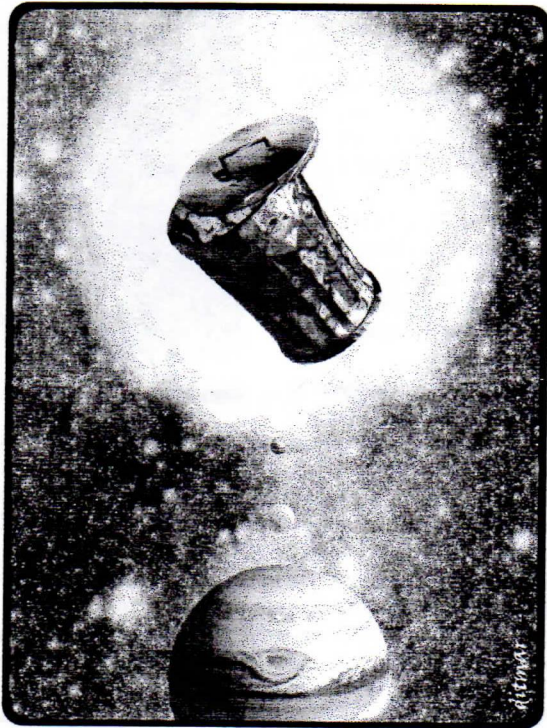


Out of the Bin



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A Newsletter from MERV BINNS
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'Space Bin' Artwork by Ditmar

ON THE NET

We are steadily making headway with communicating on the net and when I say "we" I really mean Helena, who is really the computer 'expert' in our household, but I will get there eventually. Using it for information and receiving messages from friends is all happening. On looking up Forest J Ackerman we found that old Forry had a stroke back in March, when we were in the middle of moving house. Indications are that he has recovered reasonably well and we send him our warmest regards. By e-mail from John Foyster, still in recovery from his major illness, we learned that he had a mild seizure recently when out shopping but was luckily very close to the hospital. Thank heaven for small mercies and we send him our regards and best wishes also. (Helena is still unable to access John's e-zine, however. Whenever she tries its supposed web address, she finds herself besieged by pop-up ads with no e-FNAC in sight.)

Also received by e-mail from Rose Mitchell was information on CONFLUX: The 43rd Australian National Convention, being held in Canberra, 23rd-26th April 2003. Guests of Honor Sean McMullen and well deserved but would you believe, Greg Benford again following AUSSIECON 3. Okay, he makes a very good con guest, but why not spread it around a bit? Surely there are lots of other authors who have never been guests of Australian SF Conventions. Fan Guest is Karen Herkes. For further details on membership and all, write to PO Box 903, Belconnen, ACT 2616, see their website at www.conflux.org.au, or email: info@conflux.com.au

BOOKS READ

Amazingly for me I have actually been reading some SF books. The George Turner Prize winning novel, *BLUE SILENCE* by Michelle Marquardt was more a thriller than SF, but just happened to involve some people who seem human, but could be alien, with all the action taking place on an artificial world orbiting the Earth. Interesting but not great. Stephen Baxter's *RAFT* which I believe was his first novel, proved to be a Larry Niven type featuring survivors of a space craft, living in space, orbiting a nebula. Even more far fetched than Niven's *SMOKE RING / INTEGRAL TREES*, but I enjoyed it at any rate and must read more of Baxter's works. I have enjoyed all of Ursula LeGuin's novels that I have read, but I still have a few to catch up on. However I did read the recent Hainish novel *THE TELLING*. A bit slow going for my usual tastes, but a beautifully told tale in which she is quite obviously drawing parallels with oppression and cultural change in the real world.

MAN ON THE MOON

We caught up with a program on Optus cable TV, channel 19 Odyssey, indicating that exploitation of the Moon both for mining and industry, as well as tourism, is well on the way, in the hands of commercial enterprise. The cost for governments is just not possible any more and only private enterprise can do what needs to be done. One gentleman in the tourism business was even predicting that tourists will be visiting the Moon within thirty years. What a pity it has taken thirty years for this even to be thought of. (Except, of course by science fiction writers and readers, to whom it is a familiar scenario explored at length in numerous stories.)

SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON ABC TV

A lot of the Sunday afternoon program on Channel 2 has mostly been pretty 'arty-farty', though occasional classical music or opera interludes have been worth a look. But more recently some things of great interest to me on the musical theatre and the movies have been a welcome change. One very interesting piece was on the use of the name 'Alan Smithee' as the director on a seemingly excessive number of Hollywood movies. The documentary revealed that this came about when a director, for one reason or another, did not want his real name on the credits. Some of the actual problems that came up and led to this happening made this a very interesting item. Another piece the same day on the composing of music for movies and examples from certain movies and composers was also an eye opener, but was too brief and left so much unsaid about the subject in general and the other top composers, such as Morrecone.

HAS THE THIRD WORLD WAR BEGUN?

Critics say that the writings of Nostradamus can be interpreted to mean anything the reader likes, but volumes that I have perused on the subject, apart from straight out translations into English, have always fascinated me. The believers say that major events, including the wars and the reign of despots such as Napoleon and Hitler, are apparently described. I do not have the books to look it all up now, but if I remember correctly it was said that Nostradamus, in as many words, predicted trouble in the world

that would last for thirty years. Of course it is easy to have seen over recent years that problems were developing between certain groups and it is quite clear now that the world in general has a problem with such as Bin Laden and his followers. Political analysts I recall seeing on the TV in recent years were saying how vulnerable the USA and the West in general, was to terrorist attacks. September 11th 2001 brought that home, and how! Now with the bombing in Bali it is on our doorstep. No doubt our government's stand in becoming so closely aligned with the USA has made it more likely for something like this to happen. Okay, the Australian character certainly does not let us bury our heads in the ground, but a softer approach by Mr Howard and company might have been called for and our all-out support for getting stuck into Saddam Hussein is also questionable. It is easy for people to say "no war in Iraq", but what if the accusations are correct. The first blows may have been struck of World War Three but we can only pray that the predictions of Mr Nostradamus have been misinterpreted.

SLOW GLASS BOOKSHOP CLOSING

I recently put together an addition to my memoirs about my interest in books and reading from childhood and throughout my career as a bookseller. It will appear in full with photographs and all in due course. It was rather ironic that the guy who worked for me in my bookshop, Justin Ackroyd, who opened his own SF bookshop, SLOW GLASS, found himself in the same shop as my old business, Space Age Books. It was not intentional, the shop just happened to be vacant. I was pleased in a way, but sad at the same time, that my business was not still there and now I hear that Justin is closing down his shop as the rent has become too high and I feel sad again. However Justin will be continuing to operate as a mail order business and I wish him luck and hope that he has more success with mail order than I had myself when Space Age closed down.

A TRIBUTE TO WYNNE WHITEFORD

Paul Collins, who published most of the late Wynne Whiteford's SF books, invited all his friends and associates to a get-together in Wynne's honor, at his home in Clifton Hill, a Melbourne suburb. Not far, incidentally, from where the late Frank Bryning lived as a young man. It is a sad thought that authors who have been in the forefront of Science Fiction writing, both in Australia and overseas, are slowly leaving us, but it is good that we can appreciate and honor them for their work. Wynne and Frank were pioneers in SF writing by Australian authors. In fact Wynne's first story was published the year I was born, in 1934. It was a nice afternoon on Friday the 18th of October and we all gathered in Paul's garden and listened to a reading from Wynne's novel *BREATHING SPACE ONLY* by Bob Dalvean, an old friend of Wynne's from the Eastern Writers' group, followed by a nice resume of his career by compatriot author Russell Blackford. Everybody enjoyed the excellent food and drinks provided by Paul, and Helena and I appreciated the opportunity to say goodbye to a special friend.

MERV'S MISTAKES

In my movie review of *SIGNS* in a previous issue of OoB I referred to the movie *THE SIXTH SENSE* starring "Bruce Lee". I hope everybody realised that I meant BRUCE WILLIS! Well, I was getting over my hospital trip when I wrote that and you have to make allowances for my age now I am a dodderly old 68. Helena missed it also, but then again she has been suffering from a mystery virus and associated continuing migraine headaches for over a month. Various hospital tests, including a CAT scan, have also been a strain, but as I write this she is feeling somewhat better, which is a great relief to both of us.

RICHARD HARRIS DIES

I remarked to Helena a few days ago that I had noticed that Richard Harris, who had decided to carry on his role in the second Harry Potter movie, despite illness, was born in 1930. Only four years older than me, but he looked very much older than me, even without his Professor Dumbledore makeup. Well



Unfortunately he did succumb to illness and died on October 25th. He appeared in the second Harry Potter movie, and would have been in the third, perhaps because of his granddaughter. (When he'd originally considered rejecting the role, he said, she declared that if he didn't play Dumbledore she would never speak to him again!) Well I enjoyed his performances on the screen, particularly in *CAMELOT*, *A MAN CALLED HORSE* and many more. And how could you forget that very strange haunting recording that he made, *MacArthur Park*. So we have lost another outstanding charismatic actor. One of his old drinking mates, Richard Burton, who of course also played King Arthur in *Camelot* but on the stage, passed on a few years back now, so it only leaves Peter O'Toole. Richard Harris's image will be seen on the screen for many years to come, like all the other performers who have graced the stage and screen in my life time and before, from Chaplin, to Presley, Monroe, Sinatra and so many more. It makes me realise that movies and TV are the images of my time, as cave art, statuary and paintings were of the past, and could well be still seen centuries from now.

HORSE RACING

My mother's family had always been involved with horses. Her uncle Albert Collis sold horses to the army during the first world, as a matter of fact, but I am talking about racing. My grandfather was not only a punter, but being in Collingwood in the 1920s and 1930s it is more than likely, knowing him, that he was involved in John Wren's gambling ventures in some way. My mother's cousin Arthur Tomlinson, named after his uncle Arthur, my mother's father, was an SP bookie, assisted by his sister my auntie Floss. My mother used to take me to visit her often and even as a young child I was aware of the nefarious goings on and treated it all as a bit of a joke. Then when I got older my parents and I started attending the race meetings. I saw a few Melbourne Cups and many other races during the late '40s and '50s. I reckoned I could pick the winners by using astrology, but it only worked once that I can remember. Dad had a tip on the horse, never backed it but I picked it on the astrology and it came in at very long odds. I have not been to the cup in over thirty years, but being so close to Caulfield Race Course, Helena and I have attended a few small meetings. However I always like to have a bet on the Melbourne Cup and I think that I have only missed doing so a small number of times. I cannot remember the horses that I saw win the Cup apart from Comic Court, and I always remember a small dark mare racing at the same time called Chiquita. As fate would have it her trainer's daughter Jill Quinlan and her two sisters, worked for me at Space Age Books. Well I had a small (very small!) interest on the Cup again this year, but as usual did no good. Helena had 50 cents on the winner.