

SOMETHING ELSE 5

is typed, edited and produced by Shayne McCormack, 49 Orchard Road, Bass Hill, N.S.W., 2197.

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William Rotsler - Pages 9, 19, 21b

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- Steve Fabian (with special thanks to Eric Lindsay)

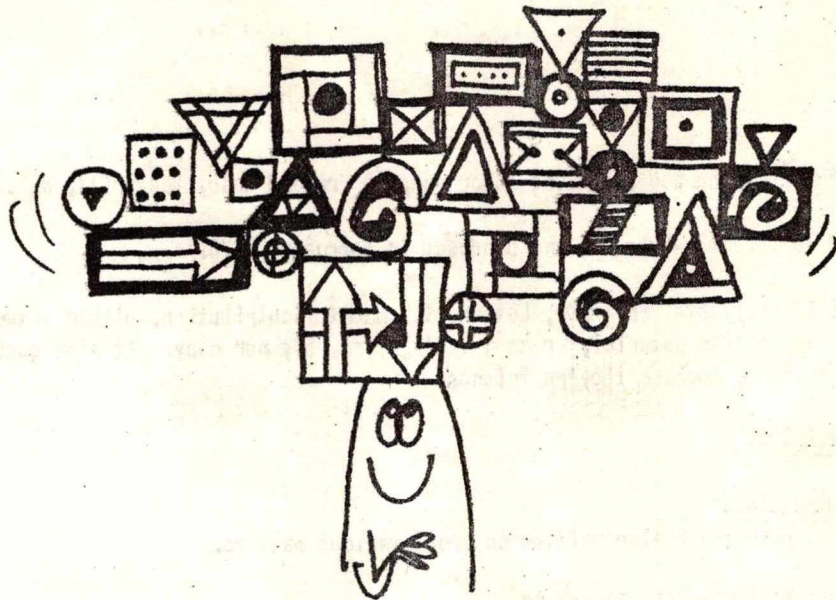
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Its been a while, hasn't it? No doubt you have been wondering if I still live, or perhaps have gafiated, or something equally disasterous. Well, you see, a lot has happened since last I sat down to pound out a page or two of SOMETHING ELSE. A couple of Worldcons, an extended trip to Manchester, England, and Aussiecon. To make matters worse, I don't own a duplicator, and up until a day ago, didn't own a real typewriter (I don't call portables real typewriters). Anything I want to print has to be done on someone else's duplicator, which usually turns out to be Eric Lindsay. As some of you know (especially those who stayed there) Eric lives in what we city dwellers call the sticks....Faulconbridge is about 35 miles from my home, about 1½ hours drive through suburban traffic and along the high-speed F4 highway.

I do put out a fanzine - the Forerunner - for the Sydney SF Foundation, of which I have the dubious honour to be President. That fanzine comes out monthly, and is little more than a Newszine, with an occasional article to take it up to its maximum 10 pages. Well, I felt like doing my own thing, and here it is.

Aussiecon happened. Thats enough to croggle the imagination..and I'm in DUFF...and Star Trek is back on Sydney TV and well, lots of things. What better reasons for a fanzine!

I should do an AUSSIECON Report, and I'm a bit amazed not to see more coming from Australian fans...maybe they haven't recovered from the shock or something. Problem is, such a report from my viewpoint would

be very long, since for me it started almost a month before and continued for a week afterwards. I can remember some magic moments, though... like meeting Urselale Guin at the airport and having breakfast at the Menzies Hotel...watching over 60 tired fans stream out of the customs hall at Sydney Airport, and the wonderful feeling of seeing faces I knew from Torcon and Discon on my own soil...that marvelous slide and music introduction to the Con, and the tremendous feeling of joy as Aussiecon began...sitting on the Registration Desk with Peter Millar and Del Stocks eating pizza (I've got a lovely photo of you, Del, all set to take a mouthful...blackmail...?)..the Masquerade, with me trying to be in 3 places at once, watching the things go wrong I knew would go wrong, and because there wasn't anything I could do about it, just standing there and sighing....the balloons and streamers and paper planes of the Banquet...having Mike and Susan and John and Sheryl at my house, sleeping in the caravan and talking and talking....seeing Ron Graham's collection for the first time, talk about mind-blowing... and so much more. Eric Lindsay is endeavouring to put together a far more detailed Report, and I hope he does, because it all deserves reporting. There was so much, and it was so good. It makes it all worthwhile, you know.

But what has happened besides..? Well, not a lot really. I am at present out of work, having left my last job because the Executives decided to change the old set-up of Secretaries into a general steno pool, thereby wrecking whatever feeling of togetherness and contentment existed in the office. I was a bit sad to leave, because I could get electrical goods at low prices, and it was handy for home. Jobs are scarcer now than a year ago, and I think it will take a bit longer to find the one I want.

As for Australia..well, we have problems, like most other countries. It was just announced over the radio (November 11) that Mr. Whitlam has been fired by the Governor-General, and Mr. Frasier named as head of a caretaker Government till an election can be held in December. I don't precisely know what that will achieve, aside from more chaos and confusion, but still they insist on continuing along their own ruinous course, following the rules even if they are stupid rules, and bugging up everything in the process. I am becoming somewhat disillusioned with this country's form of government...there's got to be a better way. Pity I can't figure out what that better way is...

Postal rates and paper costs and such are now so high that it really is a labour of love to put out a fanzine. Eric has cut his publishing efforts right down, as have most Australian fans. I mean, it really does cost to indulge in such a pastime.

Well, enough dismal complaining, McCormack, think happy thoughts. Happy...JohnDevlin, Springishere, sunishinin...see, I feel better.

You know, a terrible thought struck me the other day. After I'd slapped

it back, it gave me pause. STAR TREK is back on Sydney television (you can tell something is wrong..whenever I start spelling Star Trek STAR TREK..) I have been watching it. Not only that, but I pulled out my old scrap books, that had been stuffed away to gather dust and be eaten by mice, and got all nostalgic. After all, I was a Trek fan before I was a SF fan. I continued to watch it, and the old feeling started coming back...laughing at all the old jokes, seeing if I could remember the synopsis of an upcoming episode, defending it from the dastardly attacks of fellow club members..when it hit me. I must be still, at heart, a Trek fan. I guess its like malaria, you get one dose and it keeps coming back and striking you down when you least expect it. It worries me, it really does. Why, I even considered putting out the long-lost 5th issue of "Terran Times", especially when I re-read David Gerrold's Star Trek book, and saw it mentioned amongst 45 ST zines "some of the better distributed fanzines" he called them. Bit much..I mean, I only ever put out about 150 of each issue. Still, it was a nice zine, as Trekzines go, even if the last couple of issues were almost entirely sf fandom. You never know, I may do that fifth issue yet....

"The Starlost" is on Sydney TV at the moment, in the children's timeslots of 12 noon Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. It really isn't that bad, you know. The film technique is kind of amateurish, and the acting is sad, but the special effects, and the basic idea is sound (even if you can see "Orphans in the sky" all over it). I enjoyed it, kind of, even if just to see good 'ol Cordwainer Bird's name on the credits. First time I saw it, I almost had a fit. I mean, what a pen name. Surely Harlan could have thought up a better one than that, maybe Herbert Trentwhistle or Mergatrold Daimler Fitzpatrick. I know when I make the Big Break into prodom, I'll have a brilliant pen name all figured out. But Cordwainer Bird...strike me pink!(as we say in the True Top of the World). Get with it, Harlan! Trouble with a pen name like that, it sticks in your mind. Wasn't there an episode of that classic underwater adventure "Voyage to the Bottom of the Barhtub" with Cordwainer Bird's name tacked onto it? Personally, I wouldn't want to have my name attached to that particular series...in any form. Still, not to criticise too much...we all have to make our bread someway, I guess.

As I said before, I will be in DUFF this year, and I hope you will vote for me, since there is nothing I would love more than to see my friends again. The chances of me ever getting to another Worldcon on my own are rather slim, since the only way I managed to make it before was by saving practically every cent I earned. Not that I minded....if I should leave fandom tomorrow, those Worldcons would be among the most precious memories of my life. Isaac Asimov said it well in his introduction to the Hugo Wimers anthology...

"For one short, golden day we inhabited a tiny world in which science fiction was the exclusive interest.
I imagine Heaven must be a feeble imitation of that day."

Well, what about this Expo 76 thing that's going to be on in New York next June? I first heard about it from Capt. Chandler about 2 weeks ago (early November) and the other day I got a flyer and a letter from a Mr. Charles Ellis, asking me to advertise it in FORERUNNER. The first thing that came to mind was the Star Trek Conventions, and the next thing was the fact that it was barely 2 months before the Worldcon. I'm not saying that it's in any way a take, but I would like to hear from any of you American fans who knew about it any time in advance. It brought just a tingle of suspicion to this untrusting female mind. It all seems too good to be true. Maybe it's just a fan's natural reaction to professionalism, or organisation. Over the last year, the growing size of the Worldcons has been a major point of discussion amongst active fandom, and perhaps this is the way to solve it...an organised Convention set up for the reader who will not be necessarily interested in fannish happenings, who doesn't want to sit around in a bar talking about fanzines or the latest fan feed. Putting it so close to the Worldcon could be either a good thing or a bad thing.

It could be good by taking the heat off the Worldcon, and satisfying the huge walk-in crowd. I'm not sure of the maths behind the running of a Worldcon, but I am of the opinion that one could be put on with smaller numbers than those of the last couple of years.

It could be bad, in that it could well make some of the more prominent members of the science fiction community dissatisfied with the conditions under which Worldcons are run. Worldcons can't afford to pay the accommodation costs of the attending professionals, and I doubt very much whether any Worldcon committee would think of setting up 'autograph booths' charging fans fees for signing of books by the authors.

It could well cause a split in fandom, and whether that would be good or bad is hard to tell. In Australia, we have few authors, and our fandom has always been fannishly oriented. A convention having more than 3 authors in attendance was a big deal. Could the day ever be that the same sort of thing would eventuate in the States? A fannish fandom denuded of pros simply because they refuse to attend cons that can't afford to pay them? I know, it sounds terrible, but would anyone have believed the numbers of attendees at Worldcons today, 20 years ago? The whole face of fandom and science fiction itself is changing, but whether for better or worse I cannot say. I hope not for the worse, it would be a shame to lose the essence from such a unique thing as fandom.

Progress simply for Progress' sake isn't necessarily a good thing. If the state of a thing is good, it need not be necessary to change it, merely because change of some kind is constantly going on. World Conventions have grown over the years, but have always retained that core of optimism, that central special feeling which is so rare in today's world. Maybe it's a bit harder to find today, with so many

people knocking at the door, wanting to get in on a good thing, but it is still there. Maybe I'm being selfish, but fandom has given me many hours of pleasure over the last 6 or 7 years, and although I would not want to be responsible for denying that same pleasure to someone else, that doesn't mean I want to see it destroyed for myself. ~~Maybe~~ if we could all sit back from it, and try and figure out just what it is that we like in fandom and Conventions, we could then figure out what to do about it. I'm not saying it's easy, and it may not even be the right thing to do, but it seems to me that just sitting back and letting things go on their not-so-merry way won't help that much either.

I don't say ~~that~~ that all the pros would deny fandom, because on the whole they're good guys, and get as much fun out of it as we do. Still, they are human, and have to make a buck as much as we do. To many of them, Science Fiction is a Way of Life, their life, and in its own way, very important to them. If it should come down to a choice between fandom surviving, or their own upgrading in their chosen profession, it could be fandom that gets hurt. It isn't necessarily so....what in this world is?...but the possibility can't be ignored.

I would like to believe...oh very much...that they love this strange non-institution as much as we do. If that's so, then we ain't got no worries. If the worst came, then we could survive anyhow, maybe not the same as we were, but I like to think that fans are adaptable, and can change with the circumstances.

Anyway, maybe I'm worrying over nothing. Just a woman's fancy, perhaps. You can reassure me, or tell me I'm waffling on to no end, and maybe I am. I hope so.

Funny thing happened today. I went out to get the mail from the box at about 11.00 a.m., and there was only one letter. It was in an airmail envelope with a British stamp, and I wondered momentarily who in England was writing me a letter. As I walked back inside, I turned it over, and on the back was the name of my good friend, Keith Curtis. Now, Keith might be English-born, but I know for a fact that he lives in Earlwood, some 30 minutes by car from where I live. Now, sharp as I am, I couldn't figure out how he did it, so I rang him up (he works at night, sorting mail for the Post Office at the central Mail Exchange). Oh, he said, you've got it already, I only sent it this morning....2.30 a.m. to be exact. So, I said, but how? Oh easy enough, he couldn't find a stamp, but he did locate an English 10p stamp. He put the letter in an airmail envelope, stuck the stamp on, stamped it and sent it off..and it arrived in my mailbox 7 hours later. I ask you....talk about cutting through the system.....

On reading back over the last few pages, I realise that although I said a lot of things, I didn't really say anything. Now, thats bad. I think I was trying to put things in an unprejudiced light, and that kind of thing just doesn't work. I made it sound very uncertain, but perhaps that because I am uncertain, as far as the future of fandom, as we know it, is concerned. Anyhow, not being the kind of fan publisher who likes to waste 15c stencils, I'm leaving it in.

What I have written is still basically what I wanted to say, I just didn't say it as well as I wanted to. So, write me a letter and tell me all about it...constructive criticism never hurt anyone...very much.

20th January, 1976

After a long break away from the typer, with Christmas and New Year over, I'm back.

Don't ever let anyone tell you that producing a fanzine is easy. Keith Curtis started working on an article for me about 2 months ago, and just last week he informed me that he had put the papers down somewhere, and now can't find them. If that sounds impossible, then you obviously haven't seen Keith Crutis' home. He attempts to break or re-write the laws of volume and mass (i.e. put an incredible amount of paper into a mvery small area). He tells me he's having a clean-up. Gulp.

A new sub-fandom has beennborn in Sydney. Its called Flashy fandom. No, it doesn't entail going around in a raincoat and revealing oneself, its all about a gentleman called Sir Harry Flashman V.C., an entirely fictional gentleman, I might add, and one of the most beautifully constructed historical characters I have seen in a long time. He was so well constructed in the novel "Flashman" by George MacDonald Fraser, that many Historians took him for the real thing. Fraser has written 5 novels, "Flashman", "Royal Flash" "Flash for Freedom" "Flashman at the Charge" and "Flashman in the Great Game". The first one tells of Flashman's joining the Army during the time of the young Queen Victoria, and getting caught up in the Afganistan wars, the second is a take-off of "The Prisoner of Zenda" (and has been made into a gorgeous film) the third is set partly in Africa and party in the U.S. before the Civil War, the 4th tells of Flashy's unwilling part in the Charge of the Light Brigade, and the last (which I have just bought in hardcover) is set during the Great Mutiny in India. You see, Flashy is a rotten, stinking, lecherous, gutless coward, who always manages to beg, whine, cheat and cajole his way into being a hero. How can you help but love such a gorgeous anti-hero? Anyhow, I found that Keith Curtis and Eric Lindsay were also Flashy fans, and we delight in getting together and discussing the novels, as well as the possibility of a 6th Novel, set in the US during the Civil War, and going on to Custer's famous Last Stand (which event Fraser has mentioned quite often). Oh, there was also a short story called "Flashman and the Tiger",

which I didn't think was as good as the novels. We have hopes that there will be a 6th novel, and there is also the chance that another movie will be made, if "Royal Flash" does well enough. If you see the books, and haven't read them, and Flashy sounds like the kind of character you like, try him.

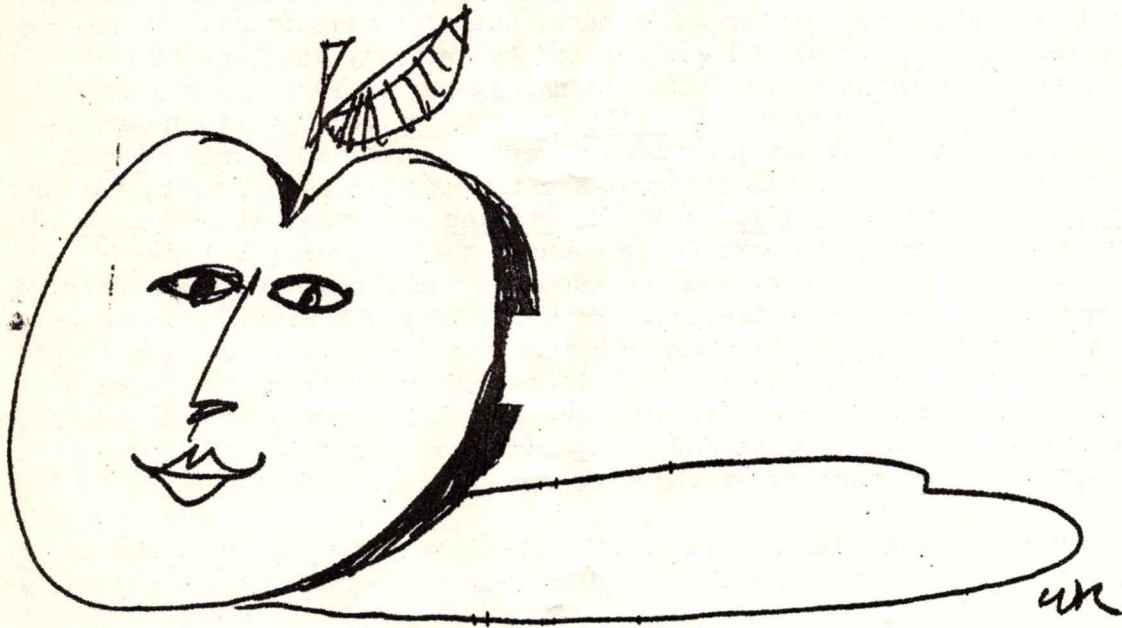
25th February Has it been dry in other parts of the world? I get the feeling that all the rain in the world got together and decided to drop in on Sydney for an extended stay. How it can rain as much as it has for the last couple of weeks I really don't know...I keep getting the feeling I should be building a large boat and collecting animals. In fact, it nearly wrote of your trusty editor yesterday. I was driving home at about 40 mph, trying to see through the incredible downpour of water. Coming across the Silverwater bridge, the road widens out into three lanes and is a clearway, so I pulled over into the outside lane, A few yards from the bridge a truck was pulled up in the middle lane, with lights flashing..I guess that means it was broken down. Well, no worries, I had plenty of room on the left to drive, but very stupidly I took my eyes off the lane for a moment to see if the truck was ok. I looked back, and nearly died of shock. The car in front of me had stopped... dead, beside the truck in my lane. I squealed, hit the brakes and thought, well, it was a nice life while it lasted. I was maybe 10 feet from the back of the car when I hit the pedal. The road was slippery and greasy, and I skidded...luckily I skidded away from the car, and somehow, don't ask me how, because even now I don't know, but somehow I squeezed through between the car and the kerb. I must have tickled the car's skin, I was that close. For the rest of the journey home, I had the nervous tick and drivers gibbers. I figure I'll live to at least 86 now. If I can survive an impossibility like that, which surely would have pulped up any other car's front end like a consatina and chucked the driver against the steering wheel..how can I go wrong?



ON TAKING A GIRL TO DINNER

When you haven't got an ulterior motive

JOHN ALDERSON



As I discovered at AUSSIECON, if you haven't got a companion of an evening, when you want to dine, you eat pie walking along the street - if you can find a pieshop open at night. So if you can't get a male companion to eat with, and you haven't got a female one on whom you have designs, you may have to put up with some ordinary female in the same boat as yourself, and remembering that it is better to eat with a strange woman than not to eat at all...you have found your dining companion for the night...

Take a careful look at her, and if that makes you wince, and so many of them do, steer for one of the more darkly lit Chinese restaruants. However, if she gives credit to your taste, head for one of the more brightly lit. There is good reason for going to Chinese restaurants; the cooking is excellent, the helpings enormous and readily divisible.

It is just as well to discover whether or not the girl has enough money to cover a meal. This is easy enough, girls are very naive on this angle. It's damnably hard to get them to pay for the meal of their male escort, but in this age of woman's emancipation (that means they get paid more than a man is likely to), they can be kidded into paying for their own. This matter takes care, but it is important. So having selected the restaurant and got her safely into it, you leer at her in as low a fashion as possible and say as suggestively as you can, "After I've shouted you a meal we'll go up to my..." Now its important for you that you have her undivided attention at this moment, because it is essential for her to interupt exactly at this point, with, "After I've paid for my meal, I'll go to the station and catch mt train home." Whereupon you appear to concede graciously that you are glad she is that type of girl but that you are sure she would not have been offended at your taste in science fiction. However, if you laid it on too heavily, and she cracks you one and charges out of the shop, it serves you right if your jaw is too sore to munch a pie as you eat it strolling down a dark and solitary street. If, however, she gladly wants to come up to your flat, serves you right for being such a rotten judge of horse-flesh, and wriggle out of it the best way you can.

The object of this exercise is to make absolutely certain that she is going to pay for her own meal. She will however certainly not pay for yours.

You then look at the menu. Remember you have taken this girl to a Chinese place for a deminite reason. Naturally being a gentleman, you hand her the menu first, after a very cursory glance to enable you to advise her. It is important to know the most filling meals, and that most Chinese meals are laced with calories, a matter you don't mention before the grub arrives. Curries are very good, but in any case you advise her to get fried rice (this has got shrimps and things in it, and is very good, and only costs three times the ordinary rice, but a girl deserves the best and when all is said and done, she is paying for it). By this time the waiter should have arrived, so without consulting her you ask for a pot of Chinese tea and two cups. Chinese tea is very cheap, and is quite different from billy-tea and not in the same world as that awful concoction generally served as tea in eating factories. However, if she protests you merely say that you would like her to be your guest in this small thing, mentioning besides that a pot of the stuff is much the cheaper way to buy it. (Remember that women are born misers in little things.)

You then look seriously down the menu and say "Ah, I'll have this soup". It is very vulgar, at this point, to count your change and see if you can afford anything more. It is much more subtle to look pale and somewhat disturbed and to let your mouth water over some of the things like "Pork sweet and sour, three seventy five" which you murmur almost inaudibly.

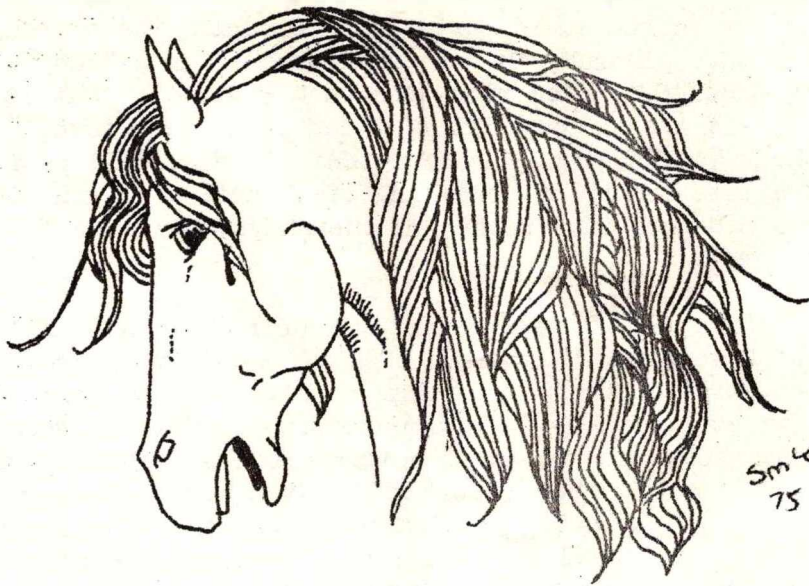
Then the waiter takes the order. "Ladies first", you say, very graciously, and remember, that any sacrifice is better than enduring the company of someone who doesn't take pleasure in being referred to as a "lady". And if she doesn't order the fried rice, remind her sweetly that in this place the fried rice is a real speciality. When it is your turn, "Oh, just this soup, thank you," adding in unconvincing tones, "Bit poorly tonight", or "Had a late lunch" or something like that. And you look a little embarrassed and feel in a pocket as though you may have forgotten that one the first time.

So two great bowls of stuff arrive for the girl (for which she will fork out four dollars or five), and this small bowl of soup for yourself, which, with the tea, will cost a mere dollar or so. You eat this carefully, savouring every drop - a wise precaution as Chinese soups are generally pretty good, and you scoff several slices of bread, and give a wistful glance now and then at the girl's two huge bowls, and finally, if you have to, jest a little that you wish you were like her and not worried by a weight problem. One has to be tactful here, particularly if you are heron-gutted in figure. Now the odds are in your favour that she will be embarrassed about this huge mass of food in front of her, and that her grandfather was Scottish and she doesn't want the good wasted. There is hardly a person in this country without a Scottish grandparent - they are a very virile race - why I had one myself. Or she may be genuinely embarrassed at the thought of what the calorie-rich food is going to do to her waist-line. Or she may get concerned about your health or wealth. Or she may be embarrassed at having this great mass of food and you with so little and worry that people will think she is a guts. But the chances are that she will insist that you help her eat some of this beautiful food. You must make a feeble protest; whatever you do, don't let her get the idea you planned this; but let the horse have its head and half her dinner will go into your soup bowl and the bulk of the fried rice. Blanch a little, and murmur that perhaps it is best not to waste it, and tuck in as thankfully as you may.

On the other hand, if you don't succeed, you are going to think of that great mass of wonderful food that got wasted as you sink down a dark street eating a pie to give you the strength to get home.

Naturally after that, you thank her for her company and take her to the station to catch her train. Don't, whatever you do, mention the food again. A girl should never be embarrassed.

Well, John Alderson, you should be ashamed of yourself! What makes it worse, the male chauvinistic hog is serious!! If that's what comes of having scotch ancestors, I'm glad mine were Irish. Well, maybe not glad, sometimes it can be embarrassing.....



This is my Aussiecon Report. It isn't as long as it should be, nor as detailed as it could be, since I don't have the time for the former, or the memory for the latter. I could start off some weeks before Melbourne, and finish it off a couple of weeks afterwards...that's how long the Affair lasted...for me.

I think I'll start at the end...it's an important place. The setting is Sydney Airport, it is about 1.30 p.m. on Tuesday. Was it Tuesday, yes, I think it was, I seem to recall leaving work with a pretended illness so I could rush to Mascot. I needn't have worried about hurrying, the aircraft was delayed at take-off. I wanted to be there, though, even when I hate good-byes. I had a brain-wave, and took along a huge armful of daffodils, some plain gold, some with darker centres, and handed them out. I miscalculated, found myself with a dozen to take home, where they stood in vases on the T.V. and the tables, reminders for some days of their relations that had taken off on an Air New Zealand DC10, clutched in the hands of my friends. Daffodils may not be natives, but it isn't easy to find a branch of wattle, even if the Government would let me have one. Besides, as anyone who went on the Ballarat trip will tell you, daffodils have Meaning.

I wandered home from the airport, feeling a bit purposeless, like a computer with no programme. For 5 years I had waited, argued, dreamt, waited more, even done some work, and it was really over. All that remained were some photographs, a large orange and yellow blow-up bird with "Drink Florida Orange" on the back of its head, and memories. And perhaps the hope of experiencing a Worldcon again one day.

So what does a fan do on such an occasion? Put the photographs in her fannish album, along with all the other photographs of fans doing their strange and wonderful things, hang the florida bird up on the blind in her book room, for all to see and admire, and consider gathering the memories together, putting them in some coherant form, and maybe even putting them in print, for her fellows to read and enjoy. Its a good idea, that, and as so few good ideas get the followthrough, I thought I'd better do it.

I started writing things when I got home from the airport, made a few notes of noteworthy things, and promptly forgot about it, in the humdrum activity of work and weddings and birthdays and Christmas. Then, with my final decision to run for DUFF, wanting to put out another issue of SOMETHING ELSE, the idea ocured again.

Where to start. I could begin with the arrival of our GOH, Ursula Le Guin, in Sydney. I think I would prefer to start with the arrival of the fanflight. Being a fan, that has more appeal.

Eric Lindsay and I drove to Mascot in good time to meet the plane. A number of other locals were present...Keith Curtis, Ron and Susan Clarke, Robin Johnson (not local, obviously, but all the way from Melbourne to meet and greet), and some others who I'm afraid I've forgotten. Then there was that incredible feeling as all 65 or so of them came out of the Customs Hall, familiar and unknown faces, and my mind going crazy because they were on my soil for the first time. There was Susan Wood, John Berry, Mike Glicksohn, Sheryl Birkhead (and unexpected, too), Don Thompson, Rusty Hevlin, Bob Tucker, Jan Finder, and so many others. I didn't really have time to stand back and think, well, its begun, I just let myself get swept along, enjoying all those North American accents, introducing friends to friends, (Susan Wood, meet Susan Clarke....Keith Curtis meet Bob Tucker), and doing a bit of meeting myself. Then, making sure we hadn't left anyone behind, they crowded onto the buses and headed for the Hotel. I took Eric, Sheryl and Mike with me, and managed to get there, only getting lost once, and ending up at the Oil Refinery. Quite unintentional, I assure you, Mike. Eric will say I do it all the time, but I don't really, only when fans are with me.. My evil little alterego takes over and destroys my reputation at those times.

Later that day a group of about 15 of us went down to Circular Quay and caught a ferry over to Manly. Mike insisted on eating some ethnic food, but since Kangaroo Tail Soup and Witchety Grubs arn't served in Sydney Milk Bars, he settled for a Chicko Roll. Its a wonder it didn't kill him. We had a little look around, then caught the Hydrophoil back.

Eric, Keith and I were driving to Melbourne the next morning, so we left quite early. It took a bit of effort to persuade Keith to pack,

he will deny it, of course, but Eric and I are sure he was hedging, caught between the extremes of nervous excitement and that strange anti-social complex that a number of fans have. Eventually, we loaded up and drove to my home, where Eric and Keith stayed the night.

Next morning we were on our way to Melbourne, starting at about 5.00 a.m. arriving at about 6.30 p.m. Keith was silent for most of the trip, since he hates to drive fast, and I usually go about 65 mph on a long trip, sometimes even 70. My car could go faster, but it only has retreads on, and I don't like to risk it.

That first night in Melbourne, there was a meeting of the Australian Authors Society or some such body, which we attended. It was a bit dull for my taste, but maybe I was just overtired from the drive. We dropped in on Bruce Gillespie for a time, talked about books and the Con and what we had to do to-day (it being after midnight), then returned to our Motel.

The next day was Wednesday, setting-up day for the Con. I don't remember a great deal about that day...doing a little pre-registering in the State Suite, meeting the Southern Aurora at Flinders Street Station, oh yes, that was Degraeves Night, wasn't it? I remember that. I managed to get Mike lost again. Then again, that is understandable, I don't know Melbourne very well. A large number of us ate the Degraeves food, indulged in our favorite conversations, enjoyed ourselves, getting into the atmosphere of fandom.

The Southern Cross is your typical Big Hotel, lots of rooms and corridors, restaurants and bars, plus its own shopping complex. The Convention rooms are separated on their own floor, with the main Ballroom for big events, the Lobby for Registration, another part of the Lobby, divided off for the Artshow, and smaller rooms for the Space Age set-up and the small group of Hucksters. Eric, Keith and I moved in on Thursday, and I went down to the Lobby to help with the Registration.

I remember the opening of the Con, how could I ever forget seeing that superb slide show and music for the first time. I've never seen anything like it anywhere else, and my congratulations go to the hard workers on the Committee who got it for the Con. I must admit, I didn't see a lot of the programme, I was too involved in other things.

I don't think its necessary to go through the whole thing. I prefer to think of those memorable highlights that ever fan has stored away in memory...the look on Keith Curtis' face at the room party he was never going to have, sitting on his bed, with Bob Tucker on one side and Ben Bova on the other..talk about high. The Masquerade. I just knew things were going to go wrong, and they did, so I just stood back and watched, and sighed a lot. I enjoyed doing it, too. The Banquet,

with paper planes carrying little messages, and our surprise of balloons and streamers, poor Robin. Ursula Le Guin, giving her GOH speech, wearing the propella beanie Eric persuaded her to wear. A nice person, Ursula, what more can I say. She forgave me for almost getting her lost, too.

Then there was the trip to Ballarat, where we all froze, and Del and Dennis Stocks got left behind, only to catch up with us later. I have a photo of Bob Tucker patting a horse, and Eric Lindsay seen entering a Joss House. I offered Bob Tucker a brick from the goldfields, but think of the excess baggage!

It was a strange Con, I suppose, small, with a core of fans and a large number of people unaccustomed to fandom. It was different, and good, and fun. It was also hard work, and problems, and expensive. So what?

I know this Report won't be as good as Don Thompson's, or Eric Lindsay's, since they have a better way with words than I, but I'm sure you get my meaning easily enough. You people who were there, you were my Convention, which is the way it should be. Worldcons may suffer in the future, as their population increases, and that feeling of being a part of something special diminishes, but we will know. Numbers don't matter, its people that count.

* * * * *



5th February

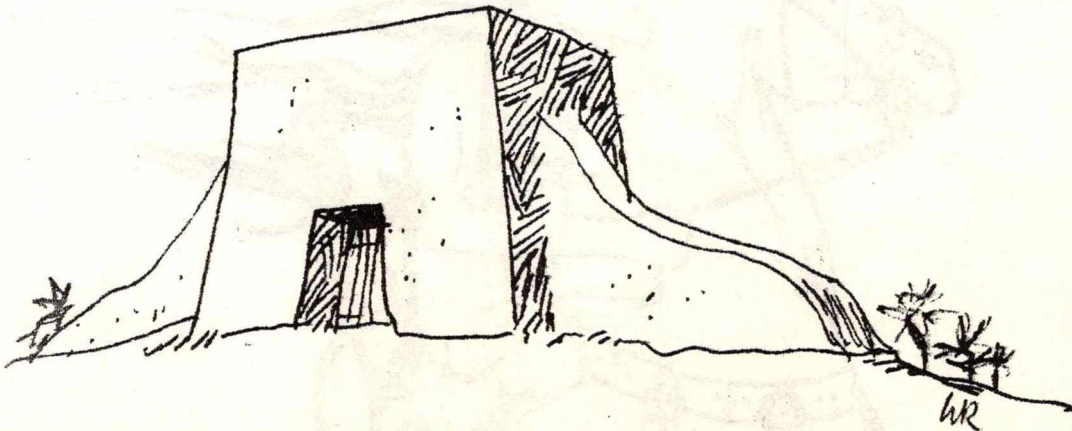
I got a nice surprise when I arrived home from work today. There, sitting on the bed, was my daily mail, a parcel from "Space Age Books" and a brown envelope with 'manuscript' on the corner. Eagerly, with hands shaking, I picked up the envelope. It was..yes, it was Kieft Curtis' article, that had been promised to me since November.

So many times I had given up hope, had been fed tantalising glimpses of what he was writing. I knew it could be good, possibly great, for Keith has a talent which should have more exposure in the fannish press than it has now. In the ways of books and pulps he is remarkably knowledgeable, and has a good writing talent to go with it. So, you can understand my happiness at getting that envelope.

His article begins on the next page, and I think you'll enjoy it. I don't know what I expected when I begged Keith for something for "Something Else", but believe me, I'm quite happy with what I got.

Keith discusses a subject dear to my heart, and one which needs more consideration (serious consideration, you could say...you could, if you wanted to be punny) by the authors of our genre.

Anyhow, I won't spill the beans, to use a cliché. Read on, and enjoy.



Keith Curtis,
26 Undercliffe Road,
Earlwood. N.S.W. 2206

Sooo, you wanted an article for "Something Else" - no doubt last week? Your suggestion was, I believe, a brief resume on "Space Opera" which I'll decline as this type of article requires a hectic reading program and as I'm committed elsewhere to doing a similar article on mystery and SF, a personal 'zine (would you believe, real soon now?) and a couple of biblios, the thought of further work is uncomfortable.

However, alternatives that presented themselves included "The Care and Feeding of Fuzzies - Little or Otherwise", "The Fannish Symbolism of the Charles Horne Chronicles" and "The Fantasy World of Felix Graham" but to no avail. All sufficiently erudite and bound to provoke some comment but, alas, better material for others.

I, therefore, paused to consider other subjects more suited to my talents (a pox on false modesty !) and ere long ideas diversified popped thick and fast. The stfanal appearances of marmalade, the teddy bear as SF hero, etc. I had almost settled down to deliver a scholarly exposition on the social significance of the Yngvi controversy when I spolt my coffee, trod on the cat's tail and fell to the floor clutching a battered third-hand copy of "I Go Pogo". In brief, I had stumbled upon the subject matter suitable for "Something Else" viz.....

GREMLINS, BLATANT BEASTS AND MAD UNIVERSES

(- towards a Humorous SF Bibliography)

Humour, a not so definable quality and though not predominant is often evident in science fiction but where and what are the literary contributions of the known SF humdrists? The brief survey that follows is not comprehensive (see foreword to the bibliography) but is evidence enough of this rich sub-genre that exists. The article rambles on by author so without further pre ambling I commence with,

Isaac Asimov; who has little in evidence apart from his non-scientifictional and brilliantly researched opus on the art of leering and beyond for sexy senior citizens. There is little within the field except for an odd short story here and there (refer Asimov's collections "Earth is Room Enough" and "Nine Tomorrows") and his characteristic and richly rewarding introductions to his own collections "The Early Asimov" and "Buy Jupiter" but to refer to these volumes as predominantly humorous SF is both inaccurate and misleading.

We have yet to see the appearance of a humorous novel from Dr. A. However, I have no doubts that somewhere, sometime (indeed if not already)

that the all inclusive Asimov's Encyclopaedic Guide and Treasury of Humour will appear. Put me down for a signed copy, please Dr. A.

Robert Bloch: apart from his still uncollected short story series "Lefty Feep" there is only one slim volume that can be considered eligible in this brief outline. I refer, of course, to "Dragons and Nightmares". A highly regarded and gifted speaker, Bloch's literary humour is regrettably sparse.

Wilson 'Bob' Tucker: despite some glorious fannish allusions in his early crime and SF stories alike one yearns for the wryly comic fantasy that Tucker is undoubtedly capable of. Visions of propellor beanie projectionists clutching a bottle in one hand a gunning down errant wire staplers with the other notwithstanding, I do seriously consider Tucker to be one of the few authors capable of writing a genuinely humorous science fiction novel. Real Soon Now?

Poul Anderson: one remembers his collaboration with Gordon R. Dickson on the unforgettable "Hoka" series - but who can say with any certainty where Anderson ends and Dickson begins? I hesitate to guess although I would be much surprised if the idea for "The Case of the Misplaced Hound" did not originate with Anderson (cf "The Martian Crown Jewels" - both stories appearing in that excellent anthology "The Science Fictional Sherlock Holmes"). I particularly remember his delightful short parody of Robert C. Howard's Conan entitled "The Barbarian" (F&SF May 1956) and the humour implicit to his novel "The High Crusade". Although not listed here it does bear the touch of the humorist's hand.

Gordon R. Dickson: "The Other Half of a Hoka" Dickson has displayed a warm sense of humour both in the abovementioned collaboration with Poul Anderson and his own novels. I refer particularly to his novel "Spacepaw". I have not read another novel in which that delicious young thing, the heroine, is known as "Dirty Teeth"² and I now read that Dickson has completed a 90,000 word "Unknown" type novel for Ballantine entitled "The Dragon and The George". I, for one, look forward to it immensely but before finishing this all too brief look at Gordy Dickson's humorous SF I must mention his collaboration with Ben Bova - "Gremlins Go Home". Although not to the forefront of humorous SF this volume is a worthy addition for any lover of the field. Gypsies, Leprechauns and Dragons and illustrated by Freas.

Footnotes

- 1 Unless one wants to make an outrageous claim for 'Psycho' as the only murder novel in which the victim cleans up the mess!
- 2 Except Dickson's "Spacial Delivery" (also set on Dilba) where she is known as "Greasy Face".

The mention of "Unknown" (later "Unknown Worlds") causes me to pause and re-ignite a while on the rich source of humorous SF and fantasy within its pages. The roll call of authors who appeared in "Unknown" has an almost ritualistic sound of magic - De Camp & Pratt, Kuttner, Russell, Brown, Boucher, Hubbard, Gold, Van Vogt & Hull. Not all contributions were humorous - some were grim and others outright fantasy - but those that were humorous are, by and large, prime examples of their kind. Several of these stories have been reprinted in various collections and anthologies, including two directly compiled from the magazine, D.R. Bensen's "The Unknown" and "The Unknown Fire", but some still remain for future anthologies to retrieve them from undeserved obscurity.

... In 1948, five years after "Unknown"'s demise, Street and Smith in an attempt to revive interest issued "From Unknown Worlds", a collection of stories from earlier issues. The cover by Edd Cartier was a fitting tribute to what "Unknown" was all about. It's a pity that copyright laws and Shayne's budget prevent reproduction here for words alone cannot do justice to the atmosphere of puckish humour that is almost a trademark of Edd Cartier, who more than any other symbolised "Unknown". His drawings of skulls, imps, cobwebs and inkpots still give me the greatest pleasure. (Coincidentally, at one time Cartier also illustrated my other favorite pulp "The Shadow" and one of my all time favourite books "Earthmen's Burden" - so I'm biased!)



Before leaving this brief eulogy for "Unknown" and passing back to particular authors I'd like to mention that the next author in resume had his first novel appear within the covers of "Unknown"'s premier issue. I refer of course to "Sinister Barrier" by the then up-and-coming Eric Frank Russell: although virtually retired EFR ranks among the leaders of humorous SF. His novels "The Great Explosion" and "Next of Kin" (US title "The Space Willies") being superb examples of this particular sub-genre.

A wildly funny prologue to "The Great Explosion" belies the gentle restrained humour that is characteristic of EFR's stories, a style, incidentally I've enjoyed muchly. "Next of Kin" though is something else! (Pun intentional.)

EFR runs riot with an infectious idea that he has used time and time again - the resourcefulness of Man against. Be it serious as in his novels "Rasp" and "With a Strange Device" (US title "The Mindwarper") or not so seriously as in his short stories "Allamagoosa", "Diabologic" and "Panic Button" EFR has succeeded in entertaining and despite strong competition "Next of Kin" may just rank as the masterpiece of humorous SF novels. (Were it short stories I think "Diabologic" would be a strong contender for top honours.) With "Next of Kin" EFR succeeds where others so often fail - the maintaining of the humour throughout. My sole complaint is that now he's retired I'll read no more new stories from this author's talented Eustace.

Laurence Janifer & Randall Garrett: these two are capable of producing some of the funniest SF around. Separately they have made some outrageous contributions - witness for example Janifer's "Wonder War" and Garrett's "Benedict Breadfruit" series of Feghoot parodies in Amazing during the early sixties. Together they have produced some of the wackiest plotlines around. Specifically I refer to their three novels about a telepathic reincarnation of Queen Elizabeth I written under the pseudonym Mark Phillips. Regretably the humour was not sustained and each was not funnier than the one before. However, their Thorne Smith style fantasy "Pagan Passions" for the long extinct Beacon Galaxy spicy SF novels though not a classic is enjoyable and worth reading.

Ron Goulart: above all others a difficult author to assess. His output though not of Malsbergian proportions (and thankfully not a la Malzberg style) is considerable within this sub-genre under review. In particular his Barnum's World and alternate earths series and not forgetting his excellent parody/pastiches of Wm Hope Hodgson's "Carnacki the Ghost Finder" series collected in "The Ghost Breakers". Goulart though is a frustrating writer in my opinion for some of his distinctively styled stories border near genius and yet despite some richly comic characters (e.g. "Ace" the wise-cracking homicidal automobile in "Spacehawk Inc") his novels fail through not sustaining the level of the humour. I have no complaints

about Goulart's cracking pace with which events usually happen - no siree! It's just that despite many scenes of comedic farce they are too often buried between flat unhumorous passages. I suspect that Ron Goulart is writing too quickly and in so doing is perhaps doing himself a disservice.

Harry Harrison: author of "Bill the Galactic Hero" and "Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers". Both heavy-habded farces, but undoubtedly fast, furious and as Pogo would say "fizzicle". Need I say More?

Finally I come to the remaining three authors I want to briefly look at. Deliberately I might add because these three plus one more have left between them incredibly rich legacies of SF humour for future readers and fans. Only one is still alive and to him I apologise for any suggestion that he's 'dead' - far from it. On to Messrs. Brown, Smith, De Camp and Pratt.

L. Sprague De Camp (and Fletcher Pratt): I don't think many people can think of De Camp without simultaneously thinking Pratt and their collaborations. Harold Shea, Gavagan, et al have left their mark. Carnelian Cubes, Blatant Beasts and lousy Yngvis - see what I mean? Their joint writings are self explanatory evidence of contributions to the field. De Camp's solitary contributions "Divide and Rule", "The Tellible Fiend" and the 'Johnny Black' series are all first rate examples and I'm surprised that no-one has yet collected the latter into one volume. Perhaps one day someone will.

It is very easy to become nostalgic when reviewing, albeit briefly, humorous SF and I warmly remember the delightful fantasies of Thorne Smith. Others have written elsewhere of their fondness for Thorne Smith (.e.g. Damon Knight) and although my association is only of recent origin Smith's zany and screwball fantasies rank among my favorite of all genres. The thought of a fan without Thorne Smith's fantasies is like imagining Sydney without the Harbour Bridge. The idea is monstrous.

Equally as monstrous is a sin of omission very nearly perpetrated by me. A few paragraphs earlier I was rash enough to intimate there were only three or so authors left to briefly cover in this entirely too brief look at humorous science fiction. Writing about Thorne Smith and Damon Knight caused me to dip into Knight's "In Search of Wonder" and there I found the following quote:

"...if Thorne Smith had not existed,
it would have been necessary for
Kuttner to invent him."

P.140

Ah me. I can think of several fans who would have personally lynched me for omitting Kuttner - and who has not read the Gallagher stories and chuckled all the way down to his boots? And one cannot forget Kuttner's Hogken series either and I can only re-echo Damon Knight's sentiments that these stories, the Hogkens, belong in a book of their own. (One of these days I will satisfy my own collecting desires and publish a couple of books myself

that I'd like to see in print.)

And so I come to the last author, my favorite,

Frederic Brown: I could wax forth interminably on the virtues of Brown's work but exercising great restraint I consider it sufficient to draw your attention to the bibliography below as evidence enough of his contributions. In the science fiction field, Frederick Brown has left a rich legacy of warm stories emanating from his talented self. With novels like "What Mad Universe" and short stories like "Star Mouse" what more could one ask for? (...except a copy of "The Case of the Dancing Sandwiches"...anyone?)

* * * * *

CHECKLIST: Part 1

The Checklist following cannot be considered complete but rather only a first draft towards a more definitive bibliography. As I have neither the time nor resources to do a more comprehensive biblio at present all additions, amendments, criticisms and further information are welcomed - though brickbats, howls of rage & hoots of derision would not be unexpected.

N.B. First appearances only are shown below although the symbol (R) denotes subsequent reprints available. The publishing information is divided into 1) Magazine appearance - short story only, 2) US editions 3) UK editions, and 4) Miscellaneous.

ABBREVIATIONS:

Classifications:

- a. anthology
- c. collection
- hc. hard-cover
- n. novel
- nf. non-fiction
- pa. paperback
- ss. short-story
- x. non sf/fanal item
- *****

- ROEM Robertson Mullens
- S&S Simon & Shuster
- TVB T.V. Boardman
- VENT Venture

All other publishers & magazines are listed in full.

Publishers & Magazines:

- AMZ Amazing
- ASF Astounding-Analog
- BALL Ballantine
- CMC Coward-McCann
- CMCG Coward-McCann & Geoghegan
- DBL Doubleday
- E&S Eyre & Spottiswoode
- FANT Fantastic
- FANU Fantastic Universe
- F&SF Fantasy & Science Fiction
- 4SQ Four Square
- HAMH Hamish Hamilton
- H&S Hodder & Stoughton
- MCB MacFadden-Bartell/Manor Books
- MYF Mayflower
- PCB PocketBooks
- PBL Paperback Library
- P-H Prentice-Hall
- POPL Popular Library
- RHD Rupert Hart-Davis

CHECKLIST

ALDISS, Brian W.

Hand Reared Boy, The	n-x	2) McCall Hc.1970? 3) Faber hc.1970
Male Response, The	n	2) Beacon pa.1961 3) 4SQ pa.1966
Soldier Erect, A	n-x	2) CMCg hc.1971? 3) Faber hc.1971

The first & third titles are the continuing semi-autobiographical & totally outrageous adventures of Horatio Stubbs. Corgi published the paperback versions in England but I know of no American pa. printing. Anyone? Highly recommended.

ANDERSON, Poul (see also DICKSON, Gordon R)

Barbarian, The	ss	1) F&SF May 1956 (Reprinted in one of Mirage's Conan Volumes?)
High Crusade, The	n.	2) DEL hc.1960 MCB pa. 1964 (R)
Makeshift Rocket, The	n.	2) Ace pa. 1962 3) Dobson hc.1971(?)
(aka 'A Bicycle Built for Brew' - originally ASF Nov/Dec issues 1958)		

ANDERSON, William C.

Five, Four, Three, Two, One-Pffff!	n.	2) Ace pa. 1960
Penelope	n.	2) Crown hc. 1963 PCB pa. 1965

ASIMOV, Isaac

Earth is Room Enough	c.	2) DEL hc.1957 Bantam pa.1959
		3) Panther pa. 1960
Loint of Paw, A	ss.	1) F&SF Aug 1957 2) inc. 'Asimov's Mysteries' cDEL 1968. Dell pa.(R)
Playboy and the Slime God	ss.	1) AMZ Mar 1961
Sensuous Dirty Old Man, The	nf-x	2) Walker hc.1971 3) Mayflower pa. 1971.

BAKER, Frank

Miss Hargreaves	n.	3) E&S hc.1940 Penguin pa.1950
Mr. Allenby Loses the Way	n.	2) CMC hc.1945 3) TVB hc.1946

BAKER, Robert Allen

Stress Analysis of an Evening Gown	a.	2) P-H Hc 1963
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BANGS, John Kendrick

Enchanted Typewriter, The	c.	2) Harper hc.1899
Houseboat on the Styx, The	n.	2) Harper hc.1896
Inventions of an Idiot, The	c.	2) Harper hc.1904
Olympian Nights	c.	2) Harper hc.1902
Pursuit of the Houseboat, The	n.	2) Harper hc.1897 (sequel to 'Hb. on the Styx')

BAXT. G.

Queer Kind of Death, A n. 2) ??? 3) Jonathon Cape hc. 1967

BELLOC, (Joseph) Hillaire

But soft - we are observed n. 3) Arrowsmith hc. 1928
Change in the Cabinet, A n. 3) Methuen hc. 1909
Man Who Made Gold, The n. 3) Arrowsmith hc. 1930
Mr. Clutterbuck's Election n. 3) E.Nash hc. 1908
Pongo and the Bull n. 3) Constable hc.1910
Postmaster-General, The n. 3) Arrowsmith hc.1932

N.B. The Arrowsmith editions are illustrated by G.K. Chesterton.

BENNET, Kem

Wink, The n. 2) Pellegrini-Cudahy 1951
(aka The Fabulous Wink) 3) RHD hc.1951

BENSEN, D.R. (as editor)

Unknown, The a. 2) Pyramid pa. 1963 (R)

BESTER, Alfred

Rat Race, The n-x 2) Berkley pa. 1956 3) Panther pa.1959
(aka Who He?) 2) Dial hc. 1953

BLOCH, Robert

Dragons & Nightmares c. 2) Mirage hc.1968 Belmont pa.1970(?)
Eight Stage of Fandom c-nf. 2) Advent hc. & pa. 1962

BOUCHER, Anthony

Far & Away c. 2) Ball hc. & pa. 1955
Compleat Werewolf, The c. 3) W.H.Allen 1969 Sphere pa. 1971

- these two collections are not all humorous stories but are, none the less, listed here for those that are. In much the same manner, the anthologies derived from F&SF and edited by Boucher are likewise highly recommended.

BOUNDS, Sydney J.

Dimension of Horror n. 3) Hamilton hc. & pa. 1953

- although not strictly a humorous novel it is nevertheless included for its burlesque on science fiction. The extracts from the erstwhile hero-novelist's book during the course of the story are irresistable fun.

BOVA, Ben

Starcrossed, The n. 2) Putnams hc. 1975 (?)

- a satire on an un-noted TV series and its writers.

BOVA, Ben and DICKSON, Gordon R.

Gremlins Go Home n. 2) St.Martin's Press hc. 1974

- delightfully illustrated by Kelly Freas.

