mode of execution, investing or digesting the narrative into separate episodes, each of which has a dramatic point. This not only speeds the unfolding of the tale, it ensures, or is intended to ensure, the attention of the reader (in a way not available to the reader of, say, *The Day of the Triffids*).

I tried out this method extensively in *Super-State*, which covers most of Europe and beyond. *Affairs at Hampden Ferrers* descends the scale, confining itself to a small fictitious village. A third novel, *Sanity and the Lady* descends the scale of magnitude still further, dealing with one family and, specifically, one woman, Laura Broughton. This third novel has been written and should be published next year, in time for my eightieth birthday.

This trio is not SF, certainly not generic SF, though my SF ancestry is plain — in this current example by the long final debate about who or what runs the universe. I've gone off SF after some stupid treatment, plus a feeling that maybe SF in its original forms was a twentieth century phenomenon. SF's little sister, Fantasy, has grown up and bitten off her brother's head. I'm repackaging myself as a Surrealist. Some hope!

19 March 2004

brg My email reply in March 2004:

Thanks very much, Brian, for the email this morning ... and congratulations for that upcoming 80th birthday. I trust the celebrations will be tumultuous and roll through the night.

The Second Edition of the Tucker Issue was made urgent by Bob Tucker confiding that his heart is slowly and surely giving out, even as he approaches his 90th birthday. On the internet he is as chirpy as ever.

I had assumed you were still very busy. I see titbits in *Ansible* and elsewhere of you turning up at this or that conference, and your books keep coming out.

I enjoyed *Affairs at Hampden Ferrers* and *Sanity and the Lady* [and, later, *The Cretan Teat*] very much. They are filled with that quality I enjoy so much in all your best work — tenderness. It's more than sympathy; it's a real understanding of the dance of life. Unfortunately, nobody seems much interested in the dance of life these days, or in that special empathetic humour that's your trademark. Also, of course, you are known as an SF writer, so there must be people at Little Brown who scratch their heads every time they receive a manuscript for you. I'm just pleased that you can still publish a wide variety of work.

(I kept thinking of *The Brightfount Diaries* all the time I was reading *Hampden Ferrers* — after all these years there's still exactly the same quality of enjoying life for life's sake.)

The real trick is to find your books in shops in Australia, as I wrote last time. I can only estimate from the books that English fans mentioned in the Acnestis apa that we are receiving less than 5 per cent of the annual British fiction output, probably far less. And the stuff we do get usually seems bland to me.

Don't worry about PDFs for the time being. They are universal files, equally accessible from Mac and PC, produced by Adobe Acrobat. They have been a great boon to publishers of all types, because they offer a way of outputting files from any desktop publisher program and know that the person on the other end will be able to read the file exactly as it was created. For instance, I create all my pages in Ventura 4.1, an old program. It does exactly what I want it to do, but nobody in publishing runs Ventura, because a Mac version never appeared. But I take my PDF files into my printer, who churns out issues of *SFC*.

More importantly, just when I thought I would never work again, a client I hadn't heard from for three years suddenly rang me and offered a wide range of work. Which means I'm back to spending all my time on Paying Work, and have no time for the next *SFC*. I don't have any money yet, but I'm hoping that I can keep going by cutting the mailing list to those people who ask for print copies, and sending polite notes to others to download the magazine on efanzines.com.

Margaret Gee — now there's a name ... In 1978 I was scraping a living as a half-time assistant editor of a teachers' union magazine. I hated the job, if only because the union was the most rigidly hierarchical organisation I've ever worked for, and I was right at the bottom. Suddenly I had a phone call from a bloke called Morrie Schwartz. He was running Outback Press, which was famous for existing for some years on all those new Arts Council publishing grants that were handed out by the Whitlam Government. It didn't matter if the book itself made money; Outback Press always came out ahead. His production manager was Neil Conning, one of the most charismatic people ever to pop up in Melbourne publishing — sardonic and sympathetic at the same time, he was a person who told wonderful stories as we sat listening to them. Neil asked me to work on an impossible book: a textbook on alternative living which had been delivered only in pencilled notes! I was supposed to turn it into English, sentence by sentence. We gave up eventually, but not before Neil took me home for a drink and a conference about the book. And that's where I met Margaret Gee, who was also working for Outback Press. I don't remember a lot about her, except that she was very bright, efficient and enthusiastic. A few years later she moved to Sydney, formed Margaret Gee Publications, and seemed to do very well from publishing massive Guides to This and That. Her annual *Media Review* became a necessity for anyone who wanted to send out publicity. I've never met her again, mainly because she's been in Sydney since.

I would have thought that Malcolm Edwards had ascended on high to such an extent he had little to do

with choosing and publishing individual books. But the SF Masterworks series reads like a list of Malcolm's favourite books and authors, and that's why I regret he did not do *The Year of the Quiet Sun* and *The Lincoln Hunters*. The Tucker book that remains up to date is *Wild Talent* (1954, written in the shadow of the HUAC hearings). A superb book, which I read again recently.

Have fun at the Florida conference, and give my best wishes to those people who might remember me. The most surprising people turn out to have seen the latest issue of *SF Commentary*, or are on an internet list I'm on.*

AHRVID ENGHOLM
Renstiernas Gata 29, S-116 31 Stockholm, Sweden

For me, the writing of Merritt lacks merit. I've tried to read him, and have been able to — with the greatest of efforts — force my way through one book or so. His prose is for me extremely cumbersome, not because it's in English but because it's that typical early paid-by-the-word prose, full of adjectives and pointless rambling.

I noticed you had a LoC from Mats D. Linder. I met him recently on the 25th anniversary party of the fannish Alvar foundation in Stockholm, and we exchanged a few words about *SFC* (which Mats thinks is excellent, and he may send you a LoC himself).

brg Mats Linder tends to be very enthusiastic, yet does not stay in contact. I did send him the magazines I was publishing in 2004, and he was very enthusiastic, but he did not send money or even (in the end) a letter of comment.*

I notice Joe Nicholas confesses to hardly reading any sf any more (which probably goes not only for him). I can recognise that in a way, because also my sf reading goes up and down, even if it has never slipped away as much as not reading a skiffy book in a year. I guess the most has been a couple of months between the skiffy stuff. It is rare a week goes by without reading at least one book, and two to three sf books per week is rather normal for me.

Meanwhile I also read a lot of other stuff: magazines, things on the net (yeah!), non-fiction books, and in later years more and more mysteries. I've always been a little bit of a mystery fan (who didn't read the entire Sherlock Holmes series at the age of twelve?), but I have in later years come to read more and more of it. The last two to three years I have read something like 45 Rex Stout books; it only took be about one and a half books to become totally hooked on that fat detective Nero Wolfe. I think there are quite a lot of parallels between mysteries and sf (apart from both growing up in the same environment, in the popular press, and often being written by the same authors). I like whodunnits, and they make you think a lot, looking for details and clues, and in the end you can enjoy a rather intricate solution to the crime. They get your tiny little brain in high gear, just like at least the best sf. A very complicated, far-out whodunnit has much of science-fiction feeling.

People send you lists of their favourite books. I don't think I could really select the best books by my favourite authors, but I could try to give you a list of my favourite authors. The list will be incomplete, and I'll add some comments:

- Isaac Asimov, particulary the original Foundation trilogy and the robot short stories.
- Heinlein, everything but perhaps the two or three worst juveniles and a couple of those overlength books (...*Evil* and ...*Love*). I can't stand the politics in *Starship Troopers* (but I won't say it's badly written).
- Poul Anderson.
- Jack Vance.
- Ursula Le Guin.
- Tolkien. I re-read the trilogy recently; and if I mention him, I can get rid of any other fantasy author on this list (because most of them have copied Tolkien).
- Harry Harrison. He's among the few funny guys.
- Douglas Adams. Ditto.
- Philip K. Dick. He can turn almost anything upside down in the most beautiful way.
- Harlan Ellison. Nobody even comes near his intensity.
- Ray Bradbury. He is the really soft, emotional, elegant one.
- Clifford D. Simak.
- Frederik Pohl.
- Jules Verne. So, he's nineteenth century, but he's surprisingly good.
- Bertil Martensson. A Swedish one; I have to mention one, and he's the best of them.

But there are many, many more. I'm not too much into fantasy. And I don't think I've mentioned anyone from the last 15 to 20 years (of those, perhaps Bruce Sterling is the one) because I tend to dislike the new brand of excessively thick books that came with the word processor. A novel today is 400–500 pages, at least, and often 700–800, and there's a lot of extra text that shouldn't be there (because of WPs making writing so much faster).

Franz Rottensteiner's remarks about Stanislaw Lem were very interesting. I can only say that my impression becomes even stronger that Lem is a grumpy old man who think he is so important. I went to the Eurocon in Poland in 2000, and the Polish fans didn't have many kind words to say about their Big Name in the genre. Lem has locked himself in his castle, has no contacts with the outside world, doesn't give a damn and if he opens his mouth it's only to insult somebody.

Now, just recently a Swedish paper had an interview with Lem. (Those are very few these days.) The headline was 'The Creator of *Solaris* Thinks Science Fiction Is Rubbish'. For this, the latest *SFC* came in very handy. I have just written a comment to the paper, quoting a couple of things from *SFC* and Rottensteiner, telling about the SFWA–Lem feud and my impressions from Poland. I mean, Lem may think sf is rubbish — but don't forget that sf thinks Lem is rubbish too.

I don't know yet if they'll publish my answer/comment, but if so it is possible that *SF Commentary* and you are mentioned (and if so I'll somehow get you a copy of it). The newspaper was *Svenska Dagbladet* and their interview with Lem (because of the new *Solaris* film, no doubt) was

published 28 February.

17 June 2002

brg In a recent issue of *Steam Engine Time* I published George Zebrowski's piece in praise of Stanislaw Lem's work, as well as an obituary. Martin Morse Wooster has also sent me an obituary, for which I might have room in this issue or the next. It seems that the fame of Lem's work will outlast his reputation as a man. If only the early Lem novels had been translated properly into English; or now retranslated.*

RICK KENNETT
PO Box 118, Pascoe Vale South, VIC 3044

Here's an odd coincidence. At the moment I'm buying a Robert Bloch collection *Cold Chills* from N&A Smiles in WA via the ABE website. Before doing so I checked my Bloch bibliography to make sure I didn't already have its contents in other books on my shelves. The only duplicate was in the anthology *And Walk Now Gently Through the Fire,* edited by Roger Elwood. I got the book down off its high shelf to see if it was worth keeping (I'd probably bought it just for its Bloch story). It bears a City Limits sticker on its cover, which is the bookshop Paul Collins used to run in St Kilda, so maybe it's been on my shelves for quite a while, though I seem to recall buying this in a secondhand bookshop in Heidelberg. On the top righthand corner of the flyleaf in small writing I notice: 'Bruce R Gillespie GPO 5195AA Melbourne 28.2.73.' You've given scores to the contents, marking them with asterisks, from one star for Barry N. Malzberg's 'Making it Through' to four stars for 'Chronicles of a Comer' by K. M. O'Donnell.

16 October 2002

brg Justin Ackroyd, of Slow Glass Books, says that he could make a career of trawling secondhand shops for ex-copies from my library that bear my name and address, plus my scribbled marginal and end notes. I kept very few of the Roger Elwood collections that Barry Gillam bought for me in New York in the early 1970s, although I still own all the other original fiction anthologies that he sent me then. I'm surprised, though, that I sold a book containing a four-star story — and yes, I do realise that K. M. O'Donnell was a pseudonym for Barry Malzberg.*

In *SFC* 78 I enjoyed David Langford's piece on the genial Mr White. I've liked what few of the Hospital Station stories I've read — shamefully few — and this article has prompted me to search out more. Reading Matters in Smith Street, Collingwood will be one of my first stops. In the *Carnacki* piece I mention finding the work of Elliot O'Donnell in a ship's library in the middle of the Pacific. It was in this same library that I also first found one of White's 'Sector General' stories in an anthology. It was the one about the aliens that had to keep tumbling to keep their circulation going.

You mention taking your cat Theodore to a small animal ophthalmologist half way across Melbourne. This wouldn't be the one in East Malvern, would it? This is where I take my dog (the 'manic whippet' mentioned in my bio) to every six months to keep his on-going eye disease under control. That this eye vet is housed in what was once a butcher shop I find somewhat ironic.

8 February 2003

ED WEBBER
25 Kintyre Close, Hamlyn Terrace NSW 2259

Samuel Huntington's *The Coming Clash of Civilisations* is coming to pass — or fruition, as the case may be — in spite of *The Australian*'s Greg Sheridan's calling the thesis 'ridiculous' when he reviewed the book a few years back. I'd say it's definitely hard to tell fact from fancy, and all the more so now that Sheridan's taken to a Freudian approach to foreign affairs ('The Psychosis of Despising All Things American', *Australian*, 6 February).

I've offered to debate him, of course, even if knowing full well that he much prefers noted and accredited 'American experts' — surely a growth industry of late — to educated and unnoted ones.

What makes the Iraqi caper all the more interesting is that it's being sold as a battle between Good and Evil, with the corporate interests of the Bushes and Cheneys trying to stay in the background, along with the Bible Belt's decidedly metaphysical interest in a certain village just up the road from Tel Aviv by the name of Armageddon. The Good and Godly within the Beltway will survive said biblical cleansing, of course. And anybody who doesn't think so is obviously psychotic and in need of help from American missionaries, etc, etc.

It is a historical fact that all the socio-econo-political movements and/or events that ushered in the twentieth century were essentially secular and, more to the metaphysical point, that God has been fighting back ever since. Now, that's a pretty metaphysical way of mixing fact with fiction. It also makes one wish it really is all about oil and other opiates.

For that matter, given that all the monotheistic sects worship a male God, and/or use him to validate their parking tickets, it's been fairly obvious of late that Mother Nature is a mite pissed off at what's being done to the neighbourhood. But Sky Gods, like America's owners called major shareholders, are notoriously hard of hearing. As for its minor shareholders called citizens, they've yet to be told that their republic was superseded by the Corporate State some fifty years ago. Such nation-states are nothing new, of course, the problem being if and when their authority ostensibly comes from a supreme deity, as in 'God is my co-pilot'.

Like the Chinese saying has it, we do indeed live in interesting times.

6 February 2003

STEVE SNEYD
4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD5 8P8, England

Your locsmiths describe reorganising their books. Maybe I'm led to cattiness by envy at their having done this, mine being in accreting shambles wherein it gets ever harder to find what I'm looking for, but the impulse to tell the world you have carried out such a reorganisation seems oddly reminiscent of the way north of England housewives, in the days of supposed cheek by jowl

'community', made a fetish of holystoning their doorsteps as proof of respectability — a public assertion of virtue, in other words.

I was very intrigued to learn of a new Aldiss poetry collection — odd to discover this via Australia, but then this *is* globalisation time!

Last year I reread *The Stars My Destination*, aka *Tiger! Tiger!*, the first time in many years. It worked again surprisingly well for me — and the final 'democratisation' of weaponry: give the deadly stuff to everyone — has a lot of current resonances, with asymmetrical warfare and Bush by threatening nuke first use against nukeless states (echoed by our Defence Secretary Hoon), offering maximum incentives to every state without nukes to get them PDQ (I imagine South Africa's leaders in the dark of night have second thoughts about having given them up, and the leaders of Ukraine and Kazakhstan at having so tamely handed over their Soviet leftovers).

Mention of Irak: the onrush to war now seeming unstoppable: what Bush wants, Bush gets (as an aside, that our government's recent intelligence dossier has been plagiarised off a twelve-year-old PhD thesis and *Jane's Defense Weekly* articles, both found on the Net, is an elegant proof that cyberspace intertextuality is an unstoppable force — truly the 'death of the author' time) — with the likely concomitant that global conflict with Islam will be (re)established as ongoing reality. Islam in its early days was far more intellectually open than Western Christendom of the same era, tolerant of other faiths, scientifically exploratory, etc.; that in many areas it became so closed and dogmatic later has been argued to be a response to being constantly under Western attack, from the Crusades onward. (Though another thesis is that it is paralleling Christian development, but 600 years later — it has now reached the age at which Christianity became most appallingly intolerant, the Alibigensian Crusade–Inquisition era).

Which segues to the fact that mention of Tim Powers drew my eye to my copy of his *The Drawing of the Dark* among a pile of books (they get everywhere) in the kitchen. I'd found his *The Stress of Her Regard* powerful, enjoyed *The Anubis Gates*, but this one I've ground to a halt completely with: the totally gratuitous, non-plot-necessary anachronisms, cardboard characters, grating of modern American lingo, etc. However, it is a book that I suspect that if reprinted would sell very well at the moment in the States, as its essence is that Islam (in the form of the Ottoman sultan) is attacking Europe, specifically besieging Vienna, because it is under the control of demonic forces. That 'axis of evil' mentality, instead of trying to understand why the 'enemy' is doing what is being done (or ever admitting, in the Bushian case, that the most virulent enemies were initially wound up and set going, on the 'enemy's enemy' principle by the US itself — the 'Arab Afghans', including Bin Laden, to destroy a relatively modernising, women-liberating, but unacceptably pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan) is clearly right back in the driving seat.

The Hodgson piece reminded me of, a couple of years back, visiting Blackburn in Lancashire to find the house in which he lived for a time, and which had been claimed as inspiring *The House on the Borderland* — the house, to me, lacked any resemblance, but the gaunt high-roomed pub just down the road from it *did* seem a plausible inspiration. A few years ago, Ned Brooks's Purple Mouth Press published a drastically abridged version of *The Night Land* (now, I think, out of print), which would be an excellent way in, if reprinted, to the tome itself for those daunted by the size of the pukkah article. It was also a neat paradox that, in an SF art display in the town's art gallery, one of the illoes was of the House on the Borderland, but without any mention of Hodgson's connection to the town, which seems to be totally ignored — no blue plaque on the house; the Tourist Info office had never heard of him.

One book I must recommend, never having seen it reviewed — but a friend passed on last year — is an alternate twentieth-century history noir PI tale, Malcolm Pryce's *Aberystwyth Mon Amour* (Bloomsbury '01). In an independent Wales, some years after a war with Argentina to protect the Welsh in Patagonia, which has involved a massacre of civilians, the PI protagonist is hired by a nightclub singer to find her missing gangster cousin, and in the process uncovers the truth about that massacre, denial about which has distorted a whole society. Very funny, very dark, very suitable reading for a time when (so far pre-) war lies tsunami us.

8 February 2003

RAY WOOD
PO Box 188, Quorn, SA 5433

brg For years, Ray has been telling me about *The Hook Book*, which he has been developing with a friend: a book of the great 'hooks', the great first lines and paragraphs from the world's literature. I said that sf doesn't have many great first lines — most of the ones that stay in my mind were written by Cordwainer Smith — but it has some great first paragraphs (from stories by Aldiss, Dick, Disch and Le Guin come to mind, as well, as ever, Cordwainer Smith). The book is still unpublished.*

Thanks for your comments about narrative hooks. I did check all of Henry Handel Richardson's work for hooks, including *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. If I were to use a hook of hers it'd not be from the Proem to *Mahony*, but to chapter 1 of *Australia Felix*. The kind of narrative hook that in itself doesn't seem very powerful, but whose power becomes gradually more evident as the book develops, is really one that we can't deal with in *The Hook Book*. For example, part of the power of that burial image in the Richardson Proem arises from its use further on, such as when Mahony thinks:

> At this moment he was undergoing the sensations of one who, having taken shelter in what he thinks a light and flimsy structure, finds that it is built of the solidest stone. Worse still: that he has been walled up inside. (317)

or

> For there was nothing final about it: the blood roared in his ears, his pulses thudded like a ship's engines, the while he waited: for a roar fit to burst his eardrums; for the sky to topple and fall upon his

head, with a crash like that of splitting beams. (767)

The most crucial use of the burial image is when Lallie dies at Barambogie (Chiltern, in NE Victoria, where the cottage is still preserved today, though I wonder whether it survived the recent bushfires), and in agony Mahony grovels in the mud, and undergoes his mystical experience (pp. 737–41), the epiphany that reconciles him to the doom that he knows is coming upon him. (The use of the image throughout the work is summed up during this epiphany in 'Thus he dug into himself', 738.)

Which is a fascinating description of a mystical experience! Patrick White's only recorded mystical experience, one that he had just before Christmas Day 1951, at Dogwoods in the rain, is so similar to Mahony's. (White uses it in *The Tree of Man*, pp. 150–2, and in *The Eye of the Storm*, pp. 419–28, where Elizabeth Hunter undergoes the hurricane in a cellar; White talks about his epiphany in *Southerly* 1973/2, p. 138; and David Marr discusses it in his biography, *Patrick White: A Life*, pp. 281–2; White also discusses it in *Flaws in the Glass*, p. 144.)

For me, Mahony's and White's epiphanies provide us with one of the most extraordinarily serendipitous moments in Ozlit.

Anyway, the Proem hook isn't one we can use for this reason, that its power derives from its tentacular extensions throughout the entire novel. We're sticking to the self-contained kind of hooks.

When you mention that you were going to let us have a few hooks from SF, that'd be great, even if all you did was name the books for us, so we could go hunting for them. We do have a few from SF, but we certainly don't know the field as well as someone like you must. Yeah, our work on this book continues. Seems never-ending.

6 February 2003

Those page numbers I gave are to 1st UK editions in the case of Patrick White, and to the 1954 Heinemann edition of *Mahony*.

I don't know if you've read all of Richardson's work, but if you haven't, you might find her first novel, *Maurice Guest*, worth reading. The theme of all her novels is the same: what are artists' obligations to society, though specifically to their families? This had a deep impact upon her, because her mother had suffered so much to put her through Methodist Ladies College, and then to take her to Leipzig to train to be a concert pianist; only she discovered at the end of all that, that she suffered stage fright too badly for her to follow that career. *Maurice Guest* is set in Leipzig.

Unfortunately *Mahony* is an unfinished piece of business: it was originally meant to be a single novel which, it seems to me was to lead up to her major work, the life of Cuffy Mahony. But she got carried away by Richard's story instead. She did write 40 pages of that major work with Cuffy the central character, but I think she discovered she'd made a bad mistake in choosing to disguise herself as a boy, and that she couldn't make the boy come alive satisfactorily, as she would have a girl: Cuffy is so twee!

Anyway, *Maurice Guest* is a complete working through of her theme, unlike *Mahony*. Well, so is *The Young Cosima*, but that one is not as good. *Maurice Guest* has sort of always been unconsidered because *Mahony* is so good, and also because it's not set in Oz: it's a very European kind of novel (specifically influenced by the great Danish novelists of her time).

Patrick White's last major novel is his best work for me, *The Twyborn Affair*, though *The Aunt's Story* seems the one that most feel is his best, and I certainly love the middle part of it, the 'Jardin Exotique'. We have the hook to *The Aunt's Story* in our Selection at present.

I didn't say that about Aussie writers, only about Richardson. Every book ever written has a hook anyway, even if it's a book that starts off with the main narrative from its very first word, which is the more usual kind of hook you get in a thriller, for example. We have quite a few good hooks from Aussie writers. Look at the first para from Armanno Venero's 1999 novel, *Firehead*, for example:

> She used to sell her kisses for caramels; her lips went for long licks of licorice and her touch for tangerines and tutti-frutti. You could get her in the dark of your cardboard cubby-house or down into the cobwebby underworld of the dirt under your home, if you could find something sweet to offer her. The other kids would run by unseeing, with scabby knees and split soles in their bare dirty feet, and she'd let you sit with her in the musk of a quiet corner where a hundred times you'd been told not to go and you'd gone a thousand times. You could give her a Valencia orange to peel and as the juice ran down her chin she'd let you hold her knee for whatever promise your fourteen-year-old mind could find there; and if she was in a good mood and her chaotic family life was on a high that afternoon or night she'd let herself be held, and you could take the spicy citrus taste from her mouth and her pink firm tongue, and when you did you knew it for sure, neither she nor you would be fourteen again, and life never so easy.

Perhaps the alliterations at the start are a bit much, but it's pretty good.

And we have Aussie authors whose hooks are generally excellent, such as Ruth Park (Kiwi by birth, however). Her first para to her 1955 *Dear Hearts and Gentle People* is:

> I was born on an enchanted island. Like a green lizard it clings close and crooked to the underside of the world, and the seas around it are the colour of jasper.

(The lizard image reminds me of James McAuley's poem, 'New Guinea': 'Bird-shaped island, with secretive bird-voices ...') And there's her 1977 *Swords and Crowns and Rings*:

> In a red weeping dawn the child was born at last. His mother gave a long cry of such peculiar poignancy that her husband, drowsing in the front room, started out of his chair and knocked the French china clock to the floor. This seemed to him to be the last straw. Tears squirted into his eyes. The sleepless night, the awful anxiety of the day that had preceded it, the nightmarish dislocation of his routine, which

was all that kept his irritable nerves on an even keel, were summed up in this one sharp, irremediable smash. He knelt amongst the lustrous shards and blubbered.

18 February 2003

brg Movements and trends can be countered by 'true criticism', i.e. the honest reaction by individual writers to the work of people they read, unaffected by current critical cant. It is this sort of criticism that is pretty rare in Australia, but was the main feature of our science fiction journals in the 1960s and 1970s. I had rather thought that this was the sort of criticism you practised.*

Yeah, it *is* the kind that I like. Literary criticism I feel should be the sensitive reading of a story, and the drawing out of the structures and relationships within it. You hope that critics are able to see subtleties in stories that you yourself don't. And on a higher level, literary criticism should also draw out relationships with other stories by the same writer, and in addition by other writers. 'Across the centuries the poets talk from each to each', I think is what Dorothy Sayers says somewhere, and the same should be true of critics.

There's nothing wrong with elucidating the structures and relationships of a story, and similarities and differences between them and other stories. What is wrong is constructing large critical schematics, not that arise from within stories themselves, but from political, philosophical, religious, gender, economic, nationalistic, etc agendas, and then forcing stories to fit into them, and worse still, persuading or even forcing writers to work only within the parameters of such schematics.

It's so dangerous that a writer may be through his entire education moulded into the uniformity of such schematics not only by being instructed in them as if they're the only possible way to go, but also by being given only stories to read that also fit into those schematics. Which seems to be what's happening in our schools and universities today.

Is there really anything different in this than an actual Burning of Books? Or than an *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*? Isn't it nothing more than literary terrorism, critical fundamentalism? — the attempt to force an orthodoxy on writers under the threat of hijacking planes and flying them into our public libraries?

When I said that the proper relationship between critic and writer is that the critic is a parasite living off the writer, and that what's now happened is that the writer has become the parasite living off the critic, I didn't mean by using the word 'parasite' for the critic that that should put the critic down. All I mean is that the critic can exist only if literature exists, and not otherwise. But today instead we have these vast critical structures that can exist independently of literature, and that so many critics and teachers would like to force writers and their stories to live and work within.

The more insidious result of this critical fundamentalism is to choke off real, unfettered creativity. And the story itself is no longer what it should be — if I can put my own interpretation on Gertrude Stein's famous letterhead logo: 'A story is a story is a story is a story.'

Reading stories with a critical schematic of some kind or other already in your head , can only falsify them, can only lead you to misread them. And forcing them to fit into such schematics produces only readers capable of misreading everything. You simply can't any longer start reading a story with a totally open mind.

Teachers tailoring reading lists in schools and universities to conform with their critical schematics reminds me that fifty years ago you never talked about going to university to *study* or to *do* Arts, but that you went there to *read* Arts. And that was what you did back then — you simply read your way through the whole literary canon, and talked about those books in a civilised and cosmopolitan way. It was designed to produce that ideal figure, the 'universal person'. In a way it was designed to sensitise readers to books more than they were before they came to uni, to make better readers of them.

6 October 2005

GENE WOLFE
PO Box 69, Barrington IL 60011

SFC 78 arrived today. I owe you all sorts of thanks, of course, for running Jenny Blackford's lovely (although at times unreliable) review of *Return to the Whorl*. Jenny has read my books with far more attention and intelligence than they deserve.

If Stephen Campbell wrote me, I have forgotten his letter completely, and in all humility I can't believe I would. I've written him assuring him that his picture is greatly loved and ennobles my living room wall to this very day. It's a gorgeous picture, Bruce. You should see it!

So this is a small Valentine for the work and devotion with which you produce *SF Commentary*, I am indebted to you. All of us are.

14 February 2003

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER
PO Box 8093, Silver Spring, MD 20907

I run the 'local sf group' of which Patrick McGuire is a member, and must say that no less than three of our 12 members — Pat, Wendell Wagner, and myself — wrote letters to you. (Wendell found out about *SF Commentary* because I gave him my copy of issue 77 when I was finished with it.) Does the Silver Spring Science Fiction Society get a prize for this?

I was sorry to hear that you haven't left your state for over 20 years. I know you don't have much money, but haven't you ever wanted to travel more? I've never had much money, and haven't had a real job since 1988, but I somehow managed to get to Melbourne twice. (The second time was because of a grant from the Visa Foundation, otherwise known as the Fund for Getting Martin Wooster Into Debt.) Why don't you stand for DUFF or GUFF? *SF Commentary* is a far better credential than most DUFF winners have — and if any Australian should win DUFF, it should be you.

brg The Bring Bruce Bayside Fund did get me to America in 2005, and the nice people who run Conflux every year in Canberra enabled me to travel there in 2008. But I've always been nervous about running for a

fan fund because (a) I might lose; and (b) if I won, I would have to raise funds and administer the fund until the next race. Also, usually winners are sent to a major convention, often a worldcon, whereas the wonderful thing about the BBB Fund is that it enabled me to attend a Corflu (a fanzine fans' convention) and Potlatch (a readers' convention), each with about 100 attendees.*

I'm probably the only *SFC* reader who actually saw Thomas Disch's play *Ben-Hur*, which John Crowley mentions in his article. As far as I know, the only production the play had was at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore in the mid 1980s. I'm trying to remember details of the play, but the only scene that comes to mind was the chariot race. Instead of actually attempting to portray the race, actors stood behind wooden chariots and read the scene from Lew Wallace's novel! This was not terribly effective.

Good luck in selling your remaining Norstrilia Press titles. I have a signed copy of *In The Heart or in the Head*, which I bought at Aussiecon II. But I noticed that one book you have sold out of is Greg Egan's first novel. I suspect that this book is quite collectible. How did you manage to spot Egan's talents a decade before anyone else? Did anyone else publish Egan before you did?

19 February 2003

brg Greg Egan's first novel *An Unusual Angle* is a gem that turned up in the rather slushy slushpile. Rob, Carey and I were very proud of publishing it, but it made little impact in Australia. Greg then sent us the manuscripts of five huge novels and three books of short stories, about the time Norstrilia Press ceased operations. We did not know what to do with this intellectually brilliant, but fairly unpublishable material. I suggested to Greg that he sell his stories to overseas magazines, as a way of finding a British or American publisher for his novels. Which he did. He won Best Story of the Year after *Interzone* began publishing his stories, which led to a contract for what most people remember as his first novel, *Quarantine*.*

DAVID CAKE
6 Florence Road, Nedlands WA 6009

Thomas Bull is from Western Australia, but left there some time ago, so I don't think he is that new an arrival in Melbourne. Thomas is a very quiet shy man, but I think people should know he was made a life member of UniSFA (the University of Western Australia SF club) for his generosity, as I am sure it's not something he will volunteer.

On the Ditmar Fan Awards, I have to say my anticipation of what would happen was more in line with the results than yours. Bias in voting on a state basis is a real issue in the Ditmars — I personally think it is strong enough that it's undermining what credibility they have a little. Accordingly, I was not surprised that *SFC* beat *Fables and Reflections* — both are fine candidates, but the difference between the Perth- and Melbourne-hosted conventions was plain in the winners. Not that I am implying either is better! I'd just rather even it out somehow. Grant Watson's tendency for Ditmar feast or famine based on site of Natcon, for example, is a bit embarrasing to the Ditmars, as well as him.

You were unfamiliar with a number of nominees for various categories. Cat Sparks can probably tell you how to get copies of the three *Mitch* anthologies. They are short fiction anthologies released over the last few years. Mitch is the publisher (not the editor; Cat edited). He much prefers to be known as Mitch (or often Mitch?, with question mark) rather than by his full name. Oddly, while a Melbourne resident, he is far better known in Perth fandom, often appearing as a high-profile double act with Danny Heap. I can understand your ignorance — the anthologies were launched at Swancon, seem somewhat Perth biased for an east coast production, and probably have not been widely promoted. They also contain art by Cat Sparks (now online at her website, www.catsparks.net), and writing by Deborah Biancotti, among others.

Consensual was an anthology of erotic fiction, conceived at one Swancon and launched at another. Its genesis was as a response to Grant Stone, who was trying hard to describe a writers (Seans W.'s?) 'meteoric' rise and continually saying 'meaty erotic' instead. Stephen Dedman, his wife Elaine, and Cathy Cupitt are the culprits.

JB Resurrection was a fannish spoof video mostly of *James Bond*-style action. Its very much a zero budget production filled with many dubious in jokes. Cat Sparks adds acting to her other talents, but will probably not be winning awards for it!

I was glad to see Cat win the award, which is well deserved and goes to a great person. I agree with her it would have been good to see a fuller ballot though! I was hoping to see Lily Chrywenstrom on the ballot, and I believe she would have been if not for a few Perth ballots reaching Marc Ortlieb a day or so late.

Count me among those amazed to discover you had actually left Melbourne briefly in 2002. There is some hope to get you to a Swancon one of these years then!

I'm still interested in doing reviews for you sometime. My review of Sean Williams *The Stone Mage and the Sea* is up on eidolon.net if you want a sample.

I also find myself part of the editorial committee of the new magazine *Borderlands*, formed from the remnants of the *Eidolon* committee. Should be interesting.

6 February 2003

brg Because of poor distribution, most of these items are now unobtainable. Even *Borderlands* has folded. However, Cat Sparks has gone on from being a notable small press publisher in Australia (Agog Press) to writing a number of distinguished short stories. I'm told she is working on a novel, and unfortunately has closed the press. But small presses do have a limited life, as they rarely pay salaries to anybody.*

DAVID LANGFORD
94 London Road, Reading, Berks RG1 5AU, England

Maps: The Uncollected John Sladek finally became available in August 2002 and has been getting good reviews, very gratifyingly for editor Langford and for John Sladek's widow Sandy. The big critical collection, though delivered

to Cosmos in October 2001, didn't actually reach the PDF proof stage until the very end of 2002 — whereupon, rather than struggle with all the systematic format errors that had crept in along the line, I volunteered to produce my own corrected PDF right here in the barn. This was rapturously approved by the overworked Cosmos editor, and the book is scheduled for Real Soon Now, with a year's extra coverage and 100 rather than 95 pieces: *Up Through an Empty House of Stars: Essays and Reviews 1980–2002*, including my review for *Steam Engine Time* ...

Now (again for Cosmos) I'm finalising a much expanded collection of Langford sf parody and pastiche, incorporating the 1988 *The Dragonhiker's Guide to Battlefield Covenant at Dune's Edge: Odyssey Two* and tentatively titled *He Do The Time Police In Different Voices*. After that, a big collection of my serious or at any rate nonparodic stories. Make the readers suffer, that's what I say.

I don't know whether it's more dismaying to produce a newsletter like *Ansible* and record new deaths in the sf field every single month, or to have to catch up on great swathes of mortality at majestic intervals as in *SFC*. You do the latter very well. Gloomy times.

8 February 2003

My sense of what ought to go into ther John Sladek collection *Maps* somehow drew the line at reviewing and criticism, except when autobiographical (final section) or couched as parody ('The Entropy Tango'). Another interesting piece which I decided not to include is 'Science Fiction and Pseudoscience', transcribing a speech delivered to the 1972 UK Eastercon when John was deep in research for *The New Apocrypha*.

26 February 2003

Joseph Nicholas's little rant about the late Chris Boyce in the *SFC* 78 letter column sent me back to the reference shelf. Brian Aldiss did not 'assault' Boyce in either the first or the second *SF Horizons*, respectively dated Spring 1964 and Winter 1965 (there were no further issues). This is unsurprising, since Boyce's sole published story at that time was in the non-genre *Storyteller* (1964). He wasn't visible on the British SF scene until his three appearances in *SF Impulse* in 1966 and 1967, and even then was hardly a large enough target to merit the Aldiss wrath.

The specific writers whom Brian Aldiss actually did carve up in *SFH* were Donald Malcolm, Lan Wright and Jack Williamson. I suppose Malcolm is the likeliest candidate for being confused by Joseph with Boyce, both being Scots associated with magazines from the E. J. Carnell stable (*New Worlds* in Malcolm's case).

Chris Boyce went on to become joint winner of a UK SF competition with his first novel *Catchworld* (1975), described by John Clute in the SFE as 'an ornate, sometimes overcomplicated tale combining sophisticated brain-computer interfaces [...] and SPACE OPERA; the transcendental bravura of the book's climax is memorable.' Joseph's implied chronology suggests that *Catchworld* was universally panned: 'still no fucking good, and the reviewers told him so.' Contrariwise, the first contemporary review that comes to hand here is by Brian Stableford — no mollycoddler — in *Foundation* 10, who, despite certain philosophical reservations, concluded: 'It is a wonderful adventure among ideas, beautifully written.'

Boyce's less ambitious *Brainfix* (1980) received a positive notice in the BSFA's *Paperback Inferno*, edited by Joseph Nicholas, who did not write that review, but in another issue of the same fanzine praised Boyce's nonfiction *Extraterrestrial Encounter* (1979) for the author's 'enormous zest and relish ... good stuff'.

Since Joseph now remembers Chris Boyce — who died in 1999 — solely as a 'bad writer' who needed to be 'stamped on immediately', and whose return to fiction ten years after being allegedly demolished by Aldiss showed him to be 'still no fucking good', I can't help wondering whether the intricate convolutions of Nicholasoid memory might have mixed up more than just the contents of *SF Horizons*?

18 March 2003

ARTHUR D. HLAVATY
206 Valentine Street, Yonkers NY 10704

Did you ever manage to get through to my LiveJournal blog? I'll be putting this plug in it:

> Science-fiction fandom makes it possible to have long-term friendships with people one has never been in the same room with. Mine with Bruce Gillespie has lasted over a quarter of a century. Today the friendship was renewed by the arrival of the 78th issue of *SF Commentary*, an 80-page zine (on large Australian-size paper) that discusses SF as well as it is discussed anywhere. Highlights include a John Crowley article on Thomas Disch's gothic novels and discussions of the two Australians who are doing some of the most fascinating work in the field today: Greg Egan and Damien Broderick. His editorial column is called 'I Must Be Talking to My Friends.' The combination of homage and pun inspired me to use that for my first entry here.
>
> 11 February 2003

brg And thanks very much. Every now and again people tell me they've mentioned Gillespiezines on their blogs, but since I rarely have the opportunity to look at blogs and websites, I miss reading all that egoboo.*

TIM MARION
c/o Kleinbard, 266 East Broadway, Apt 1201B, New York NY 10002

I appreciated all the photographs. I guess it's representative of what a misanthropist (or misfanthropist?) I have become in that I enjoyed the pictures of the cats a lot more than the pictures of the fans, no offence intended. I also enjoyed the more detailed write-up about Oscar and Theodore. How horrifying to read about the broken tube that the vet used on Theodor's penis! We enjoy our cats so much, and have so many good times with them; it's too bad that sometimes their passing turns into such a horrible ordeal for us.

I also liked what you said about Michael Waite and me, and appreciated what you said about us 'adopting' Australian fandom. That's certainly apt to an extent. I

very much appreciate my Australian friends, for whom I have, in a way, Michael Waite to thank (who put me in touch with Ditmar, who put me in touch with you guys and Bill Wright). I would seriously entertain the idea of joining ANZAPA, but I'm not really even handling SAPS and FAPA right now.

What I have read right off, Bruce, aside from 95 per cent of your own writing, was Rick Kennett's excellent article about William Hope Hodgson's *Carnacki the Ghost-Finder*, one of the original ghostbusters. It was a lot of fun reading this article and reminding myself of the Carnacki stories. Certain details Kennett described have eluded my memory, such as the amount of or type of scientific paraphernalia that Carnacki brought into his supernatural investigations.

I discovered the wonderful weird world of *Carnacki* in 1975 as well. Being a media fan, back in the mid 70s I was particular enamoured of British TV, which was broadcast over here on the so-called 'educational' network, PBS (Public Broadcasting). One show that the local Channel 13 offered was *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*. This show featured Victorian detectives other than Sherlock Holmes as protagonists. The stories were almost always well-done, intelligent adaptations; never anything run of the mill or formulaic. Some of the stories featured adventurers who were really charming (and sometimes not-so-charming) rogues, who either got the better of the authorities or an even more despicable rogue. The Carnacki story featured on this show was the one about the ghost horse, and was one of the few genuinely, truly scary ghost stories I have seen on TV.

A year later, I was a year further along into my teens and spent more time travelling to conventions than watching TV. I left Newport News, Virginia, and travelled over 200 miles north one weekend to Maryland, where I attended both a comics convention and a new science fiction regional convention (UniCon, held by a local college crew) in the same weekend, at nearby hotels. At the comics convention, North Carolina fan Brian Lockhart and I ran into Chuck Miller, who was then a budding art and book dealer, and would soon become a well-known small-press publisher. Chuck had just acquired a huge lot of British paperbacks, and when he heard the two of us were going to UniCon, he offered to pay us to set up a dealers' table for him there while he sold comics at the comics convention.

Making myself familiar with the inventory, of course I couldn't help but purchase for myself some of the books. Although I had already read my copy of Poul Anderson's *The Broken Sword* with the George Barr cover, I found myself fascinated with the British paperback edition and the Patrick Woodroffe cover. Another book I bought was the *Carnacki* book that Kennett mentions. Was that ever an exciting read! That volume is highly recommended as the very scariest ghost stories I have ever read!

Although I went to that UniCon with little more than the clothes on my back, I had, in my opinion, an exciting time and a run of good luck. I actually got paid to attend, and found one of my most exciting reading adventures. William Hope Hodgson has definitely become one of my favorite writers ... which doesn't necessarily mean every single thing he's had written and published is really worth reading, unfortunately. 14 February 2003

MATTHEW DAVIS
15 Impney Close, Church Hill North,
Redditch B98 9LZ, UK

SFC was a surprising and refreshing arrival. Admittedly I'm having to cram up on Stephen Spender at the moment, so gouging my eyes out with a rusty spoon would also make for a refreshing and gratifying change of pace. But *SFC* is quite an achievement — you manage to incorporate a wealth of lit. and critical material supported and amplified by a well-developed mein-host atmosphere wholly your own, so there is a real feeling of intelligent and personable fellowship of expression without straying into tweeness or incrowdiness. *SFC*, in its contributions by yourself and others as essayists and correspondents, creates a sense of the reader's life in books and of books in their place in everyday life, so that there is a true and equitable sense of relations between the two fields, and how they feed and bolster each other. I eagerly await the next issue. Or maybe you have back issues available? Let me know what the cost might be.

So yes, I would very much like to go on your *SFC* mailing list. I did mention to Disch sometime after the New Year about his Sladek memoir. I'm not sure whether he has a copy himself, or whether it maybe that a copy will have to come from Yale. However, Disch did also mention maybe passing along to you some poems he'd written in response to reading Crowley's *The Translator*.

If I can find the time I shall see if I can't maybe write something for you. I have some quite detailed notes on Howard Waldrop and R. A. Lafferty from over the last few years, but my major concern is starting on Cyril Connolly. Or rather, finding things which I can defensibly use to prevent myself from having to start on Cyril Connolly (100,000 words head first into a bucket holding nothing more than a damp flannel to my forehead for protection). My bright idea for the moment regarding procrastination is a long essay about two largely forgotten mid-twentieth century writers, Gerald Kersh and Julian Maclaren-Ross, to work out certain writing muscles (detailed compare&contrast) I haven't used since uni. A lengthy analysis of short fiction about WWII and novels about Soho would fall very far of *SFC*'s remit I think.

15 February 2003

When it comes to reading up on twentieth-century fiction I probably have the ideal job, since my library is the fiction reserve for the entire county, and has most of the output of any English author you can think of who was publishing up to the late sixties.

Kersh and Maclaren-Ross were both well-known short story writers in the 40s, the last period when the short story was a truly popular form (Roald Dahl and Nigel 'Quatermass' Kneale were also writers who rode the tail-end of this dying lightbulb-like brief burst of popularity). They were also big personalities in Soho, which is slightly to their detriment now, since their work is now almost entirely out of print, with no discussion of the worth of that work, so the only mention of them is as being characters for various London bores to trot out in their London bores' essays and memoirs rhapsodising/droning on about how exciting and exotic Soho used to be. Indeed, many of the writers who came into their

strengths in the forties have been mostly wiped from literary history: the writers of the twenties and thirties were coming into their prime, while the writers of the fifties, from Amis to Osborne, were largely in revolt against those writers who appeared in the forties, so writers like Maclaren-Ross and Kersh, besides having various personal problems, were being squeezed by the generations above and below. Angus Wilson for 30–40 years looked as though he would survive for posterity, but try looking for his works now or see if you can find anyone reading or writing about them now.

Kersh is known in SF for some of his horror- and SF-tinged short stories, but his best work is his novels about struggling to survive in London: *Night and the City*, *Fowlers End*, *Song of the Flea* and an historical biblical novel. He gained much notice in the 1940s writing short stories and novels about his time in the Coldstream Guards. His style is rather over-emphatic, grab-you-by-the-lapels sort of stuff, which he could energetically and enthrallingly churn out by the yard (Harlan Ellison is understandably a big fan). I think he certainly deserves revival, even if he isn't wholly to my taste, since he has some of the reverse snobbism of the overtly commercial writer (whereas I have definite opinions about where I like my snobbishness to come from: big houses and nice cutlery are a must).

Maclaren-Ross also came to notice writing short stories about his time in the army in the forties: spare, laconic stories with sharp humour and characterisation. He wrote one great novel in 1947 — *Of Love and Hunger* — about adultery and door-to-door vacuum-cleaner salesmen in the 1930s, but he then spent most of the next fifteen years living hand to mouth, surviving off the hundreds of reviews he wrote for numerous papers, with little time to do much else beside become his own character in the bars of Soho, and occasionally novelise the thrillers he wrote for BBC Radio. His last book was his incomplete posthumous *Memoirs of the 40s*, which was a return to his strengths: a distanced yet often hilarious account of the struggling artist set in wartime London, with appearances by Connolly, Grahame Greene, Dylan Thomas and numerous others; think of Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, but without any of the bitterness, holding of grudges and maudlin quality. *Of Love* has recently been republished by Penguin, and *Memoirs* isn't in print at the moment, but it has been reprinted quite a few times.

16 February 2003

brg Matthew has become a contributor to *Steam Engine Time* since we first exchanged emails. His latest work, a brilliant 35,000-word overview of the life and work of Theodore Sturgeon, is scheduled for *Steam Engine Time* 14, which will appear after the current vast *SFC* project.*

BILL BURNS
23 Kensington Court, Hempstead NY 11550- 2125

We could only dream of such professional quality when we started publishing. My friend Harry was a printer, so we worked with all sorts of technologies, but on the cheap, as no-one had any spare cash in England in the sixties. When I met him, Harry had a hand-cranked Gestetner, but we moved on from there! We did one issue of an Eastercon progress report in letterpress, set by hand and printed on a treadle-powered sheet-fed machine that was about 80 years old. We didn't have too much of any one font, so each paragraph was set in a different typeface.

Then we bought a (very) used Multilith 1250, which we ran out of Harry's garage, and a UV platemaker, and starting litho printing. The problem was always typesetting: commercial services were very expensive, and the only alternative was to use a Varityper, which we had on permanent loan from Liverpool fan John Roles. Of course that meant typing every line twice to justify it, then the printed copy had to be filmed and the plates made. For colour covers, we couldn't afford separations, so Eddie Jones did his artwork for us in four copies, one for each colour, which we then printed. Eventually we could afford filmsetting, and after I moved to the States in 1971 Harry ran a full-time printing business with Chuck Partington. He never made any real money at it, though, but he was able to produce some nice issues of his magazines on the fantastic film.

Those were fun times. It almost seems too easy now, but then you look at magazines like *SFC* and realise it's worth it. The all-electronic distribution is tempting, though, when you consider the cost just of mailing paper zines, and I'm very happy with the way Earl Kemp's *eI* has been turning out. I don't think he or I could keep up the quarterly schedule if the magazine had to be produced on paper.

On a related note, I recently acquired one of the earliest pieces of duplicating technology — an Edison electric pen. Invented in 1876, before the typewriter came into common use, the pen was used to perforate stencils, which were then printed in a flatbed press. Edison eventually sold his technology to A. B. Dick, who started the duplicating industry in America.

Pictures of the pen are here: http://electricpen.ftldesign.com/ — the more info link at the bottom of the page tells how it worked, and the Early Office Museum site has an excellent history of duplicating.

Moshe Feder wants to do a one-shot using the pen, but I haven't plugged it in yet!

16 February 2003

brg You've never seen examples of the *SF Commentary*s from the first thirty years of its existence. Starting with No 1, one of the worst-duplicated first issues ever produced, it achieved moderate readability in the early seventies. Running a duplicator taught me to swear. I never did achieve that magic control of a duplicator that one finds in the work of, say, John Bangsund or Mike Glicksohn during the same period. For four years at the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties I had access to an IBM Electronic Composer (a sophisticated typewriter with 5000 kb of volatile memory, which used golfball type faces, like an IBM Selectric typewriter, and variable fonts and letter widths, like a Varityper) so I published Nos 76–82 offset. I returned to the Roneo duplicator until the early 1990s, when for the first time I had access to a computer and Ventura software.

I'd never heard of the electric pen.*

Neither had the eBay seller, fortunately for me! I have quite a collection of old technology, but this is my find of

a lifetime, as there are only about 15 known to exist, and only five or six outside museums.

17 February 2003

RON CLARKE
95 Southee Court, Oakhurst, NSW 2761

Thanks for sending me *SF Commentary* 78 and **brg** 33. The photos of Somerset Place remind me of the super-8 movie I took of the place when the 1966 Melcon was held there. I transferred it to video (by playing it on a wall and videotaping it). Thank god I did. About four years ago someone broke into many garages in my flats, including mine, and took some boxes — one of which included my super-8 films, which included the Melcon one, and those of my overseas trip overland to Europe (again something I had transferred to video. Though not great quality, at least they are watchable.)

The Jenssen cover is striking, and it is pretty obvious that there is symbolism in it: one of the pointers is that there are few objects in it, really.

I met Wynne Whiteford, I think for the first time, at the first Syncon at Epping in 1970. I too first read his stories in *New Worlds* — and remember reading the page you feature on page 8 (another Australian SF writer of the period was David Rome — I don't know what happened to him).

I have read, and found fascinating, Greg Egan's *Schild's Ladder*. He writes right on the edge of the physics I can grasp, and keeps alive that Sense of Wonder.

The Ship of Ishtar: yes, I also read this book when I was in my first thrill of reading SF — which lasted through my teens, and I have the edition that is illustrated in the article. I agree with all that Jenssen says: the prose may be purple (or not, as he says) but the magic is *definitely* there. And there *is* magic in the writing. It has been decades since I read it — maybe I should again. But one needs Time!! Even being retired does not help.

James White's Sector General: I have the paperbacks that David Langford mentions, but again, it has been decades since I read them. I also first read the stories when they were first published in *New Writings*; but were not some also published in *New Worlds*? I seem to remember a cover or two of the Hospital from outside.

The Mentor is sleeping at the moment. I recently re-married (a long story), and I don't have the enthusiasm at the moment to continue to publish it. Since next issue is No 97, no doubt someday there will be four more at least, to reach three figures. I still to go the local Southern Sydney Fiction Group (which Graham Stone also attends) but the only zine I publish is *Watts Out*, which is basically a book-mention list (a couple of paragraphs about each book) as I find that buying pbs at $20 each a bit much.

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER
Marchettigasse 9/17,A-1060 Wien, Austria

The Soderbergh *Solaris* seems to be a complete flop, there was very little about it in the press here, and most of it was rather mixed. Yes, the film led to a few reprints, such as the first US SFBC edition of Lem ever (but only as a trade paperback), but I doubt that it will influence the sales of other Lem titles, which were always mostly nonexistent, while *Solaris* was a middling success (Harcourt sold some 20,000 paperbacks, Faber & Faber had three paperback editions, but most sales were in the export market, not in England). Lem has declared that he is not going to look at the film, and that he only reluctantly allowed it (although you may bet that he was panting after the money).

Iraq seems to become an ever greater tragedy, but until the USA has really substantial losses, public opinion will support Bush, no matter how many civilians his 'intelligent bombs' kill. But I am prepared to bet that a dead Saddam will do as much harm if not more to the US cause than a living one.

27 March 2003

SKEL
122 Mile End Lane, Stockport,
Cheshire SK2 6BY, England

Australia Day here at the Skelhouse. Chicken with black bean sauce for dinner. Yeah, yeah, I know that's not particularly Australian, but I did wash it down with the back end of a couple of Australian bottles. Wasn't a terribly good CinBBS either, but then it was a 'Good for You (less than 5% fat)' package. Less than 5% taste too, but we have to make our sacrifices where we can. If we have to make sacrifices (and apparently I do) then I'd rather make them on the food front than on the drinks front. Food is so much more lethal. Packet of crisps? Please sign this waiver. Biscuit? Hah! Die now and save us the trouble. There's no parking space available at work so I have to commute by bus and I used to consume a packet of mints every day on the bus going to work and back until Cas pointed out that this was, at an estimated 10 calories per mint a good 1000 calories each week, or more specifically the equivalent of two bottles of wine. Medical advice is that I should cut down on my calories, and since I prefer to drink two bottles of wine rather than eat five packets of mints I have only eaten one mint in the last 18 months. I'm also trying to cut down on my fat intake (and am doing pretty good, see earlier in paragraph). Anything (other than not drinking) to try and prevent me from becoming the next late-brg-zine-recipient. So today, with the CinBBS I finished off the remnants of a bottle of Jindalee Cabernet Sauvignon ('Murray Darling' it says on the label, which might be a geographical address, or might be part of a line from a sitcom 'Murray, Darling, have you seen my diaphragm?') and also the dregs of a bottle of Rosemount Estate Grenache Shiraz (significantly better in my never humble opinion).

I mention all this simply to establish topicality.

I also started to read *SFC*, which arrived during the week whilst I was working away from home in Bradford. This is not the considered response. This is just to let you know that I've got it. I noted though that various fans seem to get *SFC* delivered late at night. Meredith McArdle wrote that she 'staggered in after midnight' to be confronted with it, whilst Andy Sawyer wrote that it 'was waiting for me when I got home Tuesday night'.

Now I don't know what sort of stuff these people are reading, but when I read that something was 'waiting for

me when I got home' I know immediately that whatever it was that was waiting for me is going to jump out and attack me, eat me, and then crawl away to become ever more fearsome and eventually threaten the entire world. An issue of *SFC* is already big enough to do all that, so instead of complaining about the relative infrequency of issues maybe we should be giving thanks that you don't publish more often!

Hopefully a more considered response will follow, but I just wanted you to know that *SFC* 78 had made it here.

23 February 2003

PETER WESTON
53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield,
West Midlands B74 2PS, England

You might be amused to know that my copy of *SFC* 78 (along with the preceding number 77) travelled across the Atlantic and back with me last weekend, when I went to Boskone. I thought that the plane journey would be a good chance to catch up on my reading, and that it would get me into a suitably fannish mood for the con.

As it was, I only finished 77; didn't get into 78. There's a lot of reading in there!

That said, I'm a little bit worried about the direction you've been taking. I mean, I know you feel guilty about all those review copies that have piled up, but is it worth wrecking your fanzine in order to give them nominal coverage? Here you are, devoting page after page to fairly short reviews of books which most of us have read anyway, and even if we haven't, the total difference to publishers' sales that reviews in a fanzine will make is negligible. So here you are, spending a small fortune to mention all this stuff, and in the process making the fanzine less interesting (in my opinion) than it could be.

Speaking only for myself, I'd like to see a smaller number of longer pieces, along with lots of reader reaction, which is often the best bit of sercon fanzines (because it gives the chance for a greater diversity of opinions to emerge).

Somewhere in there you mention the idea of doing smaller, more frequent issues, and this reminds me of the Good Old Days with *Speculation*, when I got totally bogged down with some biggish issues (around 15, 16, 17), which took many months to produce, and I decided to set a limit of just 28 pages in the hope of getting them out every two months. It worked for a time, too; was much less demanding, made me really think about what I wanted to put in, and was popular with readers. Trouble is, that plan tends to create the seeds of its own destruction, because a more regular fanzine encourages contributors to send material, and in the end I gave way to temptation and let the thing grow again. But it was a useful discipline, and you might want to apply the principle — like I say, cut out the short 'obligation' reviews.

This is not a LoC, just a note of appreciation and admiration for your staying power. It's also a sobering thought that, judging by the photographs therein, I wouldn't recognise you now if you walked past me in the street! Whereas I, myself, have not changed at all, of course. (See attached, taken at Christmas with my daughter's in-laws.)

I've been re-reading some issues of *Speculation* for the first time in many years, in preparation for a major writing project I'm doing for Noreascon. I have to say that it's a bit embarrassing to look back on some of the things I wrote back then. I tend now to think that I shouldn't have tried to do a serious fanzine about science fiction, because I was clearly out of my depth, as were some of my contributors, particularly in the earlier days. Of course, standards are a great deal higher now, and I suppose I was something of a pioneer, then, but even so I wonder how I had the nerve to do it. Somehow, *ASFR* managed to operate on a higher level, which you long since reached yourself with *SFC*.

Anyway, I promise I won't wait until next Boskone before tackling Number 78.

24 February 2003

brg Since 2003 you've moved house. Your fannish autobiography has appeared. You have returned to fanzine editing, with brilliant success (*Prolapse*, which turned into *Relapse*). You were a good friend during my stay in San Francisco in 2005. And I followed your suggestions, and produced a fanzine of longer pieces about science fiction (*Steam Engine Time*). But *SF Commentary* remains my home for shorter reviews, which have developed into a landslide inside my computer. I was doubtful about their usefulness until recently I went through earlier *SFC*s featuring columns of short reviews. They become more interesting as the years go by. In some cases they show the prophetic perception of the reviewer (for instance, Dave Langford's columns in the '90s), and in other cases the books reviewed pick up interest through the accretion of time (see especially Colin Steele's columns; often he seems to receive review copies of volumes, both fiction and nonfiction, unsighted by SF readers here or in the rest of the civilised world).*

NIGEL ROWE
431 S. Dearborn, Apt 402, Chicago, IL 60605

Many thanks for your tribute to John Foyster. It brought home the many things he was responsible for, that had drifted out of my immediate memory. Yesterday I spent some time rereading all his recent *eFnac*s, and later I'm going to organise his published zines in a more purposeful manner so I can revisit them as well, especially his updated GUFF report.

His passing is a huge loss to everyone who knew him and I hope you'll pass along my sympathies to Yvonne — someone I've never met unfortunately. I hadn't seen John in person since at least 1989, and I'm extremely disappointed I won't get to see him again. He invited me to be a part of the Aussiecon 3 fan history program, but I couldn't attend the con due to a later trip to NZ that same year. We definitely shared a common love of fan history, and I enjoyed reading the materials he had assembled towards his goal of a new Australian fan history.

I have taken the liberty on forwarding on everything to Tom Cardy, Frank Macskasy, Tim Jones and Mervyn Barrett (who I'm sure is on your list as well) in NZ.

7 April 2003

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

I feel deeply chagrined to find my ambivalent review of O'Leary's *The Impossible Bird* sitting in the same issue of *SFC* as a letter of comment from the author. And yet I do find it a problematic book on several counts.

Rather too many parenthesised asides in my short take on Adam Roberts' *Stone*, I feel, reading it over again. They suggest that I was still working out my thoughts on this as I was writing, and I admit this is fair comment, since I tend to approach writing about books in apas in just that way, as a means of arguing my feelings about a work in print and in front of people I know and trust not to instantly flame me for being wrongheaded or missing the point.

I was slightly wrong on one point, I discovered at Eastercon. The third of Gwyneth Jones' books in the 'Dissolution' trilogy (not the official name, I know, but it helps to have a tag) doesn't use the full title of the Hendrix song from which it's taken, but shortens it to *Midnight Lamp*. I saw a cover proof for this in the bar. The cover artist, Anne Sudworth, who was sitting with us, hadn't even seen a copy of the proof cover (or the fluttering English flag someone in the publicity department had Photoshopped onto the original painting.)

News from Eastercon. Tony Cullen phoned last night, just after we had arrived home, with news that Christopher Priest's *The Separation* had won the BSFA Award for Best Novel. Apparently a very close decision (one vote) from M. John Harrison's *Light*. These were also the two books that caused a split vote in the Eastercon 'Not the Clarke Awards' panel, but in the end we went the other way. They are both terrific books that will wrap your brain in knots — as both authors quite cheerfully admitted was their intention, to mentally unseat you and make you question every interpretation of the text.

Interesting to re-read those several reviews of Egan's *Schild's Ladder* in *SFC* 78, as I just have. Although the SF concept of the expanding 'novo-vacuum space' is the big SF device of the book, the scene that keeps coming back to my mind is the one on which the central metaphor and the title is based, that unsettling question of 'If I change, how will I know I will still be me, and remember who I was?'

In a different context this is also the central idea of Lou, the autistic protagonist/hero in Elizabeth Moon's *The Speed of Dark*, one of this year's Clarke Award shortlisters. It's an interesting novel. Unfortunately there are rather too many POV inconsistencies, where Moon seems to forget the distinction between writer and narrator (particularly in her use of metaphor) and her need to portray the nearly affectless Lou as heroic forces her to reduce the roles of those around him almost the the point of caricature (the supportive fencing teacher, the ambituous, resentful boss at Lou's workplace). It's a good book, but it could have been much more.

Discussing Wolfe's *Return to the Whorl*, Jenny Blackford writes, 'There is an online community of terrifyingly intelligent and literate people who discuss Wolfe with obsessive tenacity.' I'm afraid that this rather puts me off. It elevates reading Wolfe to some sort of MENSA test, with the implication that they cannot possibly be understood or enjoyed by anyone not in the top 1 or 2 per cent. It's not why I read books.

Damn, up to a few weeks ago there was a spare copy of the Big Engine edition of Langford's *The Leaky Establishment* in one the BSFA reviews boxes that went up to the tombola at Eastercon. Had I known. I'm miffed because I was particularly looking forward to the new Charles Stross novel, *Festival of Fools* (which was, apparently, proofed and printed at the time the receivers came in) and the forthcoming reprint of Liz Williams' *The Ghost Sister*.

22 April 2003

I was at a course for basic report writing a couple of weeks ago and they said in the pre-course lit, 'bring an example of your own writing'. I put a copy of *SFC* 78 and *Vector* in my bag, plus something more technical from work. I think they decided I might have been at the wrong level for a 'basic writing' course.

As I mentioned in the Not the Clarke Awards panel: when both *Light* and *The Separation* went to the wire, how do you compare 'best' for two so very different styles? Is Brie 'better' than Belgian chocolate? But it does come to a matter of taste. Both mess with my head. I don't think I have fully understood either, but there a wonderful joie de vivre in the Harrison, for all its bleak moments and damaged characters (that million-mile train of huge abandoned spaceships, stretching from planet to planet, is an image that will stay for a long time). Pure unabashed skiffy.

But interesting you mention the collection (*Travel Arrangements*, or the new one?). There is one story in *TA* that is lifted out almost whole to form a central part of *Light*. Harrison does that a lot (he did it with 'The Great God Pan' in the middle of *Course of the Heart*). Also, by finally giving a name and a purpose to his horses' head Mari Llywd that has run though his fiction since *The Pastel City*, I wonder if *Light* also forms a sense of closure on that obsessive image. We shall see.

I have read *Light* twice, but *The Separation* so far only the once — I lost my copy somewhere and had to go and buy another.

I saw the news about John Foyster. I didn't know him, but saw a photo of him with Claire and Mark from one of the times they went to Australia (has Claire mentioned ...?). My sympathies to all who knew and loved him.

23 April 2003

ALAN SANDERCOCK
2010 Desmond Drive, Decatur GA 30033

I notice that Joseph Nicholas remembers sharing a room with me at a British SF convention in the '70s. I can be fairly specific about that. It was in '78 at an Easter convention in a hotel near Heathrow airport. This was also the time that I like to taunt fans of the fiction of Marion Zimmer Bradley about, with the description of how I rented a car and drove Marion down to Stonehenge for the day. It was her first visit to Stonehenge, and Marion was quite a chatty companion, with lots of stories about her husband and her terrible migraines. Cherry Wilder and Jan Howard Finder (Wombat) came along as well, so it was a

merry group on that particular day as we played hooky from the day's convention programming events. Of course this is all such a long time ago, and I'm unhappy that I never got to talk to either author again in recent years — too late now, of course, with them both passing (on). I did see Wombat once more at a convention in Nashville in the early '80s, and I can certainly see him again at some point if I ever get back to attending SF conventions.

P.S. I highly recommend the film *American Splendor*, which follows the everyday life of one Harvey Pekar — creator of the underground comic called *American Splendor*.

13 October 2003

IAN WATSON
Daisy Cottage, Banbury Road, Moreton Pinkney, Daventry, Northants NN11 3SQ, England

Of course you may re-use the interview in *SF Commentary* (and I imagine that Stephen will say the same). Honoured and pleased. On the question of money, thanks for the free publicity! Could you send one copy of your issue ... (and I imagine that Stephen, etc, etc ...).

I'm so glad you admired *AI*. Some other people do, also — particularly oodles of Japanese housewives who saw it more than once for the sake of Gigolo Joe, one of the reasons why *AI* ended up as fourth highest earner of the year worldwide despite not making great waves in America. Though this isn't exactly an aesthetic criterion. But aesthetically I approve of the movie too, as an SF fairytale. (Of course I'm prejudiced.)

30 November 2003

Many thanks for *SF Commentary* 78! People may loathe the last section of *AI* as 'Spielberg's bit' (p. 62), but the truth is that it's exactly what I wrote for Stanley, and exactly what he wanted, filmed exactly by Spielberg. So it's one of the most Kubrick parts of the movie, and essential to his conception.

I had an e-mail from a postgrad student of film at Moscow University who was doing a thesis on the difference between Spielberg's film and the one that Stanley would have made. She asked various people who were in the know, and the answers came back just as I told her: not very much difference; Stanley would have like *AI* a lot. Difficult thesis to write, she told me ...

5 February 2004

RICH COAD
2123 Berkeley Drive, Santa Rosa CA 95401

brg The following letter began from an internet discussion about cinemas. I said that I don't go to the cinema much any more. Most of the films I see are seen in the comfort of my own home on DVD and (now) Blu-Ray. In 2004, Melbourne still has a few non-multiplex cinemas. The last remaining stand-alone cinema is the Astor, a fabulous thirties film palace, fully restored, with magnificent lobbies both upstairs and downstairs, all sorts of art deco and forties featues in the upstairs lobby, the best choc-top ice creams in Melbourne in the refreshments bar, the biggest non-Imax screen in Melbourne, perfect seating positions, and (until about four years ago) very good audiences. When I lived in Collingwood, it was an hour each way by public transport to get there for me, but worth it, especially as it often offers two films for the price of one. (It's the last repertory cinema in Melbourne.) Living in Greensborough has made it impossible for me to attend there at any time other than a 2.30 p.m. or 4.30 p.m. session at the weekend.*

This sounds very much like the Castro Theatre in San Francisco, which is the premiere theatre of the Landmark chain. It's been beautifully restored, shows either art, gay or repertory films (although I'm not sure where *Bubba-Ho-Tep* fits in those categories), and is easily accessible by public transit (in fact, considering parking in the area, *only* accessible by public transit). For a great movie-going experience this is the place to go. Across the Bay, in Oakland, the Paramount theatre has been restored to such resplendence that they host the ballet and symphony (when they exist) and show movies maybe once a month with a cartoon and a newsreel. It looks *so* much better now than when I saw Disney's *The Jungle Book* on its initial release.

brg When we lived in Collingwood our local cinema was the Westgarth, which was not quite as palatial as the Astor, but remained a single cinema, with interesting programs, good audiences, until a few years ago. Close to Westgarth station, it is still our most accessible inner city cinema, but it was bought a few years ago by the Palace chain, divided into three, and shows the same movies as at the other Palace cinemas. Usually the bill of fare includes some 'arthouse' or 'independent' movies. Some of the arthouse multiplexes (not a contradiction in terms in Melbourne), such as the Nova, does have much better sound systems than the older cinemas. I could catch 90 per cent of Gollum's expostulations in *Return of the King* at the Nova, but I would have had trouble if I had seen the same film at the Astor. But at the Astor it would have been almost like watching it in Cinerama.*

I tend to avoid multiplexes as much as possible. Even with the stadium seating and good sound they give me the heebie jeebies. John Berry used to say he felt that way about supermarkets, which I didn't understand; now I do.

Every time I'm in Seattle I keep hoping that Paul Allen's Cinerama Theatre will show *How the West Was Won* in Cinerama. Hell, I'd even make a special trip to Seattle to see that. Not that I need much goading to go to Seattle.

30 January 2004

SUE THOMASON
190 Coach Road, Sleights, Whitby, North Yorks, YO22 5EN, England

SFC 78's cover symbolism ... sorry, the kindly gent from the English Department has got it all wrong. He clearly hasn't been in analysis for long enough himself to recognise that that stooping bird ain't no eagle. That, my dears, is a *vulture*, come to rip out the liver of Prometheus the fire-stealer who has lured the lightning of Divine

wrath down from heaven to earth. Suffering in the icy anti-Eden of the *hortus conclusus* (a reference to the development of full human consciousness through the 'taming' of fire during the last Ice Age), the shivering threefold figure of the incarnate Triple God (Green Man standing on the right, the Blue love-god (Krishna, etc.) crouching on the left, and centrally, the Adam 'red earth' figure) await their fate. Will they pass through the barely-open Gate? A winged angel/demon figure (messenger, certainly) descends from the sun/moon to assist/hinder them in their barely-begun Quest, which is surely to ascend the difficult terrain of the Floating Island and then descend the shamanic *axis mundi* of the World Tree into the first intimations of rational Thought ... (two can play that game ...)

22 September 2003

ADRIAN BEDFORD
5 Rainbow Close, Ballaiura WA 6066

How did I come to get a book deal with a publisher in Canada? Well, it just happened that way. I'd finished *Orbital Burn* and a fantasy novel, and was shopping them around. In the course of things, a friend of mine in the US who hangs out on an Internet mailing list for writers with me came across a flyer on the Net from a new Canadian small press interested in getting into the genre biz. This friend wondered if I'd be interested in querying these guys. They (Brian Hades and his people at Edge Books) are in Calgary, Alberta. I have a very good SF writer friend in Calgary, so I asked her if she knew of this new publisher. She wrote back and said she'd had dinner with those guys earlier that week, and pronounced them fine, reliable people. Reassured, I sent a query note. The editor wrote back asking for a blurb about each of the two books. This led to them asking to see both manuscripts. They rejected the fantasy one, and took *Orbital Burn*. Then, later, when I'd finished the second book, *Eclipse*, they took that one, too (it's now scheduled for this year sometime, probably to coincide with the Boston Worldcon, since my wife and I are going to do a launch thing there for it).

And just a couple of weeks ago I signed a contract for a third book, *Hydrogen Steel*, now tentatively looking at 2005.

The whole thing is mediated through the Internet. All the editing, for example, goes back and forth each day. The contracts arrive as PDFs that I print out, sign, and send back snail mail.

And now I'm in the preliminary stages of development for a fourth book, currently not titled. So far all the books are taking place in the same universe, but are standalone, separate stories (I hate series novels; I can never find volume one). Stuff does develop and change from book to book based on things in previous books, but in the background.

I've only ever tried to get my work published overseas, so that it gets noticed by people in the US, Canada and, eventually, one hopes, in Britain, too. Australian (or at least UK) editions of my books would be nice, and the publisher tells me that's a priority for him, too, so I guess I'll have to wait a little longer. The first book's been getting pretty decent review, including a gobsmacking one from the *New York Review of Science Fiction* that, to my great shock, placed my work in a world context. It's what I wanted, obviously, but to see it like that, associated with some very luminous names indeed, was amazing.

As for the Eidolist: I did mention the bare bones of all this when I first signed on. Almost immediately Lucy Schmeidler emerged and asked to see a review copy. Her review has just been finished, and she's sold it to *Orb* and to *SFRevu.com* (the January 04 edition). I've also sent a copy to Ted Scribner, and he's got me listed on the *Bullsheet*. Also sent a copy to *Good Reading* magazine, since they review SF, too. Could you perhaps give me some ideas on where else I might try, in order to get publicity and to help my publisher put together either a local sub-rights deal or a UK edition? I've never done all this before, and it's a bit daunting.

I'd very much appreciate having a look at *SF Commentary*. Thank you! And I'll be sure to scuttle over to efanzines.com to have a look at some of what I've missed.

19 January 2004

BRIAN HADES
Edge Books, PO Box 1714, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2L7, Canada

Thanks you for so graciously offering to review *Tesseracts Nine*. When I was in Australia this past January I picked up a copy of *The Best Australian Science Fiction Writing: A Fifty Year Collection*, edited by Bob Gerrand and published by Black Inc — a massive 615-page tome that I was sure Canada Customs would confiscate due to its size alone. *Tesseracts Nine* is diminutive by comparison!

David Hartwell was in Calgary last week and asked for review copies (which he thankfully took with and saved us the postage). Charles Brown also asked for a review copy for *Locus*.

The few 'theme anthologies' (done under the Tesseracts Books imprint prior to my purchasing the imprint) have not done well here. There are probably a hundred reasons for that ... yet I still receive 'projects' from editors that are theme based. Obviously, I'll have to explore the underlying issues to better understand the dynamics.

We (Edge) published *Orbital Burn* by Australian author K. A. Bedford last year. It was an excellent first book and was a finalist for an Aurealis Award. *Eclipse*, his second book, will be released in Canada this September (March 2006 in the USA). His writing is vastly improved.

Generally it seems that the Australian publishing scene is growing and maturing and the Australian SF&F genre is finally getting stronger legs. Of course that just may be my Canadian perspective ... you must remember it is winter (–30C below) for seven months of the year.

My wife Anita and I have been to Australia twice, and would love to visit many more times and could easily be convinced to move house and home (if your government would only let us in and providing we could convince ourselves not to retire in Hawaii — which is half way (or so) to Australia and a favourite place for us to holiday).

16 July 2005

ROSALEEN LOVE
3 Vincent Street, Glen Iris VIC 3146

Thanks for the latest *SF Commentary*. I will write to you more at depth one day soon. I'm kind of busy just now, with a new adjunct position at Latrobe Uni, and a book proposal under way. Would you like a review of Bruce Sterling's *Tomorrow Now* for a future issue? It's a book on futures, and its kind of fun. Not sf, but non-fiction. Keep Jenny Blackford writing for you. I really like her writing.

20 February 2003

Please don't send yourself into huge debt by keeping me on the list for your print issue. I am really happy to access the electronic version, as I do for the *Tapei Times*, crikey.com.au and other electronic versions of the media. (As an irrelevant aside, I've got really interested in Taiwanese politics since I visited there last year. The people I met are witty and brave, combining humour with determined resistance to the regime of mainland China).

I was most touched at the John Foyster tribute issue. What a lovely thing to do.

I am having a great year so far. Nice letter from Rob Gerrand re his project for Black Inc, and an especially nice email from David Hartwell and Katherine Cramer. They are including my story, 'Raptures of the Deep' (from *Gathering the Bones*) in their anthology *Year's Best Fantasy 2003*. I'm also doing some teaching in creative writing at Latrobe. I've got a fantasy story coming out in Michael Wilding's new short story magazine (so new he forgot to tell me what it's name is, or when it's first appearing), and then there's 'Real Men', to be broadcast by the ABC RN on March 7 in their short story slot. So, a great February–March. The rest of the year will no doubt be downhill after that, but I don't care. It's a nice beginning.

26 February 2004

brg Most of the letters I've received have been divided between those whose lives were on the upswing in 2004, but whose lives later downswung; and those who were in dire straits in 2004 but whose lives improved since. Rosaleen's life went way downhill, with the death of her husband Harold in 2007, but I get the impression that she is again writing and publishing regularly. Her tribute to Harold, in a recent issue of *Australian Book Review*, should have been picked up as the best Australian essay of the year.*

ROBERT LICHTMAN
now living at 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland CA 94611-1948

In another year or two I'll be taking an early retirement and my income will be significantly less. I've thought ahead a little and anticipate that I would probably produce a paper edition of 100 copies to cover people who send me paper fanzines, people who are contributors (of either art, articles or significant LoCs), and people I just plain *want* to have paper copies, and then post the zine on efanzines. This would probably necessitate a change of format to regular full-lettersized pages or, alternatively, I could post two version of the half-letter size — one with sequential pages (like the copy of *TD* 22 currently on efanzines.com) and another with the pages arranged 'booklet style' for those who want to print out a paper copy. Adobe Acrobat allows this.

14 February 2004

It occurs to me that another way to go might be sending out a PDF file on a disk/CD of each issue to people who don't have computer access. There would still be costs, but surely cheaper than the figures you quoted on one of the lists the last day or two. Even though those were Au$, they were stunning. My own expense for a typical issue of *Trap Door* has been in the $500–$600 range, including printing and postage. That's been affordable for the moment, but will become more problematic when I retire. I could go all electronic, but I'm loath to give up response as part of the trade-off.

It's one of the sad downsides of being a freelancer: this having to buy your own retirement. I pay 8% out of each check towards my government pension, a fair deal so far as I'm concerned. The formula is 3% per year of service at age 60 (and I'm 61), and I would like to wait until I'm 62 to jump ship so I can also collect a little Social Security.

18 February 2004

brg We finally met in 2005 at Corflu, and you helped me greatly during the BBB Trip, and with Pete Weston and Billy Pettit I saw your fabulous fanzine collection in Glen Ellen before you did retire to Oakland. You still print copies of *Trapdoor*, but it is also up on http://efanzines.com.

I can't see how I can afford to retire, ever, as I have only a small amount of superannuation after a life of freelancing. But Australia does have a universal old age pension, which I can access when I turn 65. Elaine and I now must find out if we can survive old age with any sort of dignity.*

DAVID LAKE
7 8th Avenue, St Lucia QLD 4067

I recently went on a tour of South Island, New Zealand, nine days in the southern section of lakes and fiords. Glorious. Around Queenstown they showed us where much of *LotR* was filmed. The Remarkable Mountains (that's their name) have a profile very like an upended cross-cut saw, with jagged brown peaks. They were used for the walls of Mordor. And further north, in the Dart river valley, we saw what was used for Lothlorien and Treebeard's forest, etc. But leaving that aside, the scenery was wonderful. Places reminded me of the most beautiful spots I'd seen in the highlands of Scotland. And I was with a good crowd of friends.

Since then I've been in a state of mild euphoria, which gave me some nearly sleepless nights during which I discovered the answer to Life, etc. Douglas Adams wasn't quite right — not 42, but 75, which I will be tomorrow. As usual on such occasions, I was reading a book which half blew my mind — Garrett Hardin, *Living within Limits* (1993). Much of it was familiar, but some was not. Very logical and a bit brutal. Among other things, he attacks much SF (especially media sci-fi) for encouraging the idea of limitless escape into space. I must say I have to agree

with him. Colonising Mars or Alpha Centauri is just not on, and anyway wouldn't solve any of our population problems. All that Golden Age SF optimism is dead, dead, dead.

I've just written a poem about being 75:

Unparty

Villon and Byron, summing up their days,
took stock of what they'd been, and were, at thirty,
feeling mature, or worse. I at that phase
was still a bumbling boy; perhaps at forty
a man (with wife and child), amassing praise
for stuff I'd done, from one or other party.
Now all that's gone; alone, at seventy-five
I meditate on merely being alive.

Since twenty-one, I've never understood
why anyone should celebrate being older
by one more year, and guzzle wine and food,
laughing because you're on the way to moulder
yet more in the next twelvemonth. I would brood
alone, on birthdays, looking round my shoulder
at the grim guest of bone. I don't feel hearty
at prospect of another birthday party.

Time is no friend. It's not the length of days
that we should celebrate, but gleams of joy:
a second here or there, a sudden blaze
of beauty, or of love, when to the boy
or man or woman, there bursts from the haze
of greyer life a gold without alloy.
The glories of some minutes that were mine –
to these, at seventy-five, I pledge my wine.

25 March 2004

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

A person of less equable temperament might have responded acerbically to your suggestions in the review of *A Pound of Paper* that my story is 'embroidered'. Which parts do you doubt? I'll happily supply documentary evidence. I even have photographs of the orgy detailed in one chapter, though, in the heat of the moment, I left my camera behind. Returning next morning to retrieve it, I found our host sitting rather glumly with the mistress, who, unlike himself, had taken a vigorous part in the previous day s proceedings.

'What have you been doing?' I asked, to bridge the awkward gap.

'Washing the bedspread,' he said, with an effort at good cheer. 'It was either that, or have it framed, and call it Force of Life.'

Nor did I ever suffer 'semi-poverty' in London; on the contrary, I was, by the standards of my peer group, embarrassingly well off. I could support myself by writing and in particular broadcasting, while plenty of film critics had dead-end civil service jobs, living only for the couple of hours after work when they could sneak into some cinema. A few staffed the all-night international telephone exchanges (ah, those long dead days of pull-and-plug boards) so as to have time during the day to catch press shows. One of them, Richard Whitehall, was so anxious to reach Hollywood that he systematically studied all the employment categories in which foreign emigrants could expect favoured status, got some experience in one of them, and applied for working papers as ... an embalmer. Within a couple of years, he was in Los Angeles, directing films with Timothy Carey. Pretty dreadful films, but how many British morticians have a feature credit?

I stand by my admiration of Gerald Murnane as one of the most interesting of Australian visionary writers. The simplicity and repeated motifs of his work remind me of Philip Glass. I sent him a copy of *A Pound of Paper*, and he wrote me a long letter, detailing his preoccupation these days with learning and reading Hungarian, and in compiling an archive that documents every aspect of his life. It's hard to believe that, a century from now, he won't be regarded as a deeply significant figure. He and Proust would have had a lot to talk about.

But don't worry, Bruce. You'll be remembered too, as his first publisher. See, down there, in the small print — Bryce Gyllespee, the well-known typing error.

27 February 2004

brg Probably few of us will be remembered, whether as typing errors or not. Gerald? Brian Aldiss? You? Gene Wolfe? There will need to be people of sufficient literacy to appreciate them. Will books survive, or indeed, anything much with global warming? At the moment, the only time I am footnoted is as the editor and publisher of *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd*, one of the first collections of essays about the Author who Became a Publishing Industry. PKD gains millions more readers with each passing year.*

Australia's distance and cultural complacency either induces dolce far niente inaction or a reckless tendency to flee, but never both. My own parents never left Australia until their 80s, and then only under the impetus of a grandchild whom they otherwise might never see. On the other hand, I couldn't wait to get out.

Russell Hoban and I have always kept up, ever since I met him when he visited Australia in the mid eighties. For the last few years, he's been confined to his home by an odd ailment which affected his feet. The tendons softened, causing the bones to become mobile. He had to keep weight off the feet until the malady passed, after which new shoes were made to fit their changed conformation. He's walking again now, but very slowly, and not too far.

It's true his books don't get wide distribution, but a faithful core audience guarantees at least some sort of sale. And the classics, like *The Mouse and his Child* and *Riddley Walker*, are not only still in print, but being re-issued. When I saw him in London a few months ago, he gave me copies of two recent illustrated editions of *Mouse*. And apparently *Riddley Walker* has been optioned as a movie by the man who did *Sexy Beast*.

You're right about writers with personal archives, diaries etc being the best subjects for biographies. The basement of the library in the American college where I taught in the 70s was filled with tea chests of letters and personal papers donated by various ex-students, any one

of which would provide material for a solid MA thesis. Unfortunately, none of the people had done anything of note.

28 February 2004

GERALD MURNANE
recently moved from Macleod
to PO Box 40, Goroke VIC 3142

I have never been one to crow and gloat ..., so, you know that I'm about to crow and gloat.

I'm too lazy to look into my files for the copy of my last letter to you, but I certainly remember that I humbly recommended to you in that letter the suburb of Watsonia. As I recall, Elaine was mentioning moving to suburbs such as Mitcham ... I don't think for one moment that my representations on behalf of the north-eastern suburbs would have counted with either of you, but I still feel like crowing and gloating that two intelligent and perceptive persons such as yourselves have travelled north across the Yarra and have settled in the district that has been for long the best-kept secret in Melbourne.

Well, I got that bit wrong: that bit about crossing the Yarra. But I was thinking of your figurative journey from your dreams of Mitcham to your dreams of Montmorency. Funnily enough, I said to Catherine only the other day that if some cruel injunction or some unimaginable quirk of fate were to force us to leave Macleod, I would choose to live nowhere but in Montmorency. The secret of each of these suburbs is that its shopping centre *is not bisected by a major road*. Greensborough is marred by Grimshaw Street, but the area where you're going to live is a haven of tranquillity. How do I know? Believe it or not, I know Howard Street well. I can't say that I've ever seen your house, but I must have driven along Howard Street seven or eight times in the past few years.

I have a hatred of crowded car parks and of turning out of busy traffic into same. (Once or twice each year, I find myself having to go, alone or with Catherine, to the medical precinct in Grimshaw Street, where the Diamond Valley Hospital formerly stood. Rather than drive along the mad speedway of Grimshaw Street and risk my life turning suddenly into a doctors' car park, I choose to drive into Warwick Street, which runs off Howard Street, and which is about as choked with traffic as a side-street in Goroke. I park there and walk through a funny little walkway into Eldale Avenue, which is a dead-end street leading down to the hell-hole of Grimshaw Street. By the way, the house on the south-eastern corner of Eldale Avenue and Grimshaw Street is one of the last ... what am I trying to say? Ask me one day to tell you about that house and about who once lived there.

I discovered Macleod, Watsonia, Montmorency, Greensborough and the foothills of the Plenty Ranges, as I call them, as long ago as 1960, and I determined all that time ago that I would never live anywhere else — assuming that I had to live in Melbourne, as most Victorians have to. And I never will. I could cheerfully live in Goroke, the lonely West Wimmera township whither Catherine and I go every six weeks to look after the house that Giles rashly bought there. But so long as I have to live in Melbourne, and I suppose that means for the rest of my life, given that all three of my sons live in Melbourne, together with my grand-daughter, then I'll live in Macleod or, failing that, Montmorency.

If you're really into cute little suburbs with hilly terrain and with shopping centres close to railway stations but bisected by no-thru roads, then you might care one day in the future to discover Eaglemont. Another reason for exploring that desirable suburb is that a new-found friend of mine, John Thawley, has a splendid bookshop there. Trouble is, Eaglemont is the Toorak of the North. Nor you nor we could ever afford to live there.

The winding Hurstbridge railway line is, for me, the song-line or the umbilical, or the mythic life-giver or you-name-it of Melbourne. Always having hated the beach land, being indifferent at best to mountains, I have for most of my life despised and jeered at the poor souls who have gone to live in such places as Carrum and Boronia. If I had been a tradesman from way back, or if I hadn't been educated in the south-eastern suburbs, I might have chosen to live in Essendon or Keilor or yes, Elaine, Glenroy. (I lived happily in Pascoe Vale South in 1950–51.) But one does not choose. The place chooses one, or you, if I can only stop being pretentious. The foothills of the Plenty Ranges chose me.

Did you know that your new home is only a short distance from the Cat Protection Society? You could never have known that I pass within a few hundred metres of your new place every fortnight on my way to Louis Street, where stands a small group of shops, one of which sells home-brew supplies for home-brewers such as myself. The Bendigo Bank, where some of my money is invested, has its nearest branch in Greensborough. Catherine's optometrist is in Greensborough. We buy all our household electrical appliances from a bulk store on Grimshaw Street. We are often in your area. It takes no more than ten minutes to drive from this house to the large carpark off Henry Street that I use whenever I have to shop in Greensborough.

Best of all, your new address and ours have the same Melway Page Number. Page 20, no less. You have finally arrived on our home-page, so to speak.

The rest of your news, Bruce, pales by comparison with your report of your migration to Catherine's and my page in the *Melway Street Directory*. Welcome home, Bruce and Elaine: And yes, I'm crowing and gloating ..:

14 July 04

brg We moved here to Greensborough, and you left for the small town of Goroke, west of Horsham. But not before losing Catherine last year (my tribute to her appeared in recent issues of **brg**). The move from Collingwood has been regenerative for us. Elaine decided on the direction of the move by going on the Internet, writing in all the criteria for the area we needed, and coming up with a group of northern suburbs that stretch from Watsonia to Eltham. We found this house after only a few weeks of searching. To find a house of similar price, quality and convenience of location in the eastern suburbs, we would have had to move 40 km from the centre of Melbourne. Instead, here we are 17 km from Melbourne, 35 minutes by train from Flinders Street station. The only disadvantage of moving is that I can no longer walk from my home to Readings Books in Carlton, surely a requirement of civilised living?*

TOM WHALEN
Herweghstr. 4, 70197 Stuttgart, Germany

I'm just off a three-month critical writing project myself: *The Birth of Death and other Comedies: The Novels of Russell H. Greenan (1924–)*, a 38,000 word monograph on the eight novels Greenan published between 1968 (*It Happened in Boston?*) to 1987 (*A Can of Worms*). *It Happened in Boston?* is narrated by a young Boston painter who calls himself Alfred Omega (one of seven names he'll use), time travels during his reveries on Public Garden benches, believes pigeons are spying on him, and is looking to take, so to speak, a meeting with God in order to kill Him. *Boston?* is back in print now as a Modern Library 20th Century Rediscovery.

I'm comfortably (mostly) retired and living in southwest Germany where my wife works. We travel around Europe a fair amount.

1 March 2004

RALPH ASHBROOK
303 Tregaron Road, Bala Cynwyd PA 19004

With your help Phil Dick has become a household word — well, 'desktop word'. Perhaps Wilson Tucker will find his deserved place in the pantheon as well.

I re-read *The Lincoln Hunters* and *Now Wait For Last Year* regularly. They make me feel at home. *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Lady Vanishes* work a similar magic. (No need to wait for last year.)

I don't remember if you have addressed Philip Pullman's 'His Dark Materials' trilogy. The third volume is William Blake on acid. That it is aimed as the Young Adult reading audience is startling. That Tom Stoppard is adapting it into a film trilogy (*Redux of the Rings*?) is promising.

I hesitate to mention Potter, but my first LOC to you 25 years ago was a defence of Robert Heinlein. The Potter books work for me much like the delight of 50s sf. (Was that the birth of the YA book category? The golden age of sf is 13.) Fredric Brown, Win Tenn, Kuttner/Moore (*Mimsy* pushing the envelope.) and Ted Sturgeon played in similar waters to the Hogwarts moat.

I guess it is ironic that Rowling is able to make a comfortable living of it. Kind of phildickian.

Thanks for keeping me at the party.

19 March 2004

GILLIAN POLACK
37 Melrose Mews, Medley St., 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 — 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 for me.

The reason I asked for samples was that I am just really cautious about writing the wrong thing for the wrong person — I would be writing a piece for *your* journal, not for a random one plucked out of the ether. And 'knowing about' isn't the same as reading and understanding, which is why I would love to see a sample.

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 would be happy to add to debate focusing on Cordwainer Smith, just for this reason alone.

brg The other possibility is to republish the Cordwainer Smith material that last appeared in *Australian SF Review* (Second Series) in the early nineties. That includes the original material from ASFR (First Series) No 11, 1967, by John Foyster and Alan Burns, plus material from people such as Marc Ortlieb, me and Norman Talbot.*

Maybe do that and have new essays as well? I rather like the thought of not forgetting the work that has already been done on a subject — especially as work from the 60s would be by people who knew Linebarger. The simple shift in perspective between 60s writers on the subject and modern writers on the subject would do a lot to illuminate Cordwainer Smith and where he was coming from.

9 August 2005

HARRY BUERKETT
705 S. Anderson, Urbana IL 61801-4301

The top 25 science fiction novels according to Harry Hennessey Buerkett

1 *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (Philip K. Dick)
A mind-bending, focused invasion of self; a novel paradigm.

2 *Ubik* (Philip K. Dick)
The ultimate deconstruction of alienation; also mind-bending.

3 *Roadside Picnic* (Arkady and Boris Strugatsky)
Alien refuse in 'The Zone' as an eerie metaphor for the science fiction field itself.

4 *Beyond Apollo* (Barry M. Malzberg)
Intimate, fascinating, circular tale of technology's dysfunction, by an unreliable narrator.

5 *A Case of Conscience* (James Blish)
As complex and ambiguous a critique of science and religion as has ever been penned.

6 *Solaris* (Stanislaw Lem)
A haunting and moving depiction of Mind at a loss.

7 *His Master's Voice* (Stanislaw Lem)
The Folly of Science, illustrating Haldane's Law.

8 *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley)
An intricately imagined critique of society; modern SF's first true social satire.

9 *Cat's Cradle* (Kurt Vonnegut)
An elegiac apocalypse, done with humor and social satire.

10 *The Space Merchants* (Frederik Pohl & C. M. Kornbluth)
A dead-on social satire of twentieth-century advertising.

11 *Bring the Jubilee* (Ward Moore)

A well-conceived time-travel/alternate universe novel, haunting and tragically beautiful.

12 *Star Maker* (Olaf Stapledon)
An amazing and incredible scope of imagination and universe-building.

13 *Now Wait for Last Year* (Philip K. Dick)
Brilliant, tragic and poignant social satire: a neglected work.

14 *Rendezvous with Rama* (Arthur C. Clarke)
A spooky glimpse into the universe, illustrating the vastness of space and time.

15 *The Stars My Destination* (Alfred Bester)
Full of wild and unexpected plot twists; a fun apocalyptic.

16 *Norstrilia* (Cordwainer Smith)
Brilliantly imaginative world-building; like *Dune*, only better.

17 *Galapagos* (Kurt Vonnegut)
A gentle apocalypse, with fated but endearing characters.

18 *Far Rainbow* (Arkady and Boris Strugatsky)
The most melancholy and elegaic apocalyptic on the Folly of Science ever written.

19 *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (Naomi Mitchison)
An extraordinary journey into the heart of love and empathy, by J. B. S. Haldane's sister.

20 *The War with the Newts* (Karel Capek)
A nineteenth-century apocalyptic by the creator of 'robot'; imaginative, clever and endearing.

21 *Childhood's End* (Arthur C. Clarke)
An archetype-destroying apocalyptic of human transcendence.

22 *Gateway* (Frederik Pohl)
Fun and exciting psychological space-fear, second only to Beyond Apollo.

23 *Collision Course* (Barrington J. Bayley)
A most extraordinary exploration of time conundra.

24 *The Palace of Eternity* (Bob Shaw)
A PKD-like 'broken back' novel of spiritual discovery, illustrative of Haldane's Law.

25 *The Technicolor Time Machine* (Harry Harrison)
The most fun and frivolous and clever use of a time machine, ever.

1 September 2005

brg Much to agree with here. My Top 10 SF Novels turns out differently each time I try to write the list. Off the top of my head, they include, at No 1, Brian Aldiss's *Hothouse* (*The Long Afternoon of the Earth*); as well as Lem's *Solaris*, George Turner's *The Sea and Summer* (*Drowning Towers*) and M. J. Engh's *Arslan*. Favourite Philip K. Dick novels include *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Ubik*, *Martian Time-slip* and *Now Wait for Last Year*. Other Aldiss favourites include *An Age* (*Cryptozoic!*), *Barefoot in the Head* and *Greybeard*. Two favourite Christopher Priest novels are *The Inverted World* and *The Prestige*. Also high on the list would be Thomas Disch's *On Wings of Song*, *334* and *Camp Concentration*. Then there are the classics, such as H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* and *The Invisible Man*, and Stapledon's *Last and First Men* and *Star Maker*. Most of Wilson Tucker's novels are among my favourites; especially *The Year of the Quiet Sun*, *The Lincoln Hunters* and *Time Bomb*. Memorable one-offs include Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*. But that's more than ten. My favourite SF *book* is the complete collection of Cordwainer Smith's short stories, *The Rediscovery of Man* (NESFA Press).

BARRY GILLAM
100 Donizetti Place, Apt 26E,
Bronx NY 10475-2021

It's been a long, long time. All apologies for that.

Tim Marion tracked me down and I still procrastinated and wasn't sure how to begin this message.

To get the business part out of the way, you're welcome to reprint whatever you dare from my now dust-covered contributions to your zines. I just hope that I won't have to reread them and wince.

And I hope that you're well. I did google you and see that you're settling into suburbia, with all its attendant adjustments and nosy neighbours.

What can I say for myself? Here's the last two decades in brief: For a few years I replaced Jon White (gone now) reviewing SF for *Publishers Weekly*. Then I began an 18-year run at Photofest, a photo rental agency specializing in movies and TV. From four friends around one table in one small room, we grew to two dozen employees. When that business took a turn for the worse, I moved over (in January 2006) to The Everett Collection, a younger but much more vital and better run photo agency.

My other landmarks have been the passing of my father in 2000 and my mother earlier this year.

I'm still living in the Bronx, unmarried and without significant other.

The only writing I do these days consists of memos for the office — although some of those are substantial, even if their readership is severely limited. I do have some personal film-related writing projects but when or if they will reach fruition is anyone's guess.

For many years, I was one of the hardcore New York film buffs (you'd be surprised how few there are), but I no longer have the energy to run to a double bill every day after work. Not to mention that eBay, Chinatown and other sources provide more than I can watch with my multi-region DVD player.

It's a comfortable life and I find myself nesting, with home improvement projects taking precedence over series of new Czech films. I like my work and count myself lucky that I can make a decent living at something that engages and challenges me.

Please let me know how you are and accept, once again, my regrets for gafiating so totally (no excuse, there).

P.S. Tim gave me a stack of his zines and my response was that if he got me back into fandom, I'd never forgive him.

6 August 2007

brg Those who have followed my magazines during the years will realise that there is nobody more noticeable by his absence than Barry Gillam. Thanks, Barry, for writing all those brilliant reviews and long articles during the early years of *SF Commentary*. I'm still not sure why you dropped out, or why fandom remains unattractive (apart from the fact that fanzine editors cannot afford to pay

for contributions). I always expected you to become the Andrew Sarris of the eighties and nineties, and perhaps to the readers of *Publishers Weekly* you have been. If ever you again feel like writing my kind of articles, please remember where to send them!*

WERNER KOOPMANN
Reiherstieg 202 c, 21244 Buchholz (Nordheide), Germany

Do you remember me from 1973 and Franz Rottensteiner, and our collaboration on a translation of Stanislaw Lem? I would like to hear from you. Now I live with my wife in Buchholz (Nordheide) near Hamburg.

25 February 2010

brg Yes, of course I remember you! But I had no idea how to get in touch with you.

I had a very selfish reason for wanting to get in touch. When Franz Rottensteiner fell out with Stanislaw Lem a few years ago, Franz forbade me to use any of his translations of Lem articles in my proposed *Best of SF Commentary*. That tears the heart out of it — I would want to use at least four articles by Lem in any such collection.

However, my one hope was that one day I could get in touch with you and get permission to reprint your translation of 'SF: A Hopeless Case'. There remain other problems — that the formal rights probably still belong to Harcourt (as part of the *Microworlds* collection), and then there would be Lem's current agent, whoever that might be. But if you were to give your permission to reprint your translation, that would be a start! Of course, Harcourt might want a pound of flesh, and so would the current Lem agent ... it could still prove too expensive to reprint the article, and hence *Electric Shepherd* will never receive a second edition.

So how has your life gone since the seventies? I've just turned 63, so I assume you are a similar age. Elaine Cochrane and I married in 1979, but we didn't have kids. We do have five cats, though, and a large library of books, CDs and DVDs. (And much remains of the LP collection.)

If you want to catch up on my life, send me your current snail mail address I'll send you a selection of what I've been doing recently. If you've discovered my magazines on efanzines.com, you will realise that I have kept publishing all these years — *SF Commentary* and *The Metaphysical Review* as duplicated magazines up until the nineties, then offset since then, with colour covers in recent years. In 2000, two British fans, Paul Kincaid and Maureen Kincaid Speller, and I started *Steam Engine Time* as a sort of *SF Commentary* without the short reviews. It continues, with an American co-editor, Jan Stinson. *Scratch Pad* (on efanzines.com) contains all my non-sf writing since 1991. If you want to plug straight in, the PDF version of my latest magazine is at http://efanzines.com/SFC/SteamEngineTime/SET12.pdf; if you go to the main efanzines.com site, look for recent issues of *Scratch Pad*.*

I'm really happy to hear from you. I'm 61, happily married with one daughter (not my own, but my wife's), three grandsons. They live in Leipzig; the oldest will enter school in the fall.

My wife is in Leipzig visiting the grandchildren. Her name is Ursula Friedrich: different names but married since 1998.

From Hamburg I went to Duisburg, then back to Hamburg, from where we moved to Buchholz near Hamburg, at the fringe of the Lueneburger Heide. My wife is a former kindergarten headmistress. I'm lawyer and IT teacher, both freelancing. We are both from Uetersen, Schleswig-Holstein, and went to school together.

Permission to use the Lem article granted unreservedly.

I'm not yet retired. Due to a stroke in 2004 I am still working a bit as a lawyer, though most of my money came from my freelance work as a software instructor. I began information technology in 1987, when I returned to Hamburg as head of the legal, personnel and insurance department of a small petroleum company and began implementing personal computers. When the company was sold to a bigger one in 1990, I went to New Horizons (a firm teaching software etc. in Hamburg; international franchising in Australia too?). I'm a Microsoft certified trainer, and also taught other software. As I was a student there and impressed them, I stayed till 2004, all the time working as a lawyer besides.

My wife is on semi-retirement and will really retire in 2013, while I have to wait and try to earn as much as possible until 2015. Meanwhile, we are very happy together here in our home near the forest. We met in primary school, but never had a real relationship. And when she married another in 1971, contact broke off and was only reestablished in 1996 during a class renunion. The reunion was managed by another classmate, who became our witness at marriage, and another classmate was our registrar,while still another classmate was our pastor.

26 February 2010

I'm still reading books a lot; my focus went to history, languages, religion and of course SF. However, SF is not my favourite any longer, though I still have many, along with literature on SF.

My music is soul, rock and pop, CD, singles and some LP. My wife is a classics fan: Beethoven, Schubert and the like.

My wife and me like to travel, mostly to France, but also to Spain (I attach a photo of our trip to Cadiz), and even to Portugal, which we did not like because of too many tourists. In April, we'll go to Westerland, Sylt on the North Sea.

28 February 2010

I finally made contact with Franz Rottensteiner. He writes: 'Lem is already dead; what he would think now is unimportant. Meantime the rights of the article belong to Harcourt Brace (now Houghton Mifflin), and it is up to them whether they would permit reprinting it.'

3 March 2010

Last Thursday we had the opportunity on TV to have a fifteen-minute look at Melbourne's trams. When I lived in Hamburg, there were trams too, but they were abolished in 1968.

31 March 2010

Thanks for your email. Yesterday I got your fanzines. I haven't read them all, but in one of them I saw your teenage photo and learned you are on diabetes 2. Just like me! I'm on medication and feel very well. Other ailments: three times I have had an operation because of kidney stones; plus one tooth implantation. My migraine ceased when I married my wife and haven't suffered from that since.

Rummaging through old memorabilia I found that I encountered science fiction when I was ten, during a vacation with my sports club Uetersen (northwest of Hamburg) in Hoernum (southern end of the island of Sylt).

As far as I remember, I filched (shame on me, but the statute of limitation protects me, and anyway, I was a minor then) a small paperback by A. E. van Vogt, *The Wizard of Linn*. I bought a paperback very much later, and that is still in my possession. Later, when I worked as a student for an international bookseller in Hamburg, I could afford many books, very many, most of which I sold later on.

My favourites today are the old ones: Blish, Vance, Dominik.

31 March 2010

FRANK BERTRAND
195 Bridge Street, Apt 18, Manchester NH 03104

I have checked and downloaded (to update my files) just about all of your zines for the past couple of years, etc ... It is good to read you once again. Sorry to learn about the medical issues. I'm dealing with a very enlarged prostate ... have had three biopsies to date, all benign. But I have a really cute urologist to see (a laser surgery specialist), so I don't mind too much. Also I have a lower back issue ... up to five prescribed meds ... not a fan of meds.

8 April 2010

Feature letter of comment

Patrick McGuire in the middle of a snowstorm

PATRICK MCGUIRE
7541 Weather Worn Way, Unit D,
Columiba, MD 21046

I expect February is the height of summer for you, corresponding to Northern Hemisphere August, so you may be amused to learn that I'm writing this in the middle of a snowstorm. There are about seven inches on the ground at the moment, and they are predicting up to two feet by the time it ends on Monday. This on top of a few inches that fell on Saturday before the main event started.

Later: I am finishing this late Monday morning. We have at least two feet of snow out there. Despite some drifting of the snow, I can still see the top of the hood of my car in the parking lot, but the small sports car parked next to mine has disappeared except for a bit of the roof.

The Baltimore–Washington area generally doesn't see much snow, and when we get any significant accumulation, everything grinds to a halt, because snows don't happen often enough here to justify major investment in snow removal equipment, such as is on hand farther north. Monday, alas, is already a holiday (currently called President's Day, formerly Washington's Birthday), so I may not even get a day off from work out what looks likely to be a record-breaking snowstorm.

Did Ararat have enough elevation to see snow? (I know Ballarat, not too far off, was decidedly cool when I was there in 1999 in September, corresponding to Northern March.) If not, your only prolonged exposure to the phenomenon must have been on your Great World Trek. Unless, of course, you found some warm part of the US to spend the winter in. In 1999, I passed through Ararat riding on the bus between Adelaide and Ballarat, but I was unaware then of its illustrious Gillespie links, and I fear that little of what I saw out the window remains in my memory.

I don't think Dave Piper and I ever met (if we did, it was in passing at some convention somewhere), but I have seen his letters in many a lettercol, and I will miss them. The Baby Boom generation is well into middle age and the mortality rate is starting to rise, and the writers who got us Boomers into the SF community in the first place are now old, when not already dead. As you imply, it's probably time both for a stiff upper lip and for some philosophical or religious coming to terms with mortality. Will SF help? Few SF works seem to consider human mortality except in terms of efforts to try to evade it (medicine or uploading) or when death is delivered in quantity through war or natural disaster. Some of Poul Anderson is good on an atheist or Nordic toughing it out. Miller's original *Canticle*, plus some of his short stories, and some of Zenna Henderson's work, speaks to a more Christian response. There still seems to be room for a lot more works on the theme. Just so they don't get too depressing! (A lot of fantasy concerns mortality, going back at least to Gilgamesh, but I'm principally an SF kind of guy.)

I've never read a novel by Wynne Whiteford, but if his work has been characterised as 'oldfashioned', there is probably something to be said for it, and I have just put him on my look-for list. (I may have read some of his short stories without noting his name.)

The dog we had when I was a child (and much later — he lived a long life) had been separated from its mother too early. (It was not the doing of my parents; the owners

of the puppy litter were bound and determined to get rid of it instantly.) He suffered lasting psychological damage. He could not be trained away from barking furiously at strange people and dogs, and he had a nervous habit of chewing the fur on his forepaws, which acquired an unsightly yellowish coloration. I was interested to learn that similar psychic damage happens to cats, which I think of as being more self-dependent. (In Oscar's case, you are reasoning backward from later behaviour, but I presume you do so on the basis of better-documented evidence of the cause from other cats.)

I said last loc that I was catching up on Greg Egan, but, despite that, I haven't yet read *Schild's Ladder*. I'll put it on my look-for list. *Teranesia* may, as Russell Blackford says, be the most accessible Egan book for a mainstream audience, but by the same token, it's atypical of the writer. I bogged down in it after racing through other of his books. So I'm not sure that *Teranesia* provides much of step up to the rest of Egan, and it may turn readers off him.

I found Jenny Blackford's Wolfe explication highly interesting, and potentially useful. Religion alerts for Wolfe, like the change of oldfashionedness for Whiteford, are more likely to encourage me than dissuade me. On the other hand, Wolfe's structures and basic set-ups have generally seemed to me more convoluted that really necessary, and his characters, for the most part, strike me as not sympathetic enough to reward long acquaintance. (The first volume or two of the 'Long Sun' series appeared uncharacteristically accessible, but then Wolfe seemed to revert to form.) Perhaps I ought to follow Jenny's advice, go all the way back to the start of the 'Book of the New Sun', and work my way up from there. I had missed some of the tie-ins she mentions, despite having at some point read the books they occur in. Alternatively, maybe I ought instead to turn to reading some less demanding author. Dostoyevskiy in the original, perhaps. (Several years back, I did finish *The Brothers Karamazov* in Russian, and it only took me about three years of lunchtime reading to do it!) I am not, however, trying to absolutise my own reaction. Many people whose opinion I respect regard Wolfe as adequately accessible just the way he is.

Having made it through *The Brothers K.*, incidentally, proved to be a useful run-up to a recent historical mystery novel, Akunin's *The Provincial Detective*, or, *Pelagia and the White Bulldog* (in Russian), which is a nun-detective story set in late nineteenth-century Russia, no less. It's written in a very 'literary' style reminiscent of the actual work of the period. I read a Western article where Akunin was quoted as saying that he wrote detective stories for people who felt guilty about reading detective stories — his are 'literary' enough to soothe their consciences. Despite its relatively late chronological setting, the Russian language has changed so much since people commonly wrote this way (which not everyone did even in the 1890s) that I think the Akunin novel reads like something from the early nineteenth century would in English, so that the closest stylistic parallel I can think of is Patrick O'Brian. The Akunin book was, for long stretches, pretty heavy going for what I was getting out of it, but the pace improved partway through, so that I'm pretty sure that eventually I'll give the next book in the series a chance.

Patrick O'Brian, incidentally, seems like someone you might like to read, Bruce. He's 'literary' but accessible, learned, has Australian Content in several of the books, is regarded as sort of an honorary sf writer, etc. Even if you have tried O'Brian's books (I speak, of course, primarily of the Auburey–Maturin series) but dislike them for some reason (not gloomy enough for you, perhaps), you might enjoy Dean King's biography of O'Brian. I'm sure there will be better biographies later, when more information is available, but O'Brian's was a very strange life, where he pretty thoroughly reinvented himself into someone else, and I found it well worth putting up with the shortcomings in King to learn about it.

Later: I have now read *SFC* 78 up to the point in the lettercol where Joseph Nicholas writes positively of O'Brian. Good heavens: Joseph and I agree on something! That is a recommendation indeed!

Passing over several articles, I will have to go back and read later, I arrive at Dave Langford's excellent piece on James White. I would add little to what Dave said about the Sector General novels, but would point out that Dave was, after all, writing an introduction to a Sector General collection, and that he therefore passes over White's non-Sector fiction. I wrote the White article in *Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers*, first edition. In that 1981 article I made what, in the long view, was too much of his 1979 novel *Underkill*. That book represents the one time that White really lost patience with the human race: aliens, perhaps standing in for an angry Yahweh, decide that all they can do with the misbehaving human race is to start over again with a remnant of 10 million people. I had thought that that turn to a darker side might presage a new stage in the author's career. As it turned out, having gotten that book out of his system, White went back to a more optimistic view of things in future volumes. Another road not taken seemed to be represented by *The Silent Stars Go By*, a novel in an alternate universe in which the Irish industrialise early and end up ruling the world, in a fashion that is benign, but not beyond reproach. The novel seems to end in a way pointing at a sequel, but we never got one. I somehow have the feeling that White had at least one good 'darker' novel in him that he never quite figured out how to write.

I agree with two things that Bruce says about the Rottensteiner–Lem matter. First, 'many English-language authors', and even humble English-language fans, could have told (and indeed tried tell) Franz decades ago about many of the things he finally seems to have learned the hard way. Second, 'even writers made of clay often write very well.' Although sometimes not quite as well, nor with such startling originality, as they think they do.

The Sparrow, commented on by both Rottensteiner and Benford, is an interesting subject in itself, as a book that seemed, in its time, to have virtues counterbalancing its many admitted flaws, but whose virtues are getting a little harder to discern with the passage of years. I expect I should reread it at some point. (This fading away happens to some authors, even to some one-time genre mainstays. As I have remarked before, it's getting harder and harder to find people who take Ray Bradbury or A. E. van Vogt seriously as SF writers.) On a different issue, by internal evidence, I find it all but impossible to believe that Russell never read Blish. I know that she denies

reading him, and I don't know any reason she would have to lie about the matter, so I think she must have read the book as a teenager and had it plant itself in her subconscious, while she completely forgotten about it on the conscious level.

My own rereading of *A Case of Conscience* as an adult was instructive, because by then I knew enough Catholic theology to follow where Blish was going, and not just to be blown away by his seeming erudition. I could therefore see that he was making up out of whole cloth all sorts of development of Catholic doctrine posited to happen between the time of writing and the time the story is set, development that is critical to the way the novel plays out. The novel loses some of its force when the reader comes to see how much of it is just Blish waving his arms.

My frustrations with Microsoft Word are similar to Skel's, except that I have discovered how to turn off the Word features that most annoy me, thereupon transforming it into just a mostly harmless bloated version of a civilised word processor. What used to really drive me up the wall was using Word at work, as supplied by a server that kept losing my personal profile, and therefore kept turning all those annoying features back on. So I pretty much gave up on Word at work, fortunately having alternatives of sorts available to me.

You speak, Bruce, of toying with the thought of organising Oz mystery fandom. One way this perhaps could be accomplished would be by piggybacking off of an existing SF convention. I'm not sure that this has ever been done, but Charlotte's losing Worldcon bid included (rather late in the game) the idea of including a full mystery track at their Worldcon. They reasoned that surveys had shown that some high proportion of SF fans also regularly read mysteries, and that as a result you had more mystery readers showing up in one place for an SF Worldcon than ever attended a Bouchercon (the world mystery convention). Moreover, I know that Australian sf conventions are typically less well attended than US ones, partly due to lower population densities. I don't know if Oz's small sf convention sizes pose difficulties in negotiating with hotels, etc., but if they do, there might be purely logistic advantages in combining a mystery convention with an SF one, thus increasing the size of the convention even if the members did not much cross over between programming tracks.

I had better close here and try to get some chores finished today. Snow is still falling a bit, and drifting considerably, so there is probably no point in digging my car out until tomorrow. But there are plenty of things for me to do inside.

18 February, 2003

I finally got around today looking at the January *Locus*, and there staring at me was a Connie Willis interview entitled 'The Facts of Death'. I don't know how I came to pass over Willis in my recent loc when I was discussing SF and mortality. A contributing but certainly not decisive factor was that I still have not read her 2001 novel *Passage*. Onto the look-for list it goes. (For a good while, I was not keeping the list up, and it turns out that without it, I never got around to seeking out various recent works that, somewhere in the back of my mind, I knew to exist.) Connie indicates that her mother died unexpectedly (in childbirth) when Connie was twelve, and that this has influenced most or all of her fiction one way or another. The interview very articulately presents what are obviously some long-considered thoughts, and I recommend it. I do note that when she discusses how SF in general tends to relate to death, her examples generally fall in pretty much the categories I had listed — life extension and wholesale death through war or disaster.

The snowfall turned out to be an all-time record for Baltimore, about 28 inches. Snow total was about the same here in Columbia, although substantially less in Washington, DC. I finally finished digging my car out today.

20 February 2003

Feature letter of comment

Jeff Hamill asks: can science fiction can be literature?

JEFF HAMILL
4903 Fremont Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98103

I am interested in reading the articles by Stanislaw Lem which appeared in *SF Commentary*. As far as I know, there were (at least) three of them:

- 'Ten Commandments of Reading the Magazines', *SFC* No. 6 (1969), p. 26
- 'Sex in SF', *SFC* No 22 (1970), pp. 2–10, 40–49
- 'Poland: SF in the Linguistic Trap', *SFC* No 9 (1970), pp. 27–33.

If you still have copies of these issues (and why not; there're only from 30-plus years ago), I would like to order them. Please let me know if they are available, and how much I should send you for them. (I found your e-mail address from the pdf copy of *SFC* No. 77, posted to the web, and there it says that a subscription is $US30 for 5 issues, which is $US6 per issue. But the price of back issues, and especially very old back issues, may be different.)

If you only have your own file copies, and the articles

don't (yet) exist in pdf format, I would be happy to send you money to pay for photocopying and mailing the Lem articles, if you would be willing to do that.

2 December 2003

That Lem had his own take on *The Left Hand of Darkness* does not surprise me, particularly since Lem, to my way of thinking, never showed much interest in nor understanding of questions of women's oppression. And that Le Guin could answer him well on this ground does not surprise me either, since her thinking here is much closer to my own. (I particularly like Joanna Russ's *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, although I have only just started her book.)

Lem I enjoy for his humanism, social commentary and satire, and the questions of philosophy that he raises, but he is weak on problems of women's liberation and national oppression. That Lem wants his translators to not use 'he or she' when referring to someone of unknown gender in translating his writing, but instead to translate things as he wrote them, is understandable from the point of view of literary and historical honesty. But for him to say that he is thoroughly opposed to the convention altogether is to betray a lack of understanding of the changes in the world since the 1970s.

Lem's rightly infamous remark that 'the number of female geniuses is certainly nowhere near the number of males' (he means the number of male geniuses — possibly this was mistranslated; I don't have access to the original Polish — see Swirski's *A Stanislaw Lem Reader*, pp. 55–6) — does not take into account the fact of sexual oppression and the myth, very important to the rise of world capitalism, of male superiority. The very small number of 'female geniuses' can well be explained by the powerful social barriers that women have faced and (to a slightly lesser extent) still face. Sophie Germain is an excellent example: when she first wrote to Karl Gauss, she signed her letter using a man's name, fearing that Gauss would not take a letter from a woman mathematician seriously. (See Harold M. Edwards, *Fermat's Last Theorem*, p. 61.) How many more women there were who were equally as capable in whatever fields — and as time goes on we learn of more and more who were brilliant but in their own day unknown — we will never know precisely. And in any case the 'genius' concept is not terribly useful in a scientific understanding of the world, since it is such a subjective category.

No writer — no person — forms opinions in a vacuum, not even a perfect one. We all grow up and live in a particular social environment, in a country with a specific history and traditions, and all this deeply influences our thinking. Being determines consciousness, if you want to put it that way. The vast majority of science fiction writers in the United States (and most other 'advanced' countries) adopt and accept the values of capitalism, of imperialism, and their work is correspondingly shallow and superficial. This is true in the arts and literature and popular fiction in general, but it for me more frustrating in the field of science fiction because of science fiction's promise of a vision of the future. Instead, we have the values and standards and mores of the present projected forward for ages. Hence most science fiction is trash, a commodity to be bought and sold, produced to commercial demands.

In the so-called socialist countries, where capitalism no longer is the dominant economic system — and this is still true in Poland today — the marketplace no longer determines the content of the arts; this is politically determined instead. Under the domination of Stalinism, this political content was primitive and essentially reactionary, denying in practice basic human solidarity, so as to maintain the privileged position of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Free expression, national liberation, workers' solidarity, liberation of women, were all turned into their opposites in the name of social progress. Fossilised police-state rule came to a crashing end in the early 1990s in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, but politics is still very backward in these countries. At the same time, there was the background of revolutionary upheavals in history, science and the arts, and the assumption inherited from the Russian Revolution of 1917 that history, philosophy, and human consciousness in general, stem, one way or another, from everyday economic interests and conflicts.

Stanislaw Lem is no exception. The contradictions in his writing reflect, in their own way, the contradictions that an intellectual in Poland faced and faces. This explains both the liberating effect in his writings overall and irritating limitations of his work in regard to women.

4 December 2003

Among other projects during the last few weeks I have been spending some time reading some more SF and SF criticism, with the hope of answering your question about what other writers and critics I like. (I vaguely remember reading somewhere that some people object the using 'SF' to refer to science fiction generally, but it's a convenient abbreviation, and I am not much interested in the finer points of such distinctions for now.)

Actually, the list of SF writers that I enjoy reading is very short: Lem, Le Guin, the Strugatsky brothers. And a few others: Vladimir Savchenko, Ilya Varshavsky. I might possibly add Kim Stanley Robinson to this list.

Others I might enjoy if I read more by them: Thomas Disch, Yefremov, Harlan Ellison, Joanna Russ, Samuel Delany.

There are a number of others writers whose work I enjoy, but who I consider to be not really SF writers but writers of literature (I will come back to the distinction later). They are often thought to be sort of 'honorary' SF writers (but only by SF fans, and not by anyone else): Vonnegut, Calvino, Borges, Swift, Frigyes Karinthy, Jack London, Aldous Huxley.

Then there is the 'light entertainment division' (what Orwell called 'good bad books'): those genre SF writers whose work is fun on a certain elementary level: Isaac Asimov, Fred Brown, William Tenn, Arthur Clarke, Harry Harrison, Fritz Leiber, Larry Niven (!!), John Varley.

There are also a few authors who I particularly dislike: Heinlein, Bradbury, Poul Anderson, Doris Lessing (not really SF), the Bruce Sterling/William Gibson approach (but not Sterling and Gibson themselves), and Jerry Pournelle. I must confess that I have read absolutely nothing by any of them except for Heinlein and Bradbury, and my judgment is purely a matter of political prejudice. Some of Bradbury's early stories (in *The Illustrated Man*,

The Martian Chronicles, etc.) are excellent, even if not to my (political–philosophical) taste. But my politics do not totally determine my taste in fiction — for example, Borges was an ultrareactionary, and Larry Niven is a right-wing libertarian.

There are a couple of writers who are not easily classifiable for me: Stapledon and Philip K. Dick. The sweep of Stapledon's ideas is fascinating enough, but I find his fiction hard going, dull. As for Philip K. Dick, I have never forgiven him for the role he played in the expulsion of Lem from his honorary membership in the SFWA. I know that Dick was not the prime mover in that business, but I have no patience with police informers of any kind. This has prejudiced me in attempting an objective evaluation of his writing, or even in reading his books in the first place. I did read *Ubik* — on Lem's recommendation — and, well, I did not get much from it.

Since I had last written, I have read (actually, re-read) Lem's *Peace On Earth* and *Memoirs of a Space Traveler*, as well as Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven*. I also last night finished Le Guin's *The Word for World Is Forest* (which I had not read before).

Besides reading the three issues of *Science-Fiction Studies* that I have, I had never read any SF criticism until a couple of months ago. The only exceptions are Lem's *Microworlds* articles, and two books by John Clute: *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia*, and *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (which, as I already told you, I had read from cover to cover). In recent weeks, I have read portions of Darko Suvin's *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction*, and Le Guin's *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, as well as bits and pieces of Brooks Landon's *Science Fiction After 1900*.

My main interests in life revolve around politics and the history and philosophy of science, while my academic background (to the extent that I have any) is in the fine arts. I have strong opinions about the political character of anything I read, whether fiction or nonfiction, SF included. But I have no experience in literary criticism, and I do not want anyone to think otherwise. Nor am I well read in science fiction in general, although I enjoy the form. The problem is when it comes to content!

Darko Suvin's book I find difficult, and I like it much less than I had hoped. To be uncharitable, it needs to be translated into English. Here is a somewhat arbitrary sample: 'Further, some basic structural characteristics of utopian fiction seem to flow logically from its status as a discourse about a particular historically alternative and better community' (*Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction*, p. 40.)

But the problem may be my own lack of experience with literary criticism — I really need to re-read this book more carefully.

In any event, the more general problem that I have concerns the claim by the SF community, fans and writers and critics that there is no distinction between SF and literature. For example, here is H. Bruce Franklin in *Future Perfect* (2nd edition, 1978), p. vii: 'Science fiction is a form of literature that developed as part of industrial society, and it is intimately connected with the rise of modern science and technology. In fact, one good working definition of science fiction may be the literature which, growing with science and technology, evaluates it and relates it meaningfully to the rest of human existence.'

I have no intention of entering into the What Is Science Fiction? debate, except to point out that any definition of anything can be useful in appropriate contexts, but a positive hindrance in inappropriate contexts. (Saying 'I know what science fiction is when I point to it' does not get us very far, since I can also say 'I know what the Pacific Ocean is when I point to it', which might suggest that I think that the answer to 'What Is Science Fiction?' is 'Science Fiction Is the Pacific Ocean'.)

H. Bruce Franklin's definition, to my mind, has some drawbacks. First, any modern literature whatever is connected, one way or another, with the development of industrial society. This is as true of Regency romances written today as it is of science fiction, and the production of both reflect social needs in modern capitalist society.

More to the point, I think that it is a very rare event that science fiction grows 'with science and technology, evaluates it and relates it meaningfully to the rest of human existence'.

I tend to agree with Stanislaw Lem's attitude, as expressed in his article 'Cosmology and Science Fiction' in his book *Microworlds*: '2. Now then, what is the relationship between cosmology and science fiction? The facts are clear: both universes, that of the writers and that of the scientists, grow ever more apart' (p. 203).

On the whole, SF seems to pick up the latest buzzwords in science without understanding much about the development of science itself, much less how science may relate to the rest of human existence.

The production of SF is, by and large, the production of articles for mass consumption that tell us nothing about science and technology. Only in the most rare of cases is any SF related meaningfully to the rest of human existence — on the contrary, almost all SF presents a false picture of the realities of human existence, making it harder, and not easier, to understand the world.

I do not mean to single out H. Bruce Franklin for blame here, particularly since he is a serious critic, who writes well and who does real work to show the connection between writers and the society in which they lived, as well as their particular circumstances. Brooks Landon, in his book *Science Fiction After 1900*, makes a similar mistake. On page 31, he says: 'Science fiction is the literature that considers the impact of science and technology on humanity.' If, instead, he had written, 'Science fiction *should be* the literature that considers the impact of science and technology on humanity', then he might have something there — but it would be a recommendation, or a prescription, but not a definition of what science fiction actually is.

I want to end on making the distinction between SF and literature, as I promised above. When I worked some years ago in an oil refinery, I noticed that one of my co-workers read science fiction all the time. We were not particularly buddies, but I recommended that he try reading Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and I lent him a copy. He gave it back to me a couple of days later, and told me that he didn't like it. When I asked him why, he said, 'It made me think too much.' If I had to sum up the distinction between fiction and literature in a few words, then literature is fiction that makes you think too much.

Literature, as opposed to genre fiction, does make you think too much. You learn something about the world and relate it meaningfully to the rest of human existence.

The essence of genre fiction is, I think, about telling a story. But literature is about more than that: the quality of writing, characterisation, dialogue, drama, form, parody, pathos and many other means are used to communicate something about the real world (although the means used may be fantasy, fairy tale, parable or anything but realistic in form). In addition, the distinction between fiction and literature varies with time, with the evolution of social relations. Some work is forgotten, other work is revived. The distinction between literature and fiction is not absolute.

Even so, Science Fiction still, to most people interested in literature, is a sub-branch of fiction. So while many SF fans, writers and critics hope to include such writers as Vonnegut, Calvino, Borges, Swift, Frigyes Karinthy, Jack London, Aldous Huxley in the ranks of a sort of honorary science fiction authors, the reality is otherwise. I substantially agree with this point as made by Lem in 'Science Fiction: A Hopeless Case — With Exceptions' (in *Microworlds*).

27 January 2004

Since I last wrote you, I have read Greg Egan's *Schild's Ladder,* and I just started John Kessel's *Good News from Outer Space*. I liked Egan's book, but not as much as I wanted to. The physics–cosmology part is fascinating, of course, and his ideas about the various forms of human existence are also well thought out and realistic, and there are some very funny bits here and there. (In the middle of Chapter 8 (p. 144 in my edition), where Yann says, 'Why haven't you indolent fleshers transformed the whole galaxy into chocolate?' Mariama replies, 'Give us time'; at the start of chapter 9: 'Everybody complains about the laws of physics, but no one does anything about them'; and at the beginning of Chapter 10, where Yann says, 'You *can* obfuscate, can't you? Physicists have been taking simple mathematical ideas and obfuscating them for centuries. It must have been part of your training, surely?' are my favourites.)

I am not at all sure that I agree with Elaine Cochrane's statement that almost all his characters are AIs. I would say that *almost none* of his characters are AIs, but that they are not biologically human beings any more either. Rather, they appear to be forms of a new stage in human existence, with some very interesting and imaginative properties.

Having said that, the main frustration that I have with the book is that while Egan does not write badly, and the story flows along well enough, that his writing and storytelling, like so many other authors, lack sharp edges. He is Telling a Story rather than Writing a Book. I am not sure how to express myself more clearly on this point. John Kessel's *Good News from Outer Space*, on the other hand, I like a great deal, and his writing *does* have precisely that sharpness, that edge, that I value. One feels that each character and situation is drawn with exactly the words needed, neither more nor less, and that each word used is the only one that will work. The book is obviously a satire, and I am not yet far enough into it to say whether I like Kessel's politics or not, but that is a side issue.

One last comment about *Schild's Ladder*. Greg Egan does not really talk about the way society is organised in 20,000 years. He is of course under no obligation to talk about this subject *directly* — there is no reason for his book to be a political tract — but the way society is organised should form *a background to* his novel. And it does, but in a very nebulous way. You get the impression that everyone is Very Nice and Responsible, even the members of Other Factions, but this is too much like the 'If Scientists (Physicists and Mathematicians and Chemists and maybe some Biochemists — Hard Sciences only, please) Ran the World Everyone Would Be Rational and Life Would Be Better' point of view for my taste. Scientists have their political and social prejudices just like everyone else, and the Aren't We All Fair and Honorable bit is self-serving mythology endemic to modern capitalist greed. (For example, see *Betrayers of the Truth — Fraud and Deceit in the Halls of Science,* by William Broad and Nicholas Wade.)

27 June 2004

I have been enjoying reading the old issues of *SFC* in the meantime. They are a lot of fun, and they have a certain mimeographed charm that the most recent issues, 78 and 79, don't have — but don't mistake my meaning, 78 and 79 look very nice indeed. (I have only skimmed through them as yet, except to read Franz Rottensteiner's letter [from 1998?] and your comments.)

I have been printing the .PDF files of the Lem articles et al. out so I can read hard copies and make marginal notes to my heart's content, something that I would never do with original materials. (I have no intention of making any copies beyond reading copies for myself, certainly. I find it very difficult to read anything beyond a paragraph or two on-screen — I print out any long e-mails I get, read them, and then recycle the paper.)

Parts of the interview with Lem in *SFC* 12 I found particularly interesting. One bit that my wife, Agnes, and I got a good laugh out of was where Lem and the interviewer are discussing fashions of the year 2000 (see p. 21). Agnes, as a sideline, teaches fashion history here, and when I read this to her last night she commented that the fashions of the year 2000 are not really all that different than the fashions of the year 1970, except, perhaps, that pop and op art patterns are no longer in style. Big changes in fashion happen when there are big changes in society as a whole — such as the French Revolution, for example. Or the development of cheap cotton prints with the industrial revolution. Otherwise, fashions remain really much the same, only more so, as so much of what is allegedly new in fashion is actually borrowed ideas and styles from other eras.

The other point which stuck me came towards the end of the interview, where Lem said, 'First of all it is necessary to bring some order into human affairs on earth; afterwards we can go out to the planets to settle there.' I would not have quite expressed this idea the same way — 'bring some order' has a very bad sound to it — but I would certainly agree that the first priority of humanity is to restructure the world so that there is at least basic food, clothing, housing, education, medical care (to begin a list of what is needed but not to exhaust

it) available for everyone on earth before we concern ourselves with space. We have a long way to go to reach even that minimal standard, but it must be humanity's immediate task to do so. Unfortunately, it will take revolutionary upheavals and civil wars to sweep away the economic and political domination of the capitalist system (and its apologists, which includes virtually every contemporary political party) to even be in a position to make a start on this project. And the destruction of the old system is not enough, as the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1917 shows — a new revolutionary instrument that expresses the will of ordinary people, where the rights and dignity of all are respected, must come into being, at first country by country, then worldwide. It is possible, and it will happen.

This is one reason why I am not an enthusiastic supporter of such things as the projected Mars mission. The government of the United States has the vain fantasy of using this project to bolster its prestige in the world — here on Earth — and perhaps getting some useful military applications out of the technology used for the missions. That is all. Humanity will gain nothing from it, and, in fact, rallying support for going to Mars is a useful diversion from more mundane problems.

But the day will come when the situation will be otherwise, and space exploration (by humans and machines) will be an important priority. But not now, not today, and not until humanity's much more immediate problems are resolved. Mars can wait for awhile. A century or two, or even a few millennia, won't make much difference, at least in terms of scientific priorities.

I should make it clear at this point that I am very much in favour of the scientific investigation of space, but the specific priorities should be primarily worked out by scientists in the field, based upon the needs of space science itself (and not current whims of the U.S. military establishment et al.). Humanity could then collectively decide, based on the widest possible discussion and education, what projects proposed by space scientists to pursue, in the context of the needs of world society taken as a whole.

In *SFC* 25 there appeared Philip Jose Farmer's answer to Lem's 'SF: A Hopess Case — With Exceptions'. When I got to 'most hippies are marxists, or claim to be' bit I laughed so much that I had a hard time reading any further. But on the next page (p. 25), PJF says, 'Actually, some fairly old ideas are all we need. What we need, and quickly, is a worldwide economy of abundance. Not the present worldwide economy of scarcity. We need a system which combines the economy of abundance with social and psychological systems wherein individuals have a genuine opportunity to develop their full potentiality. The old-fashioned virtues: love, honour, decency, are enough.'

Well, I agree with the first sentence. 'Workers of the world, unite!' is a fairly old idea, and still a good one, assuming that the point is that working people the world over have common problems and common tasks, and assuming the point is not to hide behind the phrase for your own petty privileges (as the so-called communists of Russia did, and they still do in China today). The last two sentences of the quote are pretty good, too. But how do we get there from here?

The middle part of the quote shows some major confusion: our world has abundance for some (a very small percentage of the population) and mostly scarcity for elseone else.

You wrote one thing in *SFC* 26 that caught my eye, and that I totally agree with: '... science fiction ... rarely talks about futures that are really possible' (see p. 28.) Yeah, that's the problem right there. (I leave aside the possiblity that a work of fiction may depict an impossible or at least unlikely future for reasons of satire, or as a fable, in order to say something important about the present. But that is rarely done also.) The reasons for this are primarily political. In order to talk about a future that is really possible, you have to understand what possiblities the present really offers. Here political judgement is needed.

Ursula Le Guin's answer to Lem in *SFC* 26 is very good, I agree.

The first issues of *SFC* appeared at about the same time that I first met and hung out with Denny Lien, when he was a graduate student at UA. (Denny is, I think, just about the same age as you, while I am a little younger, born in 1951. It made more of a difference in the early 1970s.) A bunch of English Department grad students — including Denny — and I used to pack ourselves into a car and go to a sleazy drive-in theater just outside Tucson to watch the sort of movies that MST3K would run a dozen years later. I lost track of him for many years; the last time we saw each other was in 1976. Then a couple of years ago I bought a copy of *Here Comes Civilization: the Complete Science Fiction of William Tenn* (Volume II), and I saw his name mentioned in the Acknowledgments, for tracking down stories. I sent an e-mail to the publishers, asking for Denny's e-mail address (I knew that he used to live in Minneapolis, but people do move), got it, and he and I exchanged several friendly e-mails since. We haven't written each other in awhile now, but all my correspondence with old friends is like that — I can fire off letter after letter for some time, and then there will be long gaps of months or years or even decades ...

I mention all this because Denny is, as you of course know, one of your recent contributors of *SFC*.

I wish that at some point that you will be able to scan *all* of the early issues of *SFC* — I would love to read Darko Suvin's 'A Survey of Soviet Science Fiction,' in No 35, pp. 59–68, and I keep finding other articles like that.

Let me know how much the reprint set of *SFC* 1-8 costs, and I will send you money for a copy. I also plan to sooner or later order every back issue you've got — next month I hope to be able to send you US$100 towards that goal.

I should have added one other author to the list of SF authors I enjoy — Alexei Panshin, author of the 'Star Well' series, but for that only. I have no patience with Sufism and philosophies of transcendence, but for that trilogy I will forgive him a great deal.

15–19 February 2005

A couple of months ago I finished Wolfe's *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*, and then a week later I read Disch's *334*. I enjoyed both books, for very different reasons. I re-read George Turner's reviews of them, reprinted in *SFC* 76, and I found that George already said much of what I would have to say myself, at least so far as the literary side of

things goes.

Reviewing *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*, George says: 'It is a lovely book. The identity theme is not one which has ever interested me because it seems a philosophical dead end — a meaningless question shouted into the void, like "What was before God?" or "How can an infinite creation have a beginning?" But while Wolfe casts his spell I *was* interested in it, vitally. And that is one of the things good writing is about. If I was sucked in, I was sucked in gladly, and *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* takes my present vote as one of the most attractive of all SF books written.' This sums up my own reaction pretty well. The strongest feeling that I came away with when I finished *The Fifth Head* was that I will have to carefully re-read the book, since I missed so much the first time through.

Having said that, the book does not give any sort of realistic view of the future, and, in its defence, it is not meant to. The best literature tells us something about ourselves, about the present, regardless of the form in which it was written.

Disch's *334*, on the other hand, is intended to be a picture of humanity's future, or at least one possible future. This book, too, will bear re-reading, and is beautifully written and structured. I enjoyed it a great deal.

George Turner's 1975 review states: '... in general it is a work of substance and truth, of artistic and moral integrity and of both dramatic and comic power. It is important because it takes a common SF theme — the if-this-goes-on type of future — strips it of gimmickry and genuinely *looks* through the time-telescope. It is important because it challenges what we arrogantly term the "mainstream" novel on one of its favorite grounds — the realistic middle-class novel — and demonstrates that the SF approach can provide a fresh statement without the aid of spaceships, telepaths, super-drugs or gross overwriting.'

Later on, George says: 'The points around which Disch builds his future are sparse but deep-reaching: Overpopulation has caused the termite structures of huge tenement buildings not only to remain as part of the city scene but to proliferate. Family size is regulated by law, and floor space by an agency called, sinisterly enough, MODICUM, which ensures that everyone has at least the minimum necessary accommodation. 'Minimum', unfortunately, cannot be varied much for the needs of individuals. The educational system is hinted at rather than discussed. It seems to be more efficient than ours at forcefeeding but also to offer considerable variety of opportunity; the children appear to mature intellectually earlier than ours. All kinds of marriage, homo and hetero, are recognized by the state. And TV entertainment of high emotional content floods the networks day and night, invading conversation, dreams, attitudes and thought.'

My main criticisms of *334* are twofold, and both political. First, barring some sort of mass movement of social protest, then such an institution as MODICUM, 'which ensures that everyone has at least the minimum necessary accommodation,' would not exist. No government of a capitalist country ever provides any kind of social benefit (such as housing or education) for the mass of ordinary people unless it is forced to. Otherwise, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, a popular way of expressing the economic fact, with all its political and social consequences, that as profits decline and new markets dry up, the capitalist class is in less and less of a position to make concessions. Homelessness grows, wages decline, bankruptcies increase, health care worsens, libraries close. And since the 1970s, that is exactly what has happened.

My second criticism is based on the other side of the same coin. *334* says nothing about any attempt whatever by anyone to change this future. I do not expect that *334* should portray the heroic proletariat rising up against the imperialist dogs — that would be too much to expect, and is not the point of the novel. But to be realistic — and *334* is one of the most realistic novels that I have ever read — someone in that future would imagine that life could be different, that a better kind of world could be built. Revolution, and mass movements for social justice, are a part of human history, from Spartacus to the French Revolution, from peasant revolts to the Civil Rights movement, in the United States and elsewhere. Disch is of course under no obligation to portray any of that, but such possibilities lurk in the background, so to speak, of any future that is such a direct continuation of the present. (It certainly formed part of the background of the era in which Disch wrote *334*.)

A couple of weeks ago I finished reading Greg Bear's *Eon*, which I did not like. His basic assumptions about the future — like those of most SF technophiles — stop short of envisioning any fundamental social change or political evolution. If anything, these technophiles tend to look backwards in this respect.

For example, toward the end of chapter 52, Bear writes that in Axis City, 'A number of citizens ... had found ways to create loopholes and to circumvent the ultimate penalties being put into effect to deter crime — recycling of the citizen's body and inactivation of the stored personality.'

Since there is no discussion of crime in general earlier in the chapter, it appears as though the 'ultimate penalties' (that is, capital punishment) are designed to deter *all* crime, from jaywalking to shoplifting to murder. This seems, somehow, excessive, and to be more a throwback to mediaevalism than any sort of progress. And would a society where the continuity of human life was so taken for granted view murder in the same way that we do? (I leave aside the very doubtful thesis that capital punishment deters crime. The real purpose of capital punishment is to terrorize the dispossessed — guilt and innocence has nothing to do with it; for example, Sacco and Vanzetti, or Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.)

Bear fits right in the mainstream of American politics. Less politely, he repeats the propaganda of the ruling class of the United States. He takes the American Way of Life as the best of all possible worlds, and does not challenge any of the homespun assumptions of the middle classes. The political system of the Axis City is based on that of the United States; Patricia Vasquez's advocate, Oligand Toller, tells her so.

Bear also leans on the old hackneyed standby, 'You can't change human nature,' the ultimate argument of everyone who resists change, that is, everyone who defends the existing social order. Well, the reality is that

everything changes. But the key is to discover how change comes about and in what direction change is possible in given circumstances. And what people call 'human nature' (to the extent that there is such a thing) is a product of history, economics, and class interests. In the middle of chapter 58, there is this conversation:

> 'Thirteen hundred years, and people are still people,' Heineman mused with an edge of bitterness. 'Still squabbling.'
>
> 'True, and not entirely true,' Olmy said. 'In your day, many people were so severely handicapped by personality disorders or faulty thinking structures that they often acted against their own best interests. If they had clearly defined goals, they could not reason or even intuit the clear paths to attain those goals. Often adversaries had the same goals, even very similar belief systems, yet hated each other bitterly.'

This reduces the fundamental events of history — war, revolution, civil war, and lesser conflicts — to the personal level with a vengeance: they are a result of confused individual thinking. I find it impossible to take this idea seriously.

The inhabitants of the Axis City wear flags over their left shoulders of nations that don't even exist ten years after *Eon* was written — the Soviet Union, in particular. It was not impossible to foresee that the old nation-states would someday break up. Given what the USSR had become, its dissolution was inevitable. The United Kingdom is also suffering from centrifugal forces. The exact timing of when these events happen is not important, but understanding that such things happen, is. The point is that Greg Bear takes the world as he sees it and politically freezes it forever. For him, history is over.

A few pages before the Epilogue, when Coprep Rosen Gardner comes to see Hoffman, Hoffman thinks to herself that she 'was beginning to get a sense of the orthodox Naderites — dedicated, almost chivalric, not unlike some of the political conservatives she had dealt with on Earth.' If Hoffman has never met anyone politically dedicated — I leave aside chivalric, which I find laughable — besides some political conservatives, then she has never met anyone else at all. There are politically dedicated conservatives, liberals, social-democrats, stalinists, maoists, and even fascists, which does not exhaust the list. Not all of them are dedicated, but some are. People who are dedicated to their beliefs come in all possible political stripes. I'm a communist, and I think of myself as fairly dedicated. It is a very serious mistake to think that people who don't agree with your own beliefs cannot have deep convictions of their own.

And in *Epilog: Three/Pavel Mirsky: Personal Record*, near the very end, there is another odd phrase: 'I have survived the Worker's Paradise.' Calling the Soviet Union the Workers' Paradise was invariably done only by its enemies. I include the Stalinists among them, since they did as much as anyone — with the possible exception of Nazi Germany — to turn the Soviet Union into the Workers' Hell. I name Nazi Germany as only a possible exception, since the policies of Stalin (really, of the bureaucrats that he represented) allowed (blindly, not consciously) fascism to come to power in Germany in the 1930s by saying that the Social Democrats were worse than the Nazis — and then, once German fascism was in, Stalin purged the Red Army mercilessly (and the rest of the country). Pogroms against the Jews — deportations of entire nationalities — thought-control in the arts — not to mention the imprisonment and execution of millions of ordinary workers, especially including all possible alternative political opposition — the partition of Poland, the invasion of Finland — all this alienated the sympathies of tens of millions of workers from the Soviet Union. Thus the Soviet Union was in a much weaker position to fight the 1941 German invasion than it could have been.

Now for the two Philip K. Dick novels that I just read.

Solar Lottery left me cold. I find the idea of worldwide public acceptance of premeditated murder totally repellent, and I could not force myself to examine the book more deeply than that. As far as the writing goes, I found it something of a mess.

The Man in the High Castle was a much more interesting book, and much more coherently written. But before I write to you about it, I am going to read the collection of essays and articles about Dick put out by *SFS* (*Philip K. Dick: 40 Articles from Science Fiction Studies*), which I should receive in the mail in a few days. Plus I would like reading anything that appeared in *SFC* about Dick. Is any of it in digital form, or posted someplace?

Also, I just finished reading Thomas M. Disch's *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of*.There are many bits, here and there, that I like. An outstanding exception is his vituperative comments on Ursula Le Guin. (The whole chapter on 'Can Girls Play Too? Feminizing Science Fiction' seems rather condescending.) On page 127, Disch claims that Le Guin says in her 1973 speech in Bellingham that *every* male SF writer has a Captain Davidson (from *The Word for World Is Forest*) for a hero. This is patently not true. Le Guin, in the part of her speech that Disch quotes (I have not read the speech as a whole, but I would think that Disch would quote a different section of it if it would better support his argument), explicitly says that she is talking about most SF, not all SF. Disch states, 'SF had been a magnet for writers of left-leaning tendencies.' Maybe so, but are they really the majority of writers? Do they publish the majority of books? (I leave aside the fact that there are leftists and there are leftists: Tolstoi is not Lenin.) Certainly what Le Guin says is true of, say, Heinlein.

Disch criticises Le Guin for editing of *The Norton Book of Science Fiction* in such a way that only science fiction of North America, 1960–1990, is included (and thereby leaving out New Wave British SF, as well as American SF before 1960). I have never looked at the *Norton Book*, so I have no opinion of Disch's critique of its editing, but he leaves out another important exclusion: science fiction in languages other than English. No Strugatsky, no Lem, no Nesvadba. Well, I suppose that is to be expected if one claims that SF is an exclusively American industry (at least in the sense that 'the future represented by SF writers continues to be an American future.') This omission (by Disch) is all the more notable in that he makes the same omission in his own book — there is no mention of any non-Anglophone SF writer other than Jules Verne (the index does refer us to Kafka, Tolstoi, and to Ionesco and

Calvino, but these writers are not primarily known for their SF). The stress on America First does not do Disch any credit.

Disch's summary of Le Guin's 'few, simple, political opinions' also strikes a jarring note. I will have to read her introduction for myself to see if there is any justice in it. (I thought I saw a copy of the *Norton Book* in a secondhand bookshop, but when I went back this afternoon to look through it, it was gone.) In any case, there is not anything wrong in and of itself in having 'few, simple, political opinions.' It depends on what your opinions are. Complexity in politics (or anything else) is not a virtue if it is not necessary. I don't agree with the opinions of Le Guin that Disch ascribes to her (I would have fought on the side of the Union in the Civil War in the Unted States, for example, so not all war is wrong), but if you were to say that your only political opinion is that anything that benefits ordinary people worldwide (provided that the benefit is real and not demogogy), is good, and anything that hurts ordinary people is bad, then, if this principle is intelligently applied and appropriate conclusions are drawn from it, I could subscribe to that political opinion. It is certainly a simple opinion, in one sense. The problem would lie in its specific application, but that is true of any geenral opinion about anything.

Well, I am not trying to review *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of*. I only wanted to mention a couple of points about it that particularly struck me.

10 August 2004

World's longest 'We also heard from ...'

WE ALSO HEARD FROM ...

BOB SABELLA (Budd Lake, New Jersey), who recently retired from teaching, but back in 2004 had recently started sending me his excellent fanzine *Visions of Paradise*, which now appears regularly on efanzines.com (the home of all good things).

KRIN PENDER-GUNN (Blackburn, Victoria) more or less left fandom in 2003, rightly feeling that she had been rather ignored after her estimable husband Ian Gunn died in 1998. However, we are pleased to report that she has gradually re-established links with many people she knew from the 1980s and 1990s, and has been selling various art objects — and CD-ROMs of Ian Gunn's artwork — at recent conventions. She was involved in the ANZAPA 40th anniversary afternoon tea in 2008, and we really enjoyed the day she visited us at Greensborough recently.

COLIN STEELE (Hawker, ACT) thanked me for defending his reviews to Martin Morse Wooster ('As you correctly point out, the *Canberra Times* at that stage only gave very small slots of text and to some extent, still do. While I don't get weekly — it is more like monthly — I'm still more current than any other newspaper SF reviewers'). As well as sending me occasional longer articles, Colin also reviews on Gayle Lovett's (Gaslight Books') website at: http://www.gaslightbooks.com.au/.

KIM HUETT (Woden, ACT) has been sending me interesting articles archived from his enormous cache of old fanzines, and also some photos ('I have a photo here, which Graham Stone tells me is of Frank Bryning, Bill Veney and Chas Mustchin. He also claims it was taken by Arthur Clarke in 1955. I found it in the pages of an old fanzine and sent Graham Stone a copy for identification').

JOE SZABO (Forest Hill, Victoria) has been not quite so busy with his artwork in recent years. I've been to several of his exhibitions, and opened one of them. In 2003 he wrote: 'Our dog passed away a couple of months ago. We suspect that she was poisoned by one of our neighbours. It was a sad reminder when I read the article on Theodore and Oscar, but I guess we must move on. Have you any furry friends left?' We usually have five cats in the house. Polly (her photo appeared in an *SFC* in 1994) is now feeling a bit old, but the black brethren, Flicker, Harry and Archie, are chipper, and Sampson the tabby looms in Elaine's front room.

JOHN BERRY ('the English John Berry' from South Hatfields in Herts) has been rather ill in 2010, but until then was still in touch with some fanzine editors. He also has family who live near Canberra, and has visited them without ever making contact with Australian fandom. ('My wife and I love travelling on Australian buses, so it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that we may meet in just a few months time.') But it did not happen.

JONATHAN STRAHAN (Mt Lawley, Western Australia) enjoyed *SFC* 78, and answered my query about his own critical journal, *The Coode Street Review*, which saw one very good issue, then disappeared: '*The Coode Street Review* wasn't abandoned for financial reasons. It had far more to do with my increasing overseas commitments, the loss of a publishing partner (I just enjoy working in groups more), laziness and inertia, and a whole bunch of other bad reasons. I sometimes ponder that if I'd been disciplined about everything there would be another fourteen or so issues of *Coode St* out by now, but I'm not, and since *Coode* No 1 was published I have added two kids, a mortgage, and a second job to my commitments so it's ever more unlikely. That said, I play with the idea from time to time.'

ANDY SAWYER (University of Liverpool Library, England) had a few duplicate issues of *SF Commentary*, and offered them to me. The postage would have been high — and at about the same time, long-time subscriber and friend **DEREK KEW** (Bulleen, Victoria) gave me his complete set of back issues of *SFC*, which have proved very useful (especially when I need to remove the staples from an old copy in order to scan it).

TERRY JEEVES (now living in a nursing home in Sheffield, England) kept up correspondence as long as he could, but can no longer do so. In 2003 he wrote: 'It was nice to see a return to *Carnacki The Ghost Finder* — a

real nostalgic memory of the pre-war *Weird Tales*. As for James White's Sector general yarns: while each one is good, there's a sameness about the lot — sick alien to be cured; despite hindrances, a remedy is always found at the last minute.'

MICHAEL TOLLEY (Adelaide, South Australia) re-subscribed, sent a Christmas photo of him and his family, and was building up to a contribution when he suffered a second stroke late last year. I've heard that he's recovering well.

CASEY WOLF (Vancouver, British Columbia) has stayed in touch continually over the years. It was wonderful to meet her again when I visited Seattle in February 2005. In the last decade, she has visited Haiti several times, and made many friends, who would have been affected by the gigantic Haiti earthquake. These days I keep up with her adventures on Facebook. And yes, I do mean to review her book of short stories *Finding Creatures and Other Stories* (Wattle & Daub Books, Vancouver).

LARRY BIGMAN (Orinda, California, USA) sent lots of money for back issues of my publications and a current subscription to both *SFC* and *SET*. In 2003 he wrote: 'I finally relocated your PKD mainstream essay and the *SFC* 71/72 you sent me seven or eight years ago after I rang you up long distance. A box fell over in our garage (which had been packed six-plus years ago when we moved) and, lo and behold, there they were! Another admission — I'm the scoundrel who bought that long run of *SFC* from Skel via Bill Bowers last year. I know you contacted Skel in your outrage, but at least you know where they are now. I still need Nos 1, 2, 3, 5–13, 15, 16, 19–23, 28, 67, 68, 69/70, 73/74/75, and 77.' I was able to supply some of those issues, but haven't heard from Larry in a long time.

TERRY GREEN (Toronto, Ontario, Canada): 'One of the things I didn't respond to (but should have) was your piece on SF Biographies and Autobiographies in *Steam Engine Time* 2 (Nov. 2001). I enjoyed it very much, as it's a sentiment I share. I've always liked Williamson's *Wonder's Child*, and have read it more than once. You're right, I feel, in centring it out as the best of what is available. All this came to a head with me personally last year when Gale Research commissioned a 10,000 word autobiography from me for their "Contemporary Authors" series of volumes. David Hartwell also published it in *The New York Review of Science Fiction* (October 2003).' I asked Terry if I could reprint it. His essay was current when I first asked. It's still a great article, but I still feel as if I've let him down. But Terry has kept the faith: 'All the magazines that have dropped into my mailbox over the past 30 years, upon reflection, the only ones with which I've kept the string unbroken are *SFC* (and your others) and *Locus*. All the rest have fallen by the proverbial wayside. The "I Must Be Talking To My Friends" concept permeates it. It's literate and personal — and so Australian, I think. I get a sense of the country from it that I find fascinating. And I get a sense of you from it that clearly is positive, and look forward to reading it as I would a personal correspondence. [But] how did we all get so old? That's the real question I like to read about and explore. And what happened to the past? And what should we do about it?'

AMY HARLIB (New York, USA) was upset, understandably, that her reviews of three Sophie Masson books had still not appeared in *SFC*s 78 or 79. I've been slipping gears for years, Amy. Your reviews will appear in the 'Criticanto' column, but I'm still not sure which issue that will fit in. Sophie Masson has published quite a few novels since you wrote your reviews and has had great success (especially in YA fiction). Amy also writes: 'Please, always include stories and photos about your cats!'

BENJAMIN PAYNE (Darling Heights, Queensland) sent his snail mail address and I sent him an *SFC* or two, but that's the last I've heard from him.

DARRELL SCHWEITZER (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA) agreed with **DAVID LAKE** about 'Islam itself'. In 2003, Darrell thought it very unlikely that Bush's approach would make much dint on Radical Islam. He's not quite right: American invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan seem to have immeasurably strengthened the moral authority, territory control and capacity for waging war of all the forces that America (and for some reason, Britain and Australia) are opposing. Darrell writes: 'I've seen a cartoon which I am sure will soon be a t-shirt and a bumper-sticker. It says: DON'T BLAME ME. I ELECTED GORE.'

JAN CREGAN (Balmain, NSW) was very ill when she wrote in 2003, but she recovered. Since then she has spent several years overseas, and tried out a variety of life's possibilities. She is soon moving to the Blue Mountains. Elaine and I still hope she calls in when she's next in Melbourne.

FRANK WEISSENBORN (North Caulfield, Victoria) was pleased to be in the 'Pinlighters' column of *SFC* 78: 'One of my more comprehensible emails, where I didn't get a story title wrong, or an author's name, or call a local SF gathering a world convention'.

DAMIEN WARMAN (Adelaide, South Australia) was in 2003 hoping to attend the Potlatch I would like to have attended that year, when the Book of Honour was *The Rediscovery of Man*, the collection of Cordwainer Smith's complete short stories. I can't remember if he made it or not. Nobody has ever sent me a proceedings of that convention, but I did attend the 2005 Potlatch where the Book of Honour was Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*.

NED BROOKS (Lilburn, Georgia) thought that Dick Jenssen wrote a bit too much about his own cover for *SFC* 78: 'It looks pretty psychiatric to me. What's the last fancy fanzine I remember with a muscle-man on the cover? ... Oh yeah, the first issue of Tom Reamy's *Trumpet*. He got a bit of flak over it too. The second issue had three abstract ladies for balance.' Ned agrees with Skel that 'a fanzine is something you don't have to buy', 'but unlike him I never disposed of any of them, nor are they packed in boxes — they are all in open bins (laundry baskets for the most part, though lately I have gotten something at WalMart that Rubbermaid does). As compared to the book collection they don't take up that much space. I may be one of the few to achieve a childhood ambition — I do live in a library.' So do Elaine and I.

ART WIDNER (Gualala, California): 'Thanx agen for yr hospitality when i was there in Dec. [2002]. Just finisht *Yhos* 60 wch contains my triport. Thanx also for introducing me to Bill Wright & his xlnt *Interstellar Ramjet Scoop*. Ozzies sure have the Right Stuff when it comes to

fanzinery.' Bill Wright treated Art and I to high tea the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne — the ultimate luxury afternoon tea — and later that afternoon Art visited our place in Collingwood. My 2005 trip report *American Kindness* tells of my inspiring visit up the Pacific Coast from San Francisco to Art's lair in the hills in Gualala. Art is 94 this year, but he will be attending Aussiecon 4 in Melbourne.

RICHARD E. GEIS (Portland, Oregon) is no longer editing fanzines or writing the way he used to: 'To update my physical problems: Eyesight about the same. Ability to walk unaided is deteriorating. I'm thinking seriously of buying a notebook computer for current and future bed use. A writer to the bitter end, that's me. Please alert your readers to my *Taboo Science Fiction* site in eFanzines.com. Thank Ghod for Bill Burns, eh? He may have revived fandom ... Thanks for The Tucker Issue and the John Foyster tribute. Well done and appropriate efforts.'

SIR ARTHUR CLARKE (who lived in Columbo, Sri Lanka, until his recent death) sent his Egogram 2003, and added the note: 'My little Yorkshire terrier now has a collar like Theodore's, to prevent scratching. Brian [Aldiss]'s piece reminds me that I did a lot of work on *AI*— must publish it one day.' A little mystery teaser here. In the magazine articles, nobody mentions a Clarke input into the Kubrick/Spielberg film of *AI*.

MARIANNE DE PIERRES (Brisbane, Queensland), **TED WHITE** (Falls Church, Virginia), **JOHN TEEHAN** (Providence, Rhode Island), **ULRIKA O'BRIEN** (Seattle, Washington), **MIKE McINERNY** (San Francisco, California), **MARTY CANTOR** (Los Angeles, California) and **CURT PHILLIPS** (Abingdon, Virginia, USA), all sent emails saying their copies of *SFC* 78 had arrived okay, but sent no further comment.

RANDY BYERS (Seattle, Washington) visited Melbourne the Christmas before I travelled to America, and he was a fine host to me in Seattle. He, **carl juarez** and **ANDY HOOPER** publish the excellent fanzine *Chunga*, both in a print edition and on eFanzines.com.

GERI SULLIVAN (Wales, Massachusetts) enjoyed SFC 78: 'I hope to have an issue of *Idea* to offer in trade before too many more moons pass ...'

DWAIN KAISER was just moving to Pomona, California, when he sent his response to *SFC* 78: 'JoAnn and I have been working on our used bookstore (The Magic Door Used Books IV), at 155 W. 2nd Street, Pomona. (There's a hell of a lot of work involved in opening up a used bookstore). It's an interesting location, right in the middle of the Arts Colony (which was exactly where we wanted it) — and a odd store (ten foot wide, seventy long) — but we're really looking forward to getting it going.'

I met **LENNY BAILES** (San Francisco, California) at Corflu and Potlatch in San Francisco in 2005. He has been a great help in putting together the Philip K. Dick section of this issue of *SF Commentary*.

LINDSAY CRAWFORD (Springfield, Oregon) was moving house at about the time he received *SFC* 78. I haven't heard from him since, but I'm pretty sure he downloads my magazines when they appear on eFanzines.com.

LEE BATTERSBY (Huntingdale, Western Australia) promised to send a cheque for a subscription, but it never arrived. Maybe I forgot to remind him.

GARTH SPENCER (Vancouver, British Columbia) 'trades' fanzines these days via eFanzines.com.

ABE CYTRYNOWSKI (Moonee Ponds, Victoria) asked for and paid for *SFC* 78, but I've not heard from him since. Ah well. You lose some; you lose some.

Ditto for **MIKAEL JOLKKONEN** (Uppsala, Sweden), who sent a long and interesting self-introduction, downloaded *SFC* 78 from eFanzines.com, asked for a print copy ... and from whom I have heard nothing since. I hate to say the obvious, but if people want rather expensive print copies, they do need to keep in touch, send contributions, or send subscriptions (equivalent of US$50). I do not send copies of my magazines into empty air.

Ditto for **JUKKA HALME** (Helsinki, Finland) who received a copy of *SFC* 78, promised to send money, but who then disappeared.

MATS LINDER (Norrtälje, Sweden) made friendly noises, I sent him SFC 78, and you guessed it, I heard nothing more. Why do I seem to have a communications gap with Scandinavian countries?

SCOTT PONTON (Corby, Northants, England) also asked to be added to the mailing list, but didn't send anything in return.

MARK 'ROCKY' LAWSON (Hornsby Heights, New South Wales) subscribed (and in 2010 has just resubscribed). In 2003 was seeking an agent for a novel he had written. I'm not sure what happened to the novel, but recently Rocky has written and had published a book about climate change.

I made contact with **MIKE ASHLEY** (Chatham, Kent) through the Fictionmags e-list in 2003, and I'm pretty sure I sent him copies of *SFC* and *Steam Engine Time*, but have received no response since to my magazines. Mike is a busy man, having just celebrated the publication of *The Mammoth Book of Apocalyptic SF*, his fiftieth *Mammoth Book of* for Robinson Books. My favourite titles in the series are *The Mammoth Book of Extreme Science Fiction* and *The Mammoth Book of Extreme Fantasy*.

I caught up with **EILEEN GUNN** and **JOHN D. BERRY** for a wonderful few hours when I visited Seattle in 2005. In 2003, Eileen wrote, re the recent death of John Foyster: 'I put a notice on *The Infinite Matrix* homepage [about John], as I did for Damon Knight and Virginia Kidd. Damon's death was a personal loss to me too, and it came only ten days after my mother's death. It's been a year of loss. But John was so much younger than they were. Much too young.'

TONY KEEN (Tonbridge, Kent) keeps in touch, and (I think) downloads my magazines from eFanzines.com.

ANDREW PORTER (New York) keeps in touch mainly through fannish e-lists. He suffered from a serious illness a few years ago, but feels well enough this year to make his long-promised visit to Australia for Aussiecon 4.

ANDY ROBERTSON (Leeds, England) trades paper fanzines and has sent a letter of comment to the most recent issues of *Steam Engine Time*.

YVONNE ROUSSEAU (Adelaide, South Australia) keeps in touch, often, and is one of the few people who regularly visits us now that we have moved to Greensbor-

ough. In July 2003 she reported that in his will, John Foyster had requested her to donate his fanzine collection to 'such library or institution and on such terms as she in her absolute discretion thinks fit'. I can't remember its eventual fate.

ELLEN DATLOW (New York) downloads my magazines. I hope to catch up with her at Aussiecon 4.

BILL BOWERS (who lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, before he died in 2005) is still much missed. His fanzine *Outworlds* was an inspiration for *SF Commentary*. The free-flowing layout of early issues was a model for my 'I Must Be Talking to My Friends' column. Bill always hoped to publish just one more issue of *Outworlds* before he died, but eventually he did not have the energy or resources. In *Ansible* 214, Dave Langford wrote a short obituary for Bill: 'He was 61. In the 1960s he co-edited *Double:Bill* with Bill Mallardi, and since the 1970s published seventy issues of the impressive *Outworlds*, with No 71 still in progress; both these fanzines collected multiple Hugo nominations. He tied as winner of the TransAtlantic Fan Fund in 1976.' I enjoyed meeting Bill in 1973 in Toronto, and always hoped that we might continue the conversation.

MICHAEL HAILSTONE (Lithgow, New South Wales) is somebody who has so completely disappeared that I must wonder about the state of his health. In 2003, he wrote belatedly about *SFC* 76, the George Turner Special: 'George's review of Frederik Pohl's *Gateway* surprises me a little. His main objection to the novel seems to have been unbelief that the Gateway Corporation could be so inhuman and uncaring to send its employees off on such dangerous missions in alien spaceships from which the chances of returning alive were less than good. George was writing about twenty years ago, around 1980, I seem to remember, and I feel he was suffering from an unrealistically rosy delusion about the goodness and kindness of corporations. Were he still alive and writing today in this thoroughly execrable despicable world of globalisation, would he still feel the same way? I think you once remarked to me that our generation was perhaps the luckiest in history, but I wonder. I've heard someone of George's generation say that of *their* generation, and he could be right. Somehow, in spite of a great depression and a terrible world war involving horrible totalitarian dictatorships, they grew up in a world that made more sense than the world we've known. My impression of the future world depicted by Pohl in his novel was pretty terrible, horribly polluted (as George points out but makes light of) and ruined by shale mining. People are so desperate that they will take the terrible chances with Gateway, and nobody is forced to go. (I don't remember anything about bankrupt people being pushed out of airlocks.) Yes, Pohl lays a lot of emotion on; maybe I was more foolish than George in failing to see through it.'

TODD MASON (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) keeps in touch via the Fictionmags e-list; I assume he downloads my magazines through eFanzines.com. But perhaps he doesn't; the trouble with the Internet is that one never can tell.

VAN IKIN (University of Western Australia, Crawley, Western Australia) had a truly appalling year in 2003, but as things have improved for him since, I haven't reprinted that long, newsy letter. Recently he has been able to publish the John Foyster issue of *Science Fiction*, a truly superb production honouring one of the great voices in Australian SF criticism.

GEOFF ALLSHORN (Montmorency, Victoria) lives in the next suburb, which makes it all the more reprehensible that we hardly ever see each other. Geoff suffered severe health problems after 2001, but I get the impression that life has picked up for him. I really must give him a ring before taking my next stroll to Montmorency.

HARRY BELL (Gateshead, England) was interested in my magazines, but at least was honest enough to say that he wasn't that interested. 'I'd like to discuss painting, but accept that by and large that's outside our Broad Mental Horizons (and outside the horizons of most of the allegedly art-concerned mailing lists I've investigated, where "You asswipe!" seems to be the level of discussion).' If ever I can revive *The Metaphysical Review*, will you write the art column, Harry?

BARRY MALZBERG (Teaneck, New Jersey) downloads copies from efanzines.com, I think. We've had some good discussions on Fictionmags.

HOWARD HENDRIX (Clovis, California) wrote in April 2005, 'I have at last almost finished my (overdue) sixth novel, and am presenting a paper at the Eaton conference at the SF Museum and Hall of Fame in May, so I have to get that finished first. Expect the PKD paper sometime in June.' Howard never did write up the formal version of the talk about Philip K. Dick that he gave at Potlatch in 2005, so I have used the discussion notes that you will find in the PKD special in this issue of *SFC*.

LUCY CLEARY (Epsom, Victoria) sent me a copy of her dissertation about Australian SF as a PDF file. Stephen Thompson also published her article 'What is Australian Science Fiction?', which is based on part of it, on the Specusphere site. Lucy's dissertation was rather too large even for Gillespie fanzines. I haven't heard from her for much too long.

DAMIEN BRODERICK (San Antonio, Texas) is willing to download, but I send him paper copies anyway because he keeps in touch. Damien also helps me in lots of ways. He has been publishing novels and books of criticism in Print on Demand editions. They include *The Hunger of Time* and *x, y, z, t?* The trouble is that PoD publishers such as Wildside Press do not publicise their books or send out review copies. They just stick them up on Amazon.com and hope people notice them.

ED MESKYS (Center Harbor, New Hampshire) downloads my fanzines, and offers his *Entropy* as an ezine.

DON FITCH (Los Angeles, California) writes: 'The PDF version of *SFC* 79 will do fine for me, and will probably (finally) push me into hooking-up the new printer.' In 2005 I had the great pleasure of finally meeting Don on the night I visited the LA Science Fiction Society (LASFS) with Marty Cantor.

JAN STINSON (East Lake, Michigan) became co-editor of *Steam Engine Time* when Paul Kincaid and Maureen Kincaid Speller dropped out. But in 2003 I knew her only as an editor of personal fanzine, *Peregrine Nations*, and as a writer of letters of comment: 'There are too many Old Pharts in fandom who still think all fanzines have to be free. They are living in their own per-

sonal time warps, and I'm perfectly happy to let them stay there. Downloading fanzines from the Web is fine with me, but others cavil at the ink cartidge replacement costs. I can understand that, especially when it comes from folks who don't have steady jobs.'

MARTIN DUNNE (Adelaide, South Australia) still downloads my magazines, and keeps in touch.

EVA WINDISCH (Mt Evelyn, Victoria), noted editor of *Tirra Lirra*, a lively literary magazine that always reminded me of *The Metaphysical Review* (and often published my articles), has completely disappeared. *Tirra Lirra* stopped publishing a few years ago. All my attempts to raise Eva by internet have failed. Does anybody know what happened to her?

JOSEPH NICHOLAS (London, England) asked to become a Downloader, but doesn't send letters of comment these days. What a pity. I don't anybody other than Darrell Schweitzer who has a greater ability to stir other people into sending further letters of comment.

DAVID BURTON was a famous fanzine fan of the 1970s. He reappeared on the fannish e-lists a few years ago, started a fine fanzine on eFanzines.com called *Time and Again*, handed it over to equally legendary fanzine fan Dave Locke, and disappeared again.

ROS GROSS (North Balwyn, Victoria) has contributed some reviews for the current *SF Commentary*. She has been a correspondent for many years, but we didn't meet much until she started attending Nova Mob meetings more than ten years ago. Since then she has been working at the same organisation as Jenny Bryce (a contributor to my *Scratch Pad* on eFanzines.com) and has brought two people from the same organisation to the Nova Mob. Ros writes: 'I didn't know John Foyster but I've enjoying reading about him, and also been humbled, both by the man himself and by the effect he has had on individuals and fandom in general. I get humbled in other ways when I read about fans and fandom, realising how much I still don't really understand that whole world yet. I still often feel that people are speaking a language I don't quite understand about things I don't quite fathom. I was careful skimming the Wilson Tucker issue —Tucker sounds like someone I should definitely make an effort to read soon.'

PAUL ANDERSON (Grange, South Australia) was one of the better known Australian fans in the 1960s and 1970s, but sees few fans these days. We often exchange emails, usually about films we have seen. Paul is now retired, and he and his family have recently been visiting America.

MURRAY MOORE (Mississauga, Ontario) was in ANZAPA, but dropped out, and has been too busy in recent years to trade fanzines: 'I haven't published an issue of my genzine *Aztec Blue* since the Bloomington Ditto, in October of 2001. Late last year I was dropped from the FAPA membership for lactivity. My last FAPAzine was *Green Stuff* 17, November 2002. I have been *handling* fmzs a lot. In January of 2003 I bought most of Taral's fmz collection: 26 plastic one-foot-square by 10-inch-deep crates full of fmzs. I handled some of them until Torcon details took over my time. Last December I returned to emptying the crates and removing the fmzs from their bags and sorting them in piles on a table made of two wooden doors side-by-side supported by sawhorses. Six of the 26 crates remain to be emptied.' Murray subscribed in 2004, but I probably need to ask him for some more dollars.

ALEX SKOVRON (North Caulfield, Victoria) resubscribed, as he does quite often. If everybody followed his example, my magazines would never face financial difficulties. In the last decade Alex has published several books of poems and prose poem, and a book of fiction.

WILLIAM BREIDING (Dellslow, West Virginia) sends letters — hand written, folded into envelopes with stamps on them — and folding money: 'Put me on that list you're creating for hard copies for your magazines. I'm there, baby!' William has led a restless existence since 2004, but I did catch up with him at Corflu in 2005 in San Francisco. (See the photo of him in *American Kindness*, my Bring Bruce Bayside trip report: still available for $10.)

JOHN LIGHT (Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, England) was listing my magazines in his *Light's List* every year, but he sold the magazine to another publisher, and I haven't heard from him since.

JACK DANN and **JANEEN WEBB** (Foster, Victoria) subscribed. Occasionally I catch up with them at parties to hear what they are up to. Jack (with Jonathan Strahan) has just published a new anthology of Australian fantasy, *Legends of Australian Fantasy*.

KAREN GORY when she married John Gory changed her name from Karen Johnson, and moved to Florida from Victoria. She remained a member of ANZAPA until recently, but life became so busy in Florida that she has lost much of her former interest in fanzines. Her mother, **HEATHER JOHNSON** (South Croydon, Victoria) has subscribed, but I can't persuade her to join ANZAPA to replace Karen.

JOYCE KATZ (Las Vegas, Nevada) is somebody I've met since receiving her letter of comment in 2004. Along with her husband **ARNIE KATZ**, she has been living in Las Vegas for many years, and together they have been publishing a series of brilliant fanzines on eFanzines.com telling of their adventures and those of the Vegrants (Las Vegas fans): '*SFC* 79 arrived today ... it is even more magnificent in hand than it was on line. What a monumental work, and what a wonderful subject it's devoted to. I love the cover picture of Tucker, and I particularly appreciate the fine photos of him through the years inside. I'm thoroughly understanding of the financial woes; we are in the same position with Katz zines. From now on, it has to be all digital for us, and I'll expect to receive your electronically, too.'

CHERRY WEINER (Manalapan, New Jersey) was George Turner's agent until he died in 1997, so became my agent. Although she has lived in New Jersey for many years, she hails from Melbourne, and still visits occasionally. 'I received and read the John Foyster Tribute and the *SF Commentary* that you sent. Good reading last night.'

JOHN LITCHEN (Robina, Queensland) keeps in touch, sending me books he has published, including a memoir of his father, a book of short stories and a how-to book about writing. Details have appeared in recent issues of *Steam Engine Time*. Look at for his serialised autobiography 'My Life and Science Fiction', which he is writing for my **brg** (print version)/*Scratch Pad*

(eFanzines.com version).

JENNY BLACKFORD (formerly Middle Park, Victoria, recently moved back to Newcastle, New South Wales) sent some fine reviews just as *SF Commentary* went into slow motion. Finally they will appear in the 'Criticanto' column. 'As far as I'm concerned, you're always welcome to reprint anything I've written for *NYRSF*. No problem at all (and of course I could send you softcopy). I'm sure the same would apply to Russell, unless there are odd specific reasons with a piece. Just let us know if there's anything you want softcopy of.'

JOHN BOSTON (New York) has become a Downloader

MAUREEN BREWSTER was a friend of mine for over 40 years, but she died of breast cancer in 2009. We didn't see much of her during her last years, although she lived nearby. However, in response to *SF Commentary* 79 and the Foyster tribute of my apazine she sent several letters in 2004. Among many other things she said, 'I was most moved by the editions you sent of tributes to your friend John Foyster. I vaguely remember him as part of the group of the "great unapproachables" during the 1970s. I was always in awe of your SF friends.' Maureen finished her degree (which she had begun in the early 1970s) in 2003, so we caught up with her then for a celebration. 'Your last mailing of *SF Commentary* arrived and, as usual, there are several books I would like to read. Perhaps I will have time now.'

JULIAN FREIDIN (East St Kilda, Victoria) keeps up his subscription, and even came over to Greensborough to have lunch with us. It was a great afternoon. He writes: 'There is a very peculiar pleasure to be gained from reading reviews of books I know I am extremely unlikely ever to read. However ... when I first stumbled into MUSFA (Melbourne University SF Assocation) in 1976, we were obliged to produce a list of Top Ten books. Tucker's *Year of the Quiet Sun* was near the top of mine, so *SFC* 79 is a particular delight.'

ROWENA LINDQUIST (CORY DANIELLS) (Brisbane, Queensland) has become a Downloader.

IAN SALES (England): 'I've never read anything by Wilson Tucker. I've heard of him, but he's one of those authors whose works have slipped right past me. The only book I've read recently worth remarking on is by a pair of your fellow countrymen — *Orphans of Earth* by Sean Williams and Shane Dix. It's the second in their new trilogy. They really are quite good. Not great SF, but the way heartland genre stuff should be (rather than all this Honor Harrington and clones crap). If they keep on writing them, I'll keep on buying them.'

ANDREW BUTLER (Coventry, England) was in touch while the apa Acnestis was still running (until July 2005), and I've also been in touch with him via Facebook. But now, like so many people, he seems to have disappeared.

CHERYL MORGAN (currently without a home continent, I'm told) became a Downloader. In fact, she pioneered electronic fanzines with her *Emerald City*, which I miss a lot. Cheryl published the kind of magazine I would really like to have had the energy and money to produce.

GARRY DALRYMPLE (Bexley North, NSW) sent money for print editions some time ago, but has let his subscription lapse. Or perhaps I didn't send a resubscription notice.

ROSS CHAMBERLAIN (Las Vegas, Nevada) is now a Downloader: 'I do apologise for being lax about sending letters of comment, and I suspect that my writing style would not be appropriate, but possibly I could provide some art at some point. I tend to need a little pushing — some would say a lot — to get things done, and I always like to get ideas, so if you have an idea for something you'd like to see done for you, and what file format or size you'd like, let me know.' The trouble is that I tend to store filler art, such as that sent by Brad Foster, rather than face the problem of leaving spaces in the layout and hoping the artist has time to fill them. Otherwise I would have taken up your kind offer, Ross.

JEFF SCHALLES (Minneapolis, Minnesota) is now a Downloader.

JERRY KAUFMAN (Seattle, Washington): 'Toni Weisskopf's rundown of Bob Tucker's fan career was particularly interesting, and even gave me an answer for a trivia question at Corflu Blackjack last weekend. The question was, approximately, "What was the SPWSSTFM?" I wasn't one of the contestants, but I think I was the only person in the room who knew that the "P" was for "Prevention" and not "Preservation" or "Promotion". (An aside: this is the correct acronym, and not 'StfPWSSM,' as Toni has it, at least according to *All Our Yesterdays*, page 123. "STF" was the old abbreviation for "ScienTiFiction").' Jerry is talking about, of course, Bob Tucker's famous Society for the Prevention of Wire Staples in ScienTiFiction Magazines, which plunged all fandom into war ten years before I was born.

PETRINA SMITH (Abbotsford, Victoria): 'Can you recommend any "all you wanted to know about sf markets" sources? I'm starting to write a few shorts — very tentatively, I'm not good at them — and returning to the 'psychic' novel of a decade ago with a view to young adult markets. Any tips you can give on either market gratefully received.' I wasn't able to help Petrina with market information, except to suggest that such lists are probably now Googlable. Elaine and I keep hoping to catch up with Petrina in person, but it seems unlikely now that we live in Greensborough.

RICHARD HRYCKIEWICZ (West Brunswick, Victoria) is a Downloader. He's also very good company on the few occasions when we can pin him down to a meal.

TRACEY ROLFE (Altona, Victoria) has become a Downloader.

I thought I was in touch with **CHAZ BOSTON BADEN** (Anaheim, California), and sent him some paper copies of my magazines, but haven't heard from him for some time. Chaz is famous for taking many thousands of photos of SF and fannish people in America.

JAMES DOIG (Canberra, ACT) has sent some wonderful articles for *Steam Engine Time* about Australian fannish history. They complement the articles that **CHRIS NELSON** (now also in Canberra) is writing for his own fanzine *Mumbling for Munchkinland*, which have supplied many previously inaccessible details of Australian fan and SF history.

GUY LILLIAN (Shreveport, Louisiana) does me the honour of sending print copies of his Hugo-winning

fanzine *Challenger*, and reviews my magazines in his ezine *The Zine Dump*.

BENJAMIN SZUMSKYJ (Melville, Western Australia) was going to trade my fanzines for his more academic magazine about fantasy, but he never did send me a copy of his. Now Ben has relinquished the editorship, and there has been no word of further issues.

JANICE GELB (South Yarra, Victoria) sent folding money, and thanked me not only for *SFC* 79 but also the transcript of the Foyster memorial panel at Continuum 1. Which reminds me that, thanks to Yvonne Rousseau, I can still offer copies of the talks given at John Foyster's funeral, and the talks given at the Melbourne celebration of his life must also still be around in electronic form.

PHILIPPA MADDERN (University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia) sent the sad news that her husband Ted Mundie had died. I met Pip and Ted for the first time (and they met each other for the first time) at Ursula Le Guin's Writers' Workshop in 1975, memorialised in Lee Harding's anthology *The Altered I*. Pip writes: 'Ted has a couple of photos of Ursula from the 1975 workshop — one of her sitting on the floor smoking her pipe, and one posturing in front of the whiteboard on which someone (I forget whom) had written a spoof motto ridiculing pretentious language. I don't know whether he took them himself, or got them from you or someone else, but I'm in the process of scanning his entire album, and could email attach them to you. You did tell me that George Turner made you his literary heir. I should think it would be both both fascinating and humbling. I think George had one of the best minds I ever met.' I must remind Pip that I would still love to see those photos.

IRWIN HIRSH (Prahran East, Victoria) subscribed.

JOHN NEWMAN (Maldon, Victoria) wants to receive print versions of *SFC*.

PERRY MIDDLEMISS (Hawthorn, Victoria) asked for further issues of the paper versions of my magazines. In recent years Perry has written my entry for *Wikipedia*, and has kept his web finger on the pulse of Australian SF writing.

That's 111 names in the 'WAHF' column, folks. That's not too many. Thanks for all the support over the years.

— Bruce Gillespie, 6 July 2010