

ANZAPA MAILING # 248 APRIL 2009
PUBLISHED ORIGINALLY FOR ANZAPA
BY BILL WRIGHT

UNIT 4, 1 PARK STREET, ST. KILDA WEST, VICTORIA 3182

THE JOURNAL FOR INQUISITIVE READERS



GRAPHICS BY DITMAR

INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP (THE JOURNAL FOR INQUISITIVE READERS)
PUBLISHED BY BILL WRIGHT, 4/1 PARK STREET, ST. KILDA, VICTORIA 3182

for ANZAPA #248 - April 2009

"Imagination is like a muscle. I found out that the more I wrote, the bigger it got."

Philip Jose Farmer (1918 – 2009) R.I.P

Contents

This Issue's Cover.....	3
Ditmar graphics achieve international recognition	3
Bruce Gillespie – Best Fan Writer 2009.....	3
Letters.....	4
PhilDickian or vanVogtian, that is the question	5
Book reviews	6
Norma K Hemming Award discussed at Swancon 2009	7
Australia's 2009 convention season.....	9
Worldcons on the horizon	9
Clerihew corner.....	10
Dan McCarthy and the Banach-Tarski paradox.....	11
Computers in Science Fiction before 1956.....	13
DUFF 2009	14
Mervyn Barrett visits Melbourne and reminisces on old times	15
Stefan Zone.....	15
Stream of consciousness author assessments.....	20
Variations on a theme: <i>'I feel it in my water'</i>	21
Men's health	21
Pax in bello	21
Concerning Faith and Trust and Blind Obedience.....	22
The solar energy debate continues	22
Paradise lost.....	23
Loosing the soul.....	23
Renaming the worldcon.....	24
Encomiums	24
How to deal with MDD	24

Art, etc. credits...

Cover:

Graphic by Ditmar

Page 2 Photos of Bill Wright and Dick Jenssen

Page 15

Photo from Aussiecon 3 (1999)

Pages 6 & 10 Book covers

Page 21

Photo of the famous 'Cloaca' analogue
of the human digestive system

Page 7 Photo: Norma Hemming in costume

Page 21

Vampire Dreams cocktail recipe by

Page 12 Schematic of a rotating Kerr black hole

Gillian Polack; illustration by Jane Virgo

Page 14 Pulp covers

Pages 14 & 15 Illustrations by Ian Gunn

Page 24

Illustration by Bill Rotsler

This Issue's Cover

This Issue's Cover – The Past Martian Invasion

Dick Jenssen*

I was brought up in a home in which books abounded – well, ‘brought up’, that is, when I was not shuffled off to boarding school. Both parents were avid readers and although my father was unpredictable in most matters of pocket money, he very rarely refused to buy me a book – and always did if the book was on some aspect of science, or even science fiction. (I was thirty years old before I discovered that both my father and uncle were devoted readers of 1930s SF – *Amazing, Wonder Stories...* Perhaps there is a genetic component lurking there?) And so I had read a reasonable amount of H. G. Wells’ work before I was twelve, but not all the SF fiction. In fact, for some reason both *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* were major omissions. Two of his short stories, *The Door in the Wall* and *The Beautiful Suit* made an enormous impression on me – especially the latter – and are among my life-long favourites.

My first encounter with *The War of the Worlds* was the 1953 George Pal film, and that, too, has remained a favourite piece of nostalgia. Then, fifty-two years later, came the Spielberg/Cruise version. This was faithful to Wells’ depiction of the Martians’ tri-pod war machines (but I still prefer Pal’s flyers which seem somehow much more menacing, even if the wires which supported them were startlingly obvious), but reduced the story to a series of explosions, chases, collapsing buildings and sequences of total illogic. For example, if the Martians **had** come to Earth thousands of years ago, why not begin their conquest **then**, rather than waiting until human science and technology could give them some sort of resistance? I say ‘thousands of years ago’ but, as Roger Ebert points out, *they’ve “been planning this for a million years”*. Besides, why change Wells’ story so drastically?

It was after watching the Spielberg movie that I finally read the novel. It was somewhat of a revelation in that the writing gave a sense of the immediacy and terror of the invasion – restricted to the experiences of one person and confined to a small geographical range, which made it all the more effective. It also seemed rather brutal in its depiction of the carnage inflicted by the Martians, which was unexpected (for me) since I think I was expecting a much more ‘genteel’ narrative. **But** the idiocy of the Spielberg version seemed inexpugible from my memory, and I needed catharsis, or at least **some** sort of exorcism. And so **there** is the story behind the cover graphic. Sadly, though, the film remains in my head...

Oh, by the way, the cover depicts the Martian invasion some 20,000 years ago. Since we clearly have not been conquered, it must have occurred in an alternate universe. Unless the background text, by Nigel Kneale, of the film *Quatermass and the Pit* is recalled: in that film the Martian invasion was deep in our past which resulted in humanity being of two strains – violence and crime being the legacy in one of these of Martian genes (or genetic manipulation).

Technical Notes

The image was generated in *Eon's Vue 7 Complete*. The mammoth is part of the *Poser* software, in which it was ‘posed’ before being imported into *Vue*. The Martian war machine and the little green Martian were bought from *Daz 3D*, and also posed, then imported. Final tweaks were made in *Adobe's Photoshop CS3*.

**The bold font is because some readers of IRS think that the editor writes these cover notes! Dick Jenssen*

Ditmar graphics achieve international recognition

Dick ‘Ditmar’ Jenssen (the Ditmar Awards are named after him) came in at eighth in the *Best Fan Artist* category at Corflu Zed, the fanzine editor’s worldcon, on 15th March 2009. Ditmar cover graphics are now being featured on many overseas fanzines that can be downloaded from eFanzines: <http://efanzines.com>.

Bruce Gillespie – Best Fan Writer 2009

It’s official. **Bruce Gillespie** was elected Best Fan Writer at Corflu Zed (Seattle USA on March 13-15, 2009).

The Fanzine Activity Achievement (FAAN) Award winners were announced during the Corflu Zed banquet on 15th March 2009. Corflu is the annual convention of fanzine publishers and writers. **Bruce Gillespie** from Melbourne is now recognised as the world’s top fan writer. Runners-up were **Claire Brialey** from London and **Randy Byers** from Seattle. Bruce’s intercontinental fanzine *Steam Engine Time* that he co-edits with Florida fan Jan Stinson came sixth in the *Best Fanzine* category

Letters

From Chris Garcia (Mountain View, California), 7 Feb 2009...

Ditmar Strikes Again! Great cover, but then again, everything he does turns to gold, it seems. I love the way he always has a piece to accompany each cover. In 2008 the best issue of *The Drink Tank* <Chris's e-zine> was the Taral Wayne issue where he talked about the various pieces he sent for me to run and talked about them. It's just nice to get a glimpse into that side where I'll never live since I've no artistic talent.

I agree with you, *eI* is a damn fine zine, quite possibly my favorite. I'm pleased I've gotten to meet Earl Kemp a couple of times, am working with him on the project for the Eaton Collection and have even had an article in *eI*. Dick Lupoff is a wonderful writer. Sadly, I've only managed to meet him once. He's a good guy.

I really think that I want to make it to an Australian natcon someday. Even more than going to the 2010 worldcon. Yeah, worldcon would be a blast, but really, I'd rather go to a 'native' con as it were and get to hang out with locals instead of the Union of Traveling Giants that Aussiecon 4 will certainly draw.

I don't know why, but I guess I must have been very tired a few moments ago when I read Tim Train's article and I thought he said that it was Pope Benedict's 400th birthday. I wouldn't doubt it, he looks a lot like the Emperor from Star Wars, but it did strike me as odd.

Nice little piece on Taral Wayne. Technically, *The Drink Tank* comes out every week, though honestly, I figure I'm doing three issues a month by choice and usually end up fitting an extra in for no good reason. I did the math and with my 200th issue coming out on the exact 4th anniversary meant that I had averaged 50 issues a year! That was a slight shock. The stuff Taral's been writing lately has been great and I've been lucky enough to get a fair amount of it. His art's fantastic too, which I guess would explain why he's the favorite to win the Best Fan Artist this year. I'd even put him as the Fave for Best Fan Writer, too!

I own two stamps- a Penny Black and a Zeppelin stamp from Nazi Germany. I used to have a bunch of them, but I've had to sell them over the last few years, but those two I won't sell. I keep them in my Family Bible, along with a couple of valuable baseball cards and a Confederate note. It's my safe.

The Montreal worldcon will be a big deal for me as it'll be the last worldcon when I'm TAFF administrator and I'll be doing my auction and there's a whole bunch of fun. Plus, Ralph Bakshi is the biggest deal ever! He's a huge influence on almost all my artist friends and I met him at *Cinequest* a few years ago after watching his film *Coonskin*, which was a rough view, but a near-masterpiece.

DUFF, Da Uther Fan Fund, is launching another race. I fully support DUFF and they did a great auction at the Denver WorldCon in the Fanzine Lounge. It was good fun. Whoever runs, I'm making sure I get a vote in. I don't think I've ever voted in a DUFF race, but I have voted in two GUFF races. I find that funny.

Sex on Ferris Wheel-like rides is classic. At Great America, the amusement park in Santa Clara where I grew up, we had the Sky Whirl - a Triple Wheel (see it at <http://www.greatamericaparks.com/skywhirl.html>) called The Babymaker because it was not unusual to spy a couple going at it. One famous incident I witnessed from the line was a group of bisexual activists who put on a little show one late summer afternoon, which did not make Great America management happy. You know, looking for that photo of the Sky Whirl led me down a rat hole finding a ton of other sites about Great America rides of my youth. The thing fandom leads me to.

I read the Zero Energy stuff, scratch my head, and realize that I'm exactly as dumb as I play.

The Obama YouTube stuff is great. There's a fine satire called Barak Hussein Osama- The Guy From Iraq Who Blew Up the World Trade Center and Then Ran For President. It's a comedy where the producer made a brilliant series of vignettes that he claimed were Obama in various messages by claiming that he had come into the US in the 1970s and the employees at Ellis Island, which had been out of service for years by that point, had changed his name from Osama to Obama and that there were a series of mistranslations that led to him not being confused with Osama Bin Laden, which is his real name. It's hilarious and just flat-out wrong.

I like Van Vogt. Not a lot, but I have to say, rereading some of his short works recently I've been impressed.

I saw that you're not going to be at CorFlu. The Lovely and Talented Linda and I are flying up for it and planning on fine weekend. I only make every other CorFlu and I'm glad to get to go to this one. I'm also glad that there's a tour of the Science Fiction Museum planned. I've never been!

The David Russell illo is awesome! Another name I don't immediately recognize. I have to say it's good stuff.

Chris

From **John Purcell** (Texas USA), editor of the celebrated e-zine 'Askance', 17 March 2009...

Hello, Bill! Dick Jenssen's information about Ditmar covers - always fabulous; I just don't know how he does it, but so glad he does it. This one was really interesting. Problem is, I have never read Weinbaum's "*The Lotus Eaters*." Shame on me, I know. Judging by his description, it sounds like a fascinating story, and does match up nicely with his cover art. So once again I have yet another story to tack onto my "to read" list. That dang list keeps growing every day.

Some nice conventions coming up Down There. But surely there are many more than just those four listed. If anything, those are the ones you have deemed worthy to note, which is fine. Enjoy!

Tim Train's clerihews are delightful. You really must get more material from this fellow for your zine. You describe him as a "tall, rangy youngster", which could mean he's in his 50s. <Actually, he's 31 – Ed.> Heck, I'm a youngster compared to so many fans still active in their 60s, 70s, and 80s and I'll soon be 55, six days from now as I write this. I'm a college English teacher so Tim's poetry struck a chord with me; very enjoyable stuff.

A few odds and ends herein warrant comment, notably Taral Wayne's upcoming Fan GoHship at Anticipation. Taral keeps sending me articles for my zine - for which I am eternally grateful and consistently at fault for not sending him hard copies of the zines; one multi-issue mailing coming up - and I certainly believe he is going to do a fine job. As for the Aussiecon 4 next year, I am still considering standing for DUFF in 2010, but my internal debate has slacked off in recent months. By the end of this year (2009), I should have made my final decision, which will really depend on how much I can set aside in an account to fund my portion of the trip. Stay tuned.

Many moons ago I had a stamp collection. It wasn't a very big collection, but I had fun with it. These Looney Tunes stamps are definitely fun, and I may just have to get a sheet of these, even though there are no Marvin the Martian postage stamps included. If there were, I would snap it up because I collect Marvin the Martian memorabilia. The collection improved a few weeks ago when I acquired a softy Marvin doll and a pair of slippers, which are very warm. I may have to post a picture of those on-line or in the next issue of my zine. Hmm... There's an idea for a fan arkle...

With that, I think I'll stop there. Many thanks for posting IRS, Bill, and I hope everything finds you well and safe. Mayhaps I shall see you and the rest of the Aussie gang at Aussiecon 4. Only one way to find out.

All the best,

John Purcell

"Virtues are very admirable things but it is the men and women with vices who rule the world. The good die young because there is no useful work for them to do. No really satisfactory person, from a moral point of view, ever achieved greatness." E Phillips Oppenheimer in that most moral of amoral tales, *Mr Wingrave, Millionaire*.

PhilDickian or vanVogtian, that is the question

In IRS February 2009 the editor overviewed the science fiction of A E van Vogt (1912 – 2000), in the course of which I drew attention to the way van Vogt systematised his writing method using scenes of 800 words or so where a new complication was added or something was resolved. Today we call such twists and turns of plot 'PhilDickian'. I said that Philip K Dick (1928 – 1982) must have gotten the idea from van Vogt.

Steve Green from Solihull UK picked up on that point...

You raise the possibility that Phil Dick was influenced by A E van Vogt's writing technique, "using scenes of 800 words or so where a new complication was added or something was resolved". Certainly, when I reread 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?' about five years ago, I was struck by the casual, almost careless manner in which Dick introduced a plot device which would have formed the keystone of many other writers' works, only to dismantle it just a pages later. It was kind of a literary ADHD, as his imagination jumped from concept to concept.*

* attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

I recall one occasion on which Dick introduced a murder machine, a robotic device which sneaks into a conapt, leaves DNA evidence implicating an innocent man, kills the target and metamorphoses into a TV set. The detective walks in, spots that the TV is way too heavy and guesses its real purpose. The entire sequence doesn't run longer than a half-dozen pages: awesome!

Cheers – Steve.

Book reviews

The Priestess and the Slave – Jenny Blackford’s first novel.

It is said that the best authors sometimes live their creations and I think that might have happened to Jenny Blackford when writing this one. For this is indeed a very readable and finely crafted historical novel. I perused it from beginning to end in one afternoon. Afterwards, it took me half an hour to detach myself from the novel and to re-engage with the modern world.

The Priestess and the Slave is set in 5th century BC Athens when fragmented Greek kingdoms had split from alliance against the mighty Persian Empire to war amongst themselves, thus exposing their peoples to impoverishment and disease.

After two years studying Ancient History in high school followed by four years reading Classics at the University of Newcastle where she looked at the construction of ancient chairs and tables and tried her hand at spinning and weaving as well as reading Plato’s *Symposium* and similar texts, Jenny harbours no illusions about the patriarchal nature of ancient Greek society. She decided to write about women in the process of going about their daily lives in a climate of patriarchal dominance that was reinforced by ingrained patterns of religious observance. Wars didn’t interest her but the plagues of Athens did and, as she says,

“It seemed obvious to use as the viewpoint character for the novel one of the people who would be doing most of the work, a female slave named Harmonia. There were many slaves in Ancient Greece, many of them women kidnapped from foreign families.”

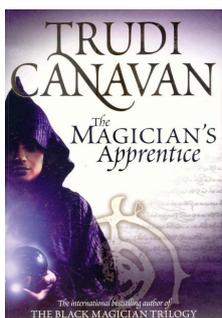
Intertwined with the domestic tale is Jenny’s interpretation of high temple politics six decades earlier when the Oracle at Delphi was at the height of its popularity and a triad of three priestesses served as Phythiai. Appalled by the behaviour of her fellow Phthia Perialla (who was bribed by the Spartan king Kleomenes), Thrasulla must navigate the shoals of competing national interests under the ever-present threat of Persian imperial ambition. The priestess and the slave never met but their stories illuminate the politics and culture of extraordinarily vital civilisation that lasted for a millennium before being violently suppressed in 498 AD.

Personally, I would have liked to have seen irony with more of a bite to it. For example, the Phythia when prophesising sat on a cauldron supported by a tripod symbolizing the triad of the Great Goddess of the matriarchy that had ruled Europe during its pre-historical emergence from tribalism. This eccentric perch can only be interpreted as symbolic boiling, reminiscent of when the Titans boiled Apollo’s divine half brother Dionysus. Lots of scope for irony there! Maybe it’s the origin of the expression, ‘the hot seat’.

Jenny Blackford’s meticulous attention to historical and archaeological accuracy in combination with narrative skills that have been honed by her reading as a judge for the World Fantasy Award should not only recommend this book to discriminating readers but also put it on university library shelves for reference by historians, physicians and archaeologists, not to mention other specialists in the social sciences who share an interest in how people lived and wrought in days gone by. The bones of history laid bare by Plato and Herodotus are not enough. They need to be fleshed out with fiction and Jenny does that brilliantly.

The Priestess and the Slave is published by Hadley Rille Books. Copyright © 2009 by Jenny Blackford. Rating ☆☆☆☆☆

The Magician’s Apprentice – Trudi Canavan

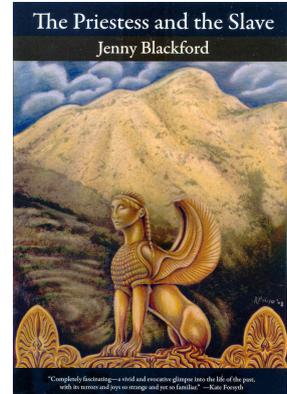


Trudi Canavan already has two successful trilogies under her belt. This new novel, *The Magician’s Apprentice*, is a prequel her first (the Black Magician trilogy), colouring in the early history of the Magician’s Guild in order to set the scene for a follow-up trilogy.

If you are looking for the zing of the Black Magician trilogy, especially in the second book *The Novice* where Sonea’s nemesis, the obnoxious twerp Regin, provokes her into challenging him to a formal duel which she wins, you might be disappointed.

This prequel is set six hundred years earlier and describes the adventures of Tessia, daughter of a village healer who is involved in conflicts between rival magicians, nations at war and, at the end of it all, establishment of the Magicians’ Guild.

The Magician’s Apprentice is published in Australia and New Zealand by Orbit Copyright © 2009 by Trudi Canavan. Rating ☆☆☆



Norma K Hemming Award discussed at Swancon 2009

Following is the text of a flier put into Swancon 2009 (Perth WA, 9-13 April) convention show bags:

Synopsis: Since the 1970s when the late Susan Wood sparked the feminist movement within the world science fiction community, no less than three American awards have been set up to promote positive images of racial and sexual minorities in North American science fiction. They are...

- the **James Tiptree Award** for science fiction or fantasy that expands or explores our understanding of gender;
- the **Gaylactic Spectrum Awards** which were created in 1988 to honour works in science fiction, fantasy and horror that include positive explorations of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered characters, themes or issues; and
- the Carl Brandon Society which is dedicated to improving the visibility of people of colour in the speculative genres of SF, fantasy, horror, magical realism, etc.

Australia has no such award. In recent years concerned science fiction fans, including a number of editors, authors and academics, have identified the need for one.

The Norma K Hemming Award is a major fan initiative that was referred to the Australian Science Fiction Foundation (ASFF) in 2007 by WA SF fan Emma Hawkes on behalf of the Western Australian Science Fiction Foundation; on the basis that, since it will be a national award, it needs the national SF association to sponsor and administer it. The award was accepted in principle by ASFF on 1st September 2007 and, after investigation, formally accepted at its annual general meeting on 25th January 2009.

Biography: Norma Hemming was a British author who migrated to Australia in 1949 and soon started writing (as N K Hemming) for local pulp magazine *Thrills Incorporated* and participating in the fan scene. She was a founding member of the femme fan group Vertical Horizons and a member of the Arcturian Players, a science fiction theatrical group for whom she wrote and acted. In the late 1950s she returned to international publishing with stories in *Nebula SF* and *New Worlds* before dying of lung cancer, at age 33, in early 1960.

Award description: This will be a jury award to mark excellence in the exploration of themes of race, gender, class and sexuality

- in the form of science fiction and fantasy or related art work or media;
- produced either in Australia or by Australian citizens; and
- first published, released or presented in the calendar year preceding the year in which the award is given.

Unlike an annual award, it is envisaged that the Norma K Hemming Award will be given only for excellence (i.e. provided an acceptable standard of competence is achieved); although it will be awarded annually for the first two years to establish the award. ASFF is working towards launching the Norma K Hemming Award at **Aussiecon 4** (68th worldcon in Melbourne on 2-6 Sep 2010); its convenors have agreed to give the award a high profile at the worldcon.

Administration and development: Emma Hawkes and graphic artist Sarah Wu are responsible for the design and fabrication of the award trophy and will be promoting the award at Swancon 2009 (34th annual Western Australian science fiction convention) where she will chair a panel where fans can brainstorm past publications/events of the sort that will be eligible when produced in 2009 – ie. SF and fantasy or related art work or media that deals with themes of race, gender, class and sexuality. It should be noted that local university librarians David Medlen, Toby Burrows and Grant Stone, each from his own different perspective, have a stake in progressing the award. A five-member Standing Committee of Jurors for the Norma K Hemming Award has been appointed consisting of academics, authors and editors who are SF fans.

Dr Toby Burrows, principal librarian for the University of Western Australia, is putting together an edition of Norma Hemming's collect writings. He is hoping to get the volume published in time for Aussiecon 4.

Also, ASFF has acquired on extended loan, courtesy of Mervyn Binns, a copy of the only script that has survived out of Norma Hemming's five stage plays, ie. *The Matriarchy of Renok* that was first performed at the 6th Australian SF Convention in 1958 and recently read over two consecutive Swancons.



Norma Hemming in costume

Norma K Hemming bibliography (courtesy of David Medlen, senior librarian at WA University)

Loser Take All	<i>Science Fantasy</i> [Winter 1951/52] Vol 1, No 3
Death Ray for Roma	<i>Thrills Incorporated</i> [Oct. 1951] No 16
Amazons of the Asteroids	<i>Thrills Incorporated</i> [Nov. 1951] No 17
Return of the Roc-Men	<i>Thrills Incorporated</i> [Jan. 1952] No 18
Lifeline on Luna	<i>Thrills Incorporated</i> [Feb. 1952] No 19
Last of the Rocketeers	<i>Thrills Incorporated</i> [Mar. 1952] No 20
Vengeance of Artilla	<i>Thrills Incorporated</i> [Apr. 1952] No 21
The Terror of Terra - A Short Story	<i>Vertical Horizons</i> [Apr. 1952] No 1
Peril of the Sea Planet	<i>Thrills Incorporated</i> [May 1952] No 22
Rocketeers at Bay	<i>Thrills Incorporated</i> [June 1952] No 23
Starchild	<i>Forerunner</i> [Spring 1952] No. 1
You Can't Stop a Spaceman	<i>Action Monthly Magazine</i> [1953] No 12
Fancy Dress	<i>Daily Mirror</i> (Sydney Newspaper) 19th Feb 1953
Symbiosis	<i>Popular Science Fiction</i> [Mar. 1954] No 3
Clearing Station	<i>Fantast Sidetrack</i> [Apr./May 1954] Supplement to UK fanzine 'Operation Fantast'
As We Were	<i>Future Science Fiction</i> [Nov. 1954] Vol 1, No 5
Dwellers in Silence	<i>New Worlds</i> [Aug 1958] No 51
Debt of Lassar	<i>Nebula SF</i> [Aug 1958]
Call them Earthmen	<i>Science Fiction Adventures</i> [1959] Vol 2. No 10

Audio Plays: *Space Lure*; *Trouble with a Time Machine*; *Witches of Arcturus 4*; and an untitled comedy sketch set in prehistoric times. The material is undated. The plays were almost certainly read by the amateur sf play group, The Arcturian Players.

Stage Plays: *That's the Way It Goes* (Syncon 1964 – lost); *Miss Denton's Dilemma* (Syncon 1955 - lost) *The Balance of Power* (Melbourne Convention 1956 - lost); *The Carson Effect* (1956/7 - lost) *The Matriarchy of Renok* (Melbourne Convention 1958 – two copies of original script extant).

References

References for those who would like to read more about Norma Hemming and her life and times are:

- i) '**Debt of Lassar**', *Nebula* #33 1958;
- ii) '**Prophet and Pioneer: The Science Fiction of Norma Hemming**'
by Sean McMullen & Russell Blackford, in *Fantasy Annual* #2
edited by Philip Harbottle and Sean Wallace (1998);
- iii) **The MUP Encyclopaedia of Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy**, edited by Paul Collins,
documenting the Australian genre scene from the 50s (1998);
- iv) '**Strange Constellations: A History of Australian Science Fiction**'
by Russell Blackford, Van Ikin and Sean McMullen (1999);
- v) '**The Best Australian Science Fiction Writing: A Fifty Year Collection**'
edited by Rob Gerrand, Black Inc (2004);
- vi) **Hemming Bibliography** by WA academic librarian David Melden (2008 - above); and
- vii) '**I Wasn't Expecting That": The Career of Norma Hemming**' by David Medlen,
in *Science Fiction: A Review of Speculative Fiction* #45 Volume 71 Number 1 - 2008

Australia's 2009 convention season

reprinted from the MSFC clubzine *Ethel the Aardvark* #140 February-March 2009

WONDERING WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR SPARE WEEKENDS AND MONEY? TRY THESE EVENTS

Nullus Anxietas 2

The 2nd Australian Discworld Convention
Friday Feb 27th to Sunday Mar 1st, 2009, Storyy Hall, RMIT, Melbourne
<http://ausdwc.org>

An Australian convention for all things Discworld is named *Nullus Anxietas* (none in Latin) to celebrate the creation of author Terry Pratchett. Three days of super sessions, perfect performances and fantastic fun in the heart of Melbourne will feature:

- Premiere Screening of the Australian made film *Troll Bridge* (based on Terry's short story)
- Full parody singer extraordinaire Maria Franois
- Costume
- Short films and live drama
- Games such as *Theed*, *Significant Other* and *Worwell*
- Medical Weapon Demonstrations
- And much, much more!

Come along and join in and follow fun - register online now at <http://ausdwc.org>

Science Fiction ALL - CLUB mini-convention

Saturday 18 April 2009
10.00 am - 4.30pm
St David's Uniting Church Hall,
74 Melville Rd, West Brunswick

All Melbourne's science fiction clubs under one roof

Guest of Honour - Kim Westwood
author of *The Daughters of Moab*
Prize-winning "Federation" Board Game
"Mad Max meets Ironman with a nice arse of Ironman"

Meet Melbourne's sci-fi clubs
Specialist dealers and booksellers
Collectibles, memorabilia, books for sale
Rarities auction Trivia Quiz
Panel discussions

\$10 admission, \$20 families, \$5 concession
(Melways ref 29 CS, or catch a 55 train from William St
in the city to tram stop 36)

Food & real coffee served all day

Swancon
April 9-13, 2009
All Seasons Hotel,
15 Robinson Avenue,
Northbridge,
Perth, WA

CONTACT

Swancon 2009

Guests of Honour:
Richard Morgan,
Trudi Canavan,
Theresa Anns,
Rob Masters
Alicia Smith.

http://supanova.com.au/
Melbourne March 27-29
Melbourne Showgrounds

Full A\$160
Concession A\$140
swancon@swancon.com
<http://2009.swancon.com.au/>

Conflux 6

Friday October 2 to Monday October 5, 2009
The Marquee, Canberra, Australia

<http://conquest.asn.au/> Conquest is Melbourne's Easter Games Convention held annually at Melbourne High School over the Easter Weekend. In 2009, it's from Friday 10th April to Monday 13 April. Conquest present a variety of quality games to anyone interested in playing them: tabletop, roleplaying, freeforms, RPGA/Living games etc

Introducing Conflux 6
The fifth speculative fiction convention held under the Conflux name in Canberra. The first was in 2004 and was the national convention (Natcon) for that year. One of Australia's finest conventions. <http://www.conflux.org.au/>

CONTINUUM

Galaxies by Gaslight

Continuum 5 (Aug 14-16, 2009) The Ether Centre, Melbourne, Australia.
Continuum is a Speculative Fiction convention that spans all genres and media.
This year's theme is "Galaxies by Gaslight". GoH Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.
For more information: <http://www.continuum.org.au/>.

<http://www.anticipationsf.ca/> Montreal, Canada
Le 67e Congrès mondial de science-fiction 6 - 10 août 2009
The 67th World Science Fiction Convention 6 - 10 August 2009
Anticipation

the 30th National Science Fiction Convention of New Zealand
ConScription
Auckland
Hotel Grand Chancellor, Auckland Airport
Friday 29 May to Monday 1 June 2009
(Queen's Birthday weekend)
www.conscription.org.nz, Wednesday 27 to Friday 29 May 2009

International Literary Guest of Honour
Julie E. Czerneda
New Zealand Literary Guest of Honour
Russell Kirkpatrick

ARMAGEDDON Expo

October 17/18
2009
Melbourne Exhibition Centre
www.armageddonexpo.com/

Aussiecon 4 will be held 2-6 September 2010 at the new Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre. Guests of Honor: Kim Stanley Robinson, Robin Johnson and Shaun Tan. Co-Chairs Perry Middlemiss and Rose Mitchell.

For more details, visit the Aussiecon 4 website
www.aussiecon4.org.au

Contact details:
Aussiecon 4
GPO Box 1212
Melbourne VIC 3001

Register online at <http://www.auscontraire.org.nz> (and let us know at info@auscontraire.org.nz if you have any problems with the website), or print forms will be available soon. We will of course be accepting registrations in person at ConScription.

Worldcons on the horizon

Anticipation (the 67th worldcon) will be held in Montréal, Quebec, at the **Palais des congrès de Montréal** from August 6-10, 2009. Website: <http://www.anticipationsf.ca/>. Australians can join through Anticipation's agent Craig Macbride. E-mail: montreal@f8d.com or write to PO Box 274, World Trade Centre VIC 8005.

Aussiecon 4 (the 68th worldcon) will be held in Melbourne, Australia, on September 2-6, 2010.

E-mail: info@aussiecon4.org.au Website: <http://www.aussiecon4.org.au>

Mailing address: GPO Box 1212, Melbourne 3001 AUSTRALIA

Clerihew corner

*George W Bush
Shoulda got the push.
Barack Obama
Seems a lot calmer.*

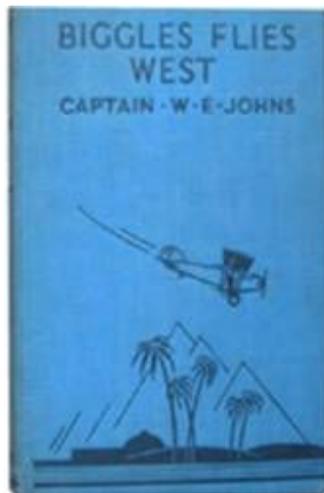
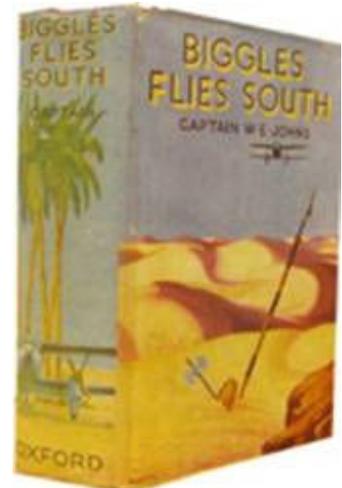
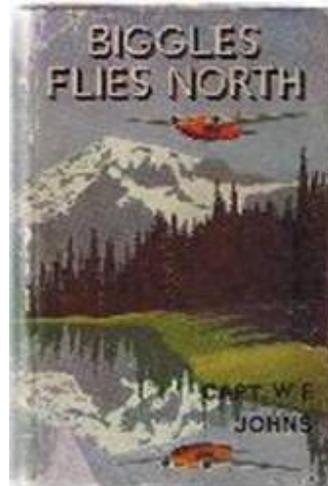
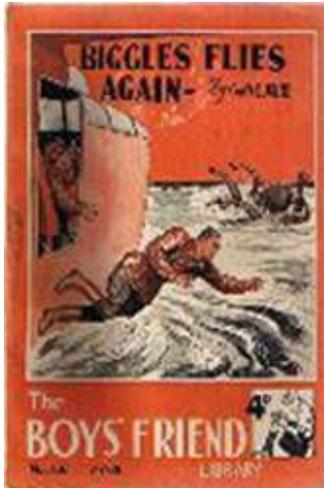
but, of course,
the reason for *that*
is *this*:

*Barack Obama
Needs to be calmer
So he don't frighten
Joseph Biden.*

This is a propos of nothing much, except that I've been reading about US politicians lately . . .

*The critics didn't stint on
Their bile for William Clinton
And also chose to pillory
That other Clinton, Hillary.*

My latest catalogue from ABE Books is all about the *Biggles* books by Captain W.E. Johns, including these classic adventures of Biggles, Algy, Ginger, and Bertie:



No mention of the classic
Monty Python version,
Biggles Flies Undone!

The following book, however,
is probably what led Biggles
(in his later years) to become a
devotee of prune juice and oat bran...



All this is, of course, a pathetic lead-in to the following clerihew...

*One of my pet peeves or niggles
Re: James Bigglesworth ("Biggles")
Is his penchant to injure
Algy, Bertie or Ginger.*

Trivium of the day: James "Biggles" Bigglesworth was born May 1899 in India. He was the second son of an administrator in the Indian Civil Service. Because of his upbringing in India, Biggles was fluent in Hindi.

Dennis Callegari

Dan McCarthy and the Banach-Tarski paradox

Synopsis

IRS February 2009 showcases Dick Jenssen's review of Henry Kuttner's 'The Time Axis'. Dick makes a special point of mentioning that, whatever the *time axis* may be, it played a fundamental role in avoiding destruction of the universe. Also involved is a real mathematical procedure known as the **Banach-Tarski dissection**, named after two mathematicians who, in 1927, proved that it is possible to dissect a solid sphere into a finite number of pieces and to reassemble those pieces to yield *two* spheres *identical* to the original. In 1945 another mathematician, R M Robinson, proved that the minimum number of pieces was a mere five. Four years later 'The Time Axis' first appeared in the pulp magazine Startling Stories January 1949.

The review drew an immediate response from no less a wight than the President of Anzapa, Dan McCarthy, who said,

Thank you for drawing my attention to the Banach-Tarski paradox (The Time Axis). However, if I have to choose between a mathematical proof and the law of conservation of mass, I will go for the latter every time: I have had dealings with mathematicians. Banach and Tarski only prove it is possible, not how it is possible. The shapes involved would defy description, as they would be defined by an infinite number of points and they would not have a finite volume in any ordinary sense.

The best commentary I found on the subject read, in part, "The fact that the Banach-Tarski depends on the axiom of choice (AC) yet is so strongly counter-intuitive has been used by some mathematicians to suggest that AC must be wrong; however, the benefits of adopting AC are so great that such black sheep of the mathematical family as the paradox are generally tolerated.

Myself, I will merely quote the fourth ghost in Ruddigore, "Fallacy somewhere, I fancy."

Dick responded to Dan's concerns about the conservation of mass with the following article...

Dan McCarthy and the Banach-Tarski paradox (BTP)

Dan raises quite a few points in his comment on the *Banach-Tarski dissection/reconstruction (BTdr)* which would require a couple of pages for a reasonable reply. Let me just say that the BTP is a mathematical **proof** which is accepted as such **if the axiom of choice** is accepted. (You see, there is already a need for quite a lot more explanation). But there are objects which exist **only** in the mathematical universe and **not** in the physical universe. The *Koch Snowflake* is an example. And in the mathematical universe its properties **can** be determined even if it is 'unreal' in the sense of being 'physically *impossible*'. (More words here are necessary, of course). As for the *Axiom of Choice* being counter-intuitive, well more words again are needed, because, really, it's quite simple. What disturbs some mathematicians is that it is an **axiom** which postulates that 'this process' **can** be done, but does not show **how** it can be done – it is **non-constructive**.

The BTP involves dissecting a solid sphere into five pieces, and then re-assembling those pieces into **two** solid spheres each of which are of the same volume as the original. What I want to comment on here is Dan's words: "*(h)owever, if I have to choose between a mathematical proof and the law of conservation of mass, I will go for the latter every time*". This seems to me, and I apologise if I have misunderstood Dan, a confusion and/or conflation of the Mathematical and Physical universes. The former is one of abstraction, the latter is one in which we, and all things material, exist. The former is a product of the human intellect (I am no Platonist!), the latter is what we describe as 'physical reality'. A materialist says that reality is all that there is, but even a materialist (and I am of that persuasion!) must admit that the human mind can, and does, create 'unreal' objects which can be examined and their relations with other such 'unreal' constructions determined.

For example: unicorns and gryphons; or orcs and nazguls. Or the whole wide world of mathematics – which is **all** abstraction. So the proof of the BTP is not in any way antagonistic to the physical universe – it exists solely in the mathematical cosmos, and it can **not** be accomplished in 'reality'. It exists, nonetheless, as a truth, for **all** mathematical proofs are statements of truths which have always been true, and will always be true. Provided, of course, that the underlying axioms are accepted...

As for conservation of mass...well here are three ideas.

1 Mass/Energy

Thanks to the genius of Einstein we know that mass and energy are related via $e = m c^2$, and so they may be thought of as two aspects of the one reality: fundamental particle masses are expressed in terms of energy, for

example. So – what if the *Banach-Tarski dissection/reconstruction* involves sufficient energy to generate the mass of the second sphere?

2 The Higgs Field

This is a field which is postulated to permeate all of the physical universe – a modern equivalent of the *ether*. (Loads of references to this are on the Internet - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higgs_field, <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=the-mysteries-of-mass>). *It is a legitimate and accepted part of contemporary Physics – the mediator of this field is the Higgs boson*. The search for this *God particle* is one of the aims of the recently operational Large Hadron Collider. All fundamental particles are hypothesized to be massless, and to acquire their mass by their motion through the Higgs field. So – what if the Higgs field could be damped or screened? The BTdr could then proceed without any concerns regarding conservation of mass.

3 Kerr rotating black holes

As Martin Rees points out in his book *Before the Beginning*, “(i)n 1963 the New Zealander Roy Kerr discovered a . . . solution of Einstein’s equations (of general relativity), which represented a collapsed *rotating* object” – a Kerr black hole. “In a spinning hole the stresses become infinite on a ring rather than at a point. Kerr immediately realized that (if you pass) through this ring . . . you’re in a completely different universe where radius and mass are negative!”. So bring in mass from the outside, and what happens to conservation?

The accompanying figure is from *Cosmic Catastrophes* by Craig Wheeler.

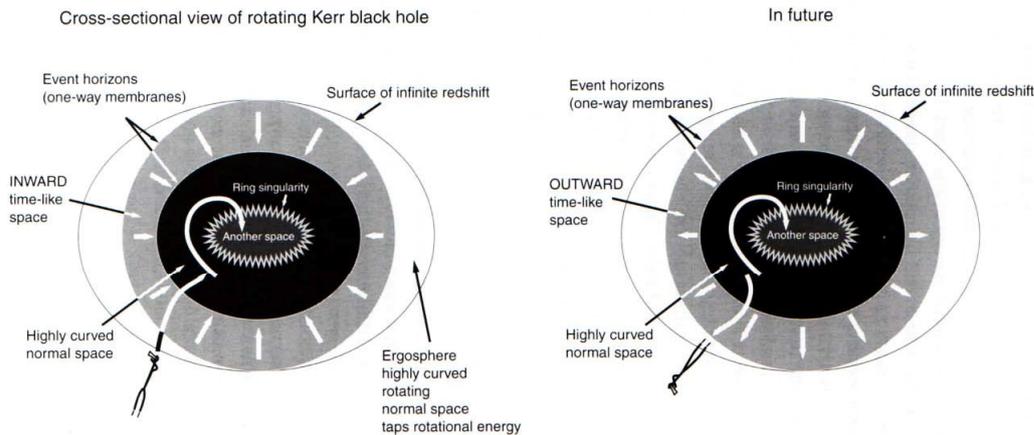


Figure 9.7 (Left) Schematic cutaway view of a rotating Kerr black hole illustrating the complex structure of the geometry. In this geometry one could, in principle, fly through the ingoing time-like space between the event horizons and survive in the highly curved, but “normal,” space within that surrounds the ring singularity or the different space one would find by passing through the ring. (Right) In the future of the left-hand diagram is a portion of the geometry that would, again in principle, allow one to fly out through outgoing time-like space into a normal, low gravity space, but in another universe than the one from which one entered.

Now these ideas, I freely admit, are improbable, but not, I suspect, impossible – they are, after all based on contemporary physics. I confess, though, that the last formal connection I had with Physics was 53 years ago in my final year B.Sc., and that perhaps Science Fiction has o’erwhelmed my faculties of reasoning. Even if I still possess some modicum of rationality, ***I must agree with Dan that the Banach-Tarski dissection/reconstruction is impossible in the Physical universe.*** It involves making cuts which are smaller than what is taken to be the lower limit of measure – the Planck length. At this size (1.6×10^{-35} metre) contemporary quantum physics breaks down. However, I reiterate: the BTdr *is* possible in the mathematical universe, and it ***has been proved to be so!***

Dick Jensen

Post Script

Dan McCarthy got to preview this article, thereby manoeuvring himself into having the last word . . .

“You might mention that I am resident in the physical universe and intend to stay here rather than venture into a mathematical one. As I said, I have had dealings with mathematicians.”

Dan McCarthy

Computers in Science Fiction before 1956

*Dick Jensen**

These are just brief notes...

Intelligent machines existed in Science Fiction (SF) well before the 1950s, but these do not fall into the category of what most people envisage computers to be. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (ed. by J. Clute & P. Nicholls) lists some of these early stories under the entry **Computers**. As they point out, a "mechanical brain" was featured in E. P. Mitchell's 1879 story *The Ablest Man in the World* - but this is not an electronic device.

A story which, for some critics, prefigures the InterNet is Murray Leinster's *A Logic Named Joe*, published in 1946. This postulated a vast data bank of information which could be accessed, at home or in the office, by "logics", which were essentially dumb terminals. One such terminal is incorrectly wired, and, thanks to the pool of information available, develops a consciousness of sorts. It attempts, benevolently, to serve Man - with potentially disastrous consequences, but is disconnected by the narrator.

The first SF story involving an electronic, digital computer which I can remember is Gordon R. Dickson's *The Monkey Wrench* (1951). A computer on board a spacecraft (if I remember correctly) starts to behave inimically towards the crew. It is finally disabled by a "monkey wrench" of a program which is of the *Epimenides* type. The program is of the form: *the next command is false* followed by the command *the previous statement was false* (although it might have been as simple as *this statement is false*). The computer enters an endless loop and the humans regain control. The problem here is that any programmer worth his salt would code for the possibility of such a loop...

Another early story was the short, short SF piece *The Answer* by Fredric Brown. Here a giant computer has been built and every piece of knowledge has been stored in its memory - including all religious tomes, works of fiction, invalid mathematics...

It is then asked the question: *Is there a God?*

The machine's immediate reply is *Yes - there is now...*

There was a sufficient amount of short stories on intelligent machines - even if, to paraphrase Dr. McCoy of *Star Trek*, "they were not computers as we know them" - for the better ones to be collected by Groff Conklin and published as *Science Fiction Thinking Machines* (1954).

In 1950, Francis G. Rayer began a series about a "modern" computer, which he named the *Mens Magna* (which, of course, sounds much more compelling than *Giant Brain*). These were the short stories *Deus ex Machina* (1950), *The Peacemaker* (1952), *Adjustment Period* (1960) and *Contact Pattern* (1961).

But the major work was *Tomorrow Sometimes Comes* (1951).

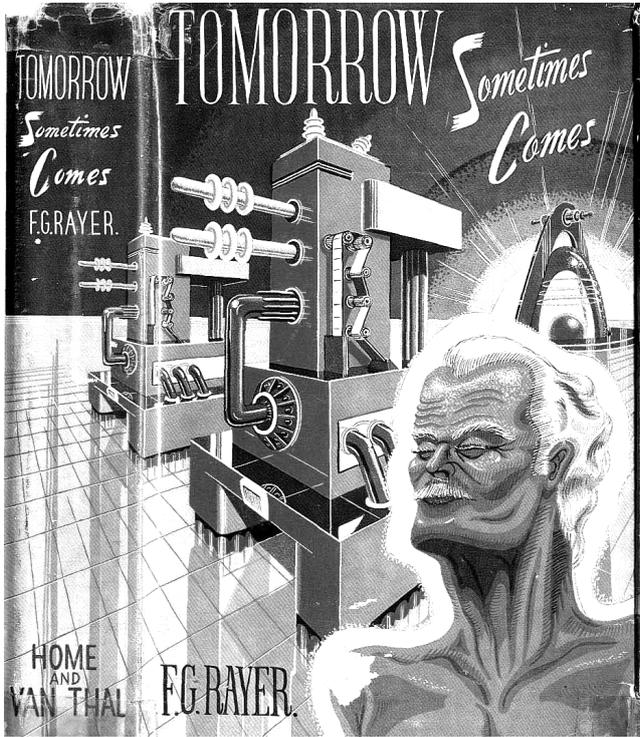
This was a complex *sleeper awakes/after the holocaust/redemption of Mankind/time travel* plot, which had the twist that the sleeper is the person who was responsible both for initiating the destruction of civilization, and for ultimately saving humanity by being the time-traveller. Pockets of organized life exist in scattered villages and small cities. The sleeper finds his way to one of these, and learns it is dominated by a computer.

This is the *Mens Magna*, which occupies a huge building - probably larger than a city block - and which controls all aspects of the city, and the inhabitants' lives. It is also waging a war against the "barbarian" hordes outside the gates. The *Mens* is capable of conducting many hundreds (if not thousands) of interviews at once, while simultaneously running all other control programs, repairing itself, and adjusting and amending its own programs. It communicates by keyboard, visual screens, and voice - both understanding human speech, and responding vocally. It is massively redundant with many "control units".

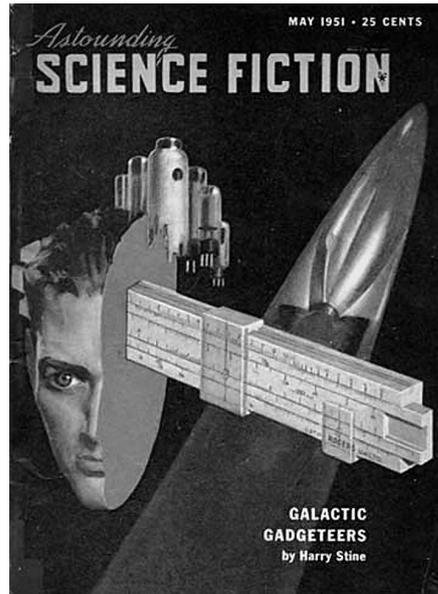
All newcomers to the city must be interviewed by the *Mens* which attempts to elicit hidden information by asking what are apparently disconnected questions in the nature of non sequiturs. This computer, then, is self-programming, self-aware, multi-tasking, redundant, and communicates in a highly sophisticated manner.

If the above description sounds familiar, that is probably because the *Alpha 60* computer in Jean-Luc Godard's 1965 film *Alphaville* shared all these traits. Rayer was not, of course, credited.

Remember this story was written in 1951! Only a handful of computers (probably as few as five) existed at that time which were fully electronic and which had programs stored internally. No computer had any of the Mens' attributes, save the keyboard and visual CRT screens... In fact, the May 1951 issue of Astounding Science Fiction featured an article by Harry Stine which clearly envisaged the high-tech 'computer' of the future to be a slide-rule...

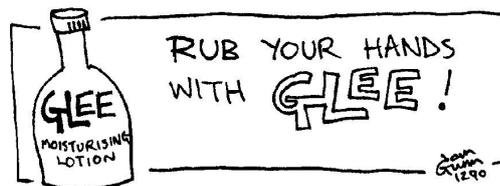


Cover by Clothier



Cover by Rogers

**The bold font is because some readers of IRS think that the editor writes my articles! Dick Jenssen*



DUFF 2009

Since 1972 the Down Under Fan Fund, a fan-supported fellowship, has encouraged closer ties between science-fiction fans in Australasia and North America through an alternating annual exchange of representatives. DUFF is supported by voluntary contributions from fans all over the world. DUFF delegates attend the worldcon or a national convention in the host country and visit fans they might otherwise never meet in person. Delegates are responsible for raising funds and administering DUFF until a new delegate from their continent is elected and are expected to publish trip reports which can be sold to aid the fund.

In 2009, the DUFF trip will be from Australasia to Anticipation (67th worldcon in Montreal, Canada, on 6-10 Aug 2009). To be on the ballot form, a candidate must have been nominated by three Australasian fans and two North American fans. Each candidate has a written platform and promises (barring Acts of God) to travel to the 2009 Worldcon, and to serve as administrator of the fund until the next Australasian delegate is elected.

Each nomination must be sent by the nominee and be accompanied by a donation of at least US\$5, AUS\$8 or NZ\$9 to DUFF. Visit <http://sffanz.sf.org.nz/duff/> for details. Nominations close on 15th March 2009.

Mervyn Barrett visits Melbourne and reminisces on old times

New Zealander Mervyn Barrett was living in Melbourne when Race Mathews founded the Melbourne Science Fiction Club in 1950. He became an original member and a stalwart of the club for many years before returning to live in New Zealand. He has visited Melbourne again on several occasions, most notably to attend Aussiecon 3 in September 1999...



*Left to right: Back: John Foyster, Bruce Gillespie, Tony Sander, Bill Wright, Mervyn Barrett.
Front: Race Mathews, Karen Pender Gunn, Merv Binns, Dick Jenssen.*

In February 2009, Mervyn Barrett visited Melbourne again with his wife Janet, where he renewed acquaintance with old friends at Café Tien Tien in Barkly Street St Kilda with a deserved reputation for adding a modern Australian spin to Asian food. Present at the gathering were Mervyn and Janet Barrett, Jennifer Bryce, Mervyn and Helena Binns, Bruce Gillespie, Elaine Cochrane, Dick Jenssen and Bill Wright.

We learned a lot about what we had happened in each other's lives since the (pre-Aussiecon-1975) days of our youth but, as happens on such occasions, all that I am left with is the sense of having had a jolly good time. As for anything that was said, I'm afraid it has faded from the memory of this poor scribe.

Bill Wright

Stefan Zone



LIMITS

Due to the recent bushfires, my muse was put on the backburner as I trolled the Internet for news of the bushfires on Black Saturday. Even when I changed my plan to double my normal usage, it only lasted until the second week of Feb. I didn't want to line ol' Sol's pockets with any more of my money if I could help it. As it is, he will be lucky to get out of Australia with only a double hernia from carrying his payout.

It's not only Telstra that is setting limits on me at the moment. Work told me a few months ago I had too much leave built up and that I had to take at least 2 consecutive weeks off. Luckily I go back to work tomorrow. Any more than 2 weeks off and I would have given up work and joined the ranks of the long-term unemployed. At least then I'd get some of this Free Taxpayer-Money Government giveaway.

The various levels of Government are always setting limits on us, from speed limits to parking restrictions to a range of knee-jerk, litigation-limiting decrees. We are only allowed to water the garden for two hours, two days a week but

only if your surname ends in a Y (pew, lucky us). We are pressured to keep showers to five minutes (I had to increase my time to fit in with this) and they want to limit us to 155 litres of water a day.

Then they waste millions on ad campaigns threatening us with black balloons that are meant to represent our emissions. Well, most of our emissions, anyway. Why can't the balloons be coloured or white, or is it another of these race things? Maybe it's meant to be one of those mystic-arty-symbolic things where the balloons actually represent US and how we are being kicked out of jobs at an alarming rate as machines take over. Well, they should be happy that I had my PC off most of the holidays.

Connex is also limiting us to one on-time train journey per month, which I think is fair enough. Any more and we'd expect it every trip.

Luckily for you I'm also limiting myself to 400 words this article. Stay tuned for a backlog of Stefan in the coming weeks.

THE FUTURE OF EJUMAKASHN = COMPUTER GAMES (& SPELL CHECKER)!

In a press release last month, so-called 'child experts' (read computer-game-company flunkies) reported that both parents and teachers should 'embrace' kids' TV and technology, such as computer and console games. Yes, well, the likes of "Crash n' Burn VI" and "Death Zombie Raider XVI" do need embracing, don't they. Just watch out for sharp metal objects ... and those zombies. Oh, hang on a minute, they're not zombies - they're just the kids fresh from another 10 hours of playing games.

As if it isn't enough for the kids to be sitting around at home getting square eyes in front of the idiot box and developing mental disorders from computer games, there's now a push to have these games used in school as 'Education'. "Now children, listen up. Instead of ignoring me for the lesson, start your computer game 'Play-do for Dummies' and start ignoring the online teacher."

For, you see, these computer games help kids connect with others. *"How do you cheat on 'Tying your own Shoelaces'? I can't be bothered going through the 3-step, 30-second game." "Did you decapitate Sue Sergeant in 'Zoom Racer XC-Aviation-fuelled incineration' or just shoot her?"*

"I've killed 5,236 people so far in computer games, but am yet to open my score in real life. What about you?"

It's not just the older kids that will 'benefit' from playing games. Even babies fresh out of hospital will benefit if they only just played 3-6 hours of Wii or Xbox a day. Despite kids nowadays having the same attention span of a hyped up druggie, computer games apparently teach children to concentrate. Nup, sorry, we've lost them again.

According to the article, computer games also enable children to 'better understand concepts', 'develop concepts - space, size and shape' and 'classify objects'. Hmm, that sentence sounds like it was generated using a teacher's random-sentence-generator report-writer. It's scary if these Child Experts think that games such as Grand Theft Auto will be of any educational value. In a few years from now, primary school-age kids will be stealing cars and getting into high-speed police chases all in the name of an English Report on a video game. Hey, that's what English is crashing down to become. If I went back to do Year 12 now, I could do my final English exam on Train Timetables or Christmas Catalogues.

Some parents, bless their tiny, little beady brains, are embracing the move:

** "Our Tyler was a social misfit until he started playing violent video games up to 20 hours a day. It was an effort to get him to go to Kinder, but now he has no problems going. He wants to be the first one there to show the other kids all the new moves he learnt from the games. Strange how there's only him attending now. Maybe the others are off with the flu. When I pick Tyler up from Kinder, he's always making these ambulance siren noises. I don't know where he learnt that. Maybe from one of his games."*

** "My Zara's spelling was shocking last year at school, but since she's learnt how to use the spellchecker, she's had no problems spelling words like Cat and Dog or even big words like Horse. The teacher said Zara may even go to Grade 1 next year if she continues to improve."*

** "Billy has been a bit obsessed lately with violent video games. He even 'borrowed' his dad's credit card and ordered a gun from the US. We didn't know he knew anything about guns, but apparently there's everything you need to know on the Internet. His little hand doesn't have the strength to control the mouse at this stage, but it was rock-steady with the gun in it. We don't like to discourage him at this stage in his life and, seeing as we're never home, he needs something to amuse him since we can't get a baby sitter to stay with him anymore. I didn't know they could put a ban on a two-year-old."*

Enough already !! If I don't send this article now, I won't be able to spend six hours playing computer games and take a ten minute catnap before going to work tomorrow.

And if I don't get my ten minute catnap, I won't be in a very good mood.

STEFAN'S SNEAK STOCKMARKET TIP

With all this doom & gloom of the global recession hanging over the entire world like some out-of-control asteroid on a collision course, there are not many good luck investment stories to be had. No investment stock in any industry seems to be unaffected by the Recession Tsunami swamping over our stockmarket shoreline. No stock, that is, until now.

Introducing the best stockmarket tip since the likes of Enron and One-Tel shot to prominence (then plummeted down to earth like a kamikaze)... Stefan Health Investment Trust is being listed on the stock exchange next Monday and you're all invited to join in the fantasy. In fact, I knew you'd be so busy jumping for joy over such an offer, that you may not have the time to fill out the prospectus on time. That is why I engaged the services of a professional forger to fake your signature on the documents.

Stefan Health only has one asset at the moment - a broken down hospital bed - but it's a real money spinner. This hospital bed is used for Day Patients only, and the good thing about that is there can be multiple patients a day that use the bed but you can charge each patient for a full day's stay. Thank goodness for Government loopholes.

At the moment, the bed is used exclusively for high-turnover procedures, such as Clearing out of Earwax (KRuddy used to be a regular until he decided to go down the DIY path and use his

finger); Trimming of Nose Hair; Cutting of Toenails; etc. Operating from 08:00 - 17:00 each working day, up to 150 patients a day can be cycled through. The bed even has a Patient-Eject function - if the patient stays on the bed longer than 5 minutes, one side of the bed collapses and the patient is dumped on the floor.

With your capital injection, Stefan Health will be able to expand its fleet of broken down hospital beds and may even be able to afford luxury extras for patients, such as sterilised equipment, clean sheets or a fully trained nurse. Obviously these luxuries will have to wait until we've cleaned up some of our other pressing needs, such as the loan we took out from the Hospital Mafia that was due 2 weeks ago.

Not that you have anything to worry about. The Hospital Mafia have only threatened to go after the owners of Stefan Health next week to recover the loan. I mean, in the off-chance that Shareholders are considered "Owners" of a company, it would have to be in an extremely rare case, such as someone asking, that we would have to provide a list of the shareholders to anyone. In any event, it's not as if we've circled your name and highlighted it in red with "Majority Owner" next to it.

If worst came to the worst, just remember there is a broken-down hospital bed with your name on it, at least for five minutes. Rest assured you'll be in safe, albeit untrained, hands.

AUSTRALIA'S SECOND ATTEMPT AT ECONOMIC RECOVERY

It's official. Australia will again attempt to dig its way free of recession, this time via a druggie-led economic recovery. After the "success" of the first economic recovery (we ended up digging towards China) and the euphoria of 'being seen to be doing something', the Federal Government has overspent to such an extent that by the time future generations have paid the debt off, it will be time to worry about the next Millennium Bug.

The first rescue package didn't seem to rescue too many people. In fact, single unmarried mothers with ten kids from forty potential fathers couldn't fit another Plasma TV into their free government housing as it was already chockers full of Plasma's bought via the multiple \$7,000 baby bonuses.

Druggies, on the other hand, were a bit upset at missing out last time - so much so that they got their noses out of joints. At least they won't miss out this time around. While prisoners may not be able to vote in elections while in jail, this won't stop them missing out on the World's Wackiest Money Giveaways.

If we find that the druggies and crims are more likely to splurge their new ill-gotten gains on other ill-gotten gains instead of moving the economy forward, then the next group to rely on to lead us from recession is the Overseas Pensioners Group. If only the government had listened to my suggestion we pay these people their bonus in confiscated cheap Chinese clothing imports, fake Akubras and out-of-date jars of Vegemite, we would have saved some cash. One only hopes

that they travel back to Australia in the not too distant future (i.e. before they die) to spend some of our money.

Not that dying will be a hindrance, as our government believes in trying to bring the dead back to life (at least for a last spending spree) via a zombie-led recovery. Like some spaghetti western, our government believes in handing out \$900 to people - "Dead or Alive".

Not only that, if anyone was off their rocker to the extent they left their money to an animal, then that animal will get the bonus payment. If the animal has died in the meantime, then their offspring will receive the bonus, assuming they left a valid Animal Will. If no Animal Will was left and there are a few mongrels and half-mutts claiming the bonus, then it could end up in the animal courts, tying up vets for months in miles of red dog leads and cat collars.

So, if you're a dead criminal druggie animal mother with 10 babies, it seems you've struck the jackpot. Even if you're not, you've still got a good chance of receiving the bonus.

Unfortunately, most of our family will miss out, not because we earn too much money, it's just that KRuddy doesn't like us very much.

I've calculated that approximately one cent of the bonus YOU receive will be thanks to our family. And we'll be watching VERY carefully what you spend it on.

THE WAR ON JUNK FOOD

Forget the War on Jobs, the War on the Economy, the War on Water Waste and any other war that KRuddy's declared recently. There's another secret war out there that not many people know about, and we're in danger of losing it. I'm talking about the War on Junk Food.

Haven't heard about it? Well, the War on Laziness gets most of the publicity, but you don't have to look far to see the signs that a war is raging out there, involving countless Working Families living on Struggle Street. Here are just three signs in the past two days alone that have rocked the world of Junk Food Connoisseurs (JFC's) across Australia:

* Tim Tams banned by council: In a move to create "*sustainable, healthy and cruelty-free catering*" at City of Sydney meetings and events, staff have stopped providing chocolate biscuits along with meals containing eggs, bottled water,

fat-rich cakes, dairy desserts and 'bad' fish species. (Herald Sun, Mar 25th) I think they're replacing these with enviro-friendly recycled sewerage drinking water and vegan 'stuff'. I also heard that the Council has plans in the pipeline for a 'Green Poo' day to confirm their allegiance to the new green religion. Anyone not found with the right colour will be accused of non-vegan eating and stoned with chunks of old tofu.

* Twisties shrunk: Retailers are now in the process of selling off the last of their stocks of the usual 50g bag of Twisties and replacing them with 45g bags. (Daily Telegraph, Mar 25th). That's a 10 % drop in volume. If the trend continues, they'll soon have packets of Twisties containing only one Twisty. Then the ACCC will step in and advise the makers to drop the plural name to match the content. The smaller packets will be great at a

party. "Hey, let's open a packet of Twisty. Oh, it will have to be chopped up – it has to feed 20." I hope I'm not alive to see the day that a packet of Cheezel gets sold.

* Chocolate Drop: Confectionary Giant Cadbury has confirmed it will cut its chocolate blocks from 250g to 200g, because *you* wanted it to. (Herald Sun, Mar 27th). That's a massive 25 % reduction, but don't expect a 25 % drop in price. It's good they listen to us but I distinctly remember asking for a drop in price and an increase in content.

Is Junk Food destined to become a mere entry in the bowels of humankind (at least of those people that partook in the soon-to-be-outlawed practice of Junk Food eating)? As this stupid green religion spreads further, will we see Junk Food banned

completely? Will Junk Food Addicts become the next druggies, stealing to make their next hit of 'Cheezel' (CHZ)? When will KRuddy call a war on this green religion?

Try reducing the size of grog bottles and you'll end up with drunken riots in the streets. I admit it will be a bit hard to distinguish these riots amongst the other riots that take place each week, but these extra riots won't be on the Weekly Riot Schedule. Yet, they're banning and downsizing Junk Food and there's been no response from JFC's, maybe because we're too fat to bother protesting.

If they ever reduce to junk food to "*Essence of ...*", then I'll think about protesting. If someone could just help me up from the couch.

HAPPY EASTER, OR IS IT?

Just in case you didn't know, Politically Correct (PC) people have taken over Australia. Scientists are unsure how these people breed, but they seem to appear out of nowhere like a late-running, overcrowded Connex train out of a fog of government mismanagement. Backed by lawyers of ill repute, who would even sue their dead grandmother if they thought they could squeeze another dollar from her, PC's have spread their deadly views like a toxic algae bloom over a pristine lake of tranquillity. It's also uncertain how they have got into their positions of power (Big frogs in little puddles?), but it could be partly because the rest of us are too lazy to take these positions and allow traditional unpolitical correctness to run rampant.

Each of these PC's chip away at the very fabric of Australian society, unravelling years of fun and enjoyment by banning things like play equipment in schoolyards and jokes about ethnic stereotypes and blondes. This obviously wasn't enough, so they started on Religion (or, to them, small 'r' religion). Despite being a predominantly Christian country, anything mainstream is suppressed in order for minority religions, or those without a religion, to feel safe. At the same time, anything to do with minority religions was pushed into the spotlight to enable acceptance within Australia.

Christmas carols and nativity plays were banned, just on the off chance someone from another religion happened to be passing by and became offended. On the other hand, other religions had their practices taught in schools. How about Bug Worship Day of the 15-members-world-wide Order-of-the-Bug or Lichen Appreciation Day

from the 33-members-world-wide Lichen-Affected-Tree-Huggers group?

Easter was left untouched for some time. Sure, they tried to replace the Easter Bunny with the Easter Bilby, but that was just an interim step before a final replacement by the Easter Gnat (made from recycled tofu, of course). It may not be long before the cross has to be removed from Easter celebrations because Madonna or another shock celebrity has laid claim to it.

Now the traditional Happy Easter greeting is under threat, following on from the demise of Merry Christmas, which died a PC death over a few years. Merry Christmas, of course, was shortened to Merry Xmas to rid it of Christian overtones, before the 'mas' part was removed in case anyone associated it with mass. Obviously you can't just leave Merry, because this may offend Marys the world over. This led to the new expression "Happy Holiday"! The new expression to replace Happy Easter is still under wraps, but I have heard that Easter is out, because it signifies mainstream religion while Happy is going to have to go because it may offend those feeling sad. How does Morose Holiday sound?

I'd like to send these PC's and their associated lawyers over to a country like Iran to see if they have the same level of success as they have achieved in Australia.

At least they haven't slapped a ban on satirical comment, not that my factual and objective articles in IRS would be under any threat.

Stefan

Stream of consciousness author assessments

Roger Zelazny and Cordwainer Smith

It is Mother Nature's cosmic joke that the sexual apparatus of animals is inextricably linked with the plumbing for elimination of bodily wastes. That creates rich, and heretofore largely unexplored, potential for fanciful exploration of fears and phobias arising from social conditioning and/or genetic predisposition.

Accordingly, I live in hopes of reading speculative fiction by Australian authors that dares to breach conventional privacy taboos so as to deal sensitively – and, hopefully, ironically – with a dimension of the human condition that consumes so much of people's inner lives.

Only the giants of our genre have ventured into these golden waters, as exemplified by...

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Roger Zelazny's posthumous whodunit 'The Dead Man's Brother' published in February 2009 by Dorchester Publishing Company Incorporated, 200 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN 0-8439-6115-5 ISBN-13978-0-8439-6115-7, isn't science fiction or fantasy but the novel – as Greg Bear says on the cover blurb – "*is like dropping into a Mozart string quartet as played by Theloneous Monk.*"

Following is an example from page 83, where the protagonist has just been rudely awakened from his deepest rest by an importunate telephone caller...

"My fluids refused to reverse their mysterious and ungentlemanly actions, so I staggered off to the bathroom to start the day on a clean foot. By the time I had finished my work, so had they. So I dressed myself and went out for coffee and rolls."

Whilst admiring Zelazny's ironic treatment of a delicate subject, I am reminded that one of the remarkable things about the characters in early Space Opera is that they never seemed to have to go to the toilet. In that era, encompassing four decades in the mid-twentieth century from 1929 to 1979, only characters in Cordwainer Smith's parody of the US Military Industrial Complex disguised as science fiction appeared to be subject to the calls of nature.

Smith's saga, consisting of twenty or so short stories and two novels, charts the history over fifteen thousand years of an evolving future civilisation guided by the Instrumentality of Mankind. Functionally, The Instrumentality is a utilitarian organisation concerned only with the greatest good for the greatest number which, for reasons of economy, does not include robots or animal-derived underpeople. Politically, it is a telepathic elite that, whilst it exists to maintain the status quo, finds itself unable to resist the imperatives of social – and, in the case of the underpeople, mental – evolution.

Two Lords of the Instrumentality meet in the novel 'Norstrilia', in a chapter headed *Discourses and Resources*. Lord Jestocost is passionate and tricky. Lord Crudelta (the name is Italian for cruel) is wise and very tricky. Crudelta, being also very old, is accompanied by a bear-woman nurse who becomes flustered at her need to respond to a call of nature in an environment catering only for true humans...

"My lord and master Crudelta, may I leave you here?" she asked.

"Yes. Go. I will call for you later. Go to the bathroom on your right. It's on the way out."

"My lord-!" she gasped with embarrassment.

"You wouldn't have dared if I hadn't told you. I've been watching your mind for the last half hour. Now, go along."

The bear-woman fled with a rustle of her starched skirts.

As is the case with the USMIC, the Lords may be cruel where large issues are concerned but kind where their job description allows their better nature to surface.

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Cordwainer Smith was the pen name of Dr Paul Linebarger, professor in Asiatic Studies at Johns Hopkins university and a colonel in US military intelligence. An accomplished linguist and sinologist, he was foreign policy adviser to the State Department and JFK's expert on China. His narrative style is more like poetry than conventional prose and his writing is full of literary and historical allusions. His science fiction was written late in life when he was not well.

Like Roger Zelazny, Paul Linebarger delighted in intricately crafted puns, but his have more of a literary bias and are of such complexity that most are opaque to the general reader. The genius of the man is that he let people find their own level and never allowed his bon mots to get in the way of the story.

Bill Wright

Variations on a theme: 'I feel it in my water'

The previous article got me musing on the manifold discomforts of age that are increasingly focused on areas of the human anatomy that are either out of reach or are normally outside the scope of civilised discourse. I comfort myself with the reflection that the time is coming when each of us will have a neural or radar connection to our personal artificial intelligence which, at will, can ferret information out of cyberspace or manufacture tiny robots to cut toenails or scratch body parts we can't reach. What then happens to the concept of having a human life mate is unclear to me, because much of a spouse's function might be seen to have been usurped by one's personal AI. Maybe that's when we'll need really big AIs to handle relationship counselling.



Technology, I find, is already moving into my comfort zone by way of scientific exploration of the mechanics of human digestion. At left is the famous *Cloaca no. 5* machine that converts scraps from a nearby cafeteria into artificially produced faeces. The direction of future research is clear enough. To simulate Mother Nature this machine needs the addition of a reproductive apparatus controlled by an artificial intelligence that responds to stimulation by human observers. The latter are seated before a bank of switches that have the appearance of organ keys. Reading from scripts that are indistinguishable from sheet music, their organised arpeggios stimulate evolutions within the contraption that vary outputs from assorted orifices in a variety of types that are best left to the imagination in a family friendly zine such as this.

The next stage, ie. tinkering with cyborg creations aimed at human enhancement, has been explored in science fiction, notably by Cordwainer Smith whose predicting machine uses the torso of a woman as its terminal on the derelict Alpha Ralpa Boulevard. Passers-by had to stimulate the predictor by mounting the terminal. The morality of that is suspect, in that setting up the terminal must have involved an unacceptable level of cruelty. The ethics of this are of a high order. For example, the lesson from the above is that, if people are to be free to indulge their fantasies, it's best done via mechanisms like *Cloaca* that can't suffer thereby.

Men's health

Every place we lived in as I grew up had its own back yard lemon tree. I remember the way I used to make homemade lemonade, ie. adding the juice from half a lemon to a glass of tap water. In old age, however, my three room apartment in the middle of a fifteen-unit building complex has no garden space for a lemon tree.

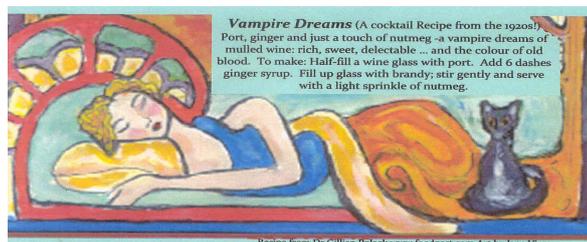
So, when it first appeared on supermarket shelves in January 2009, I laid in three months supply of Berri Lemon Squeeze. I open one pack at a time and keep it in the refrigerator until it's time for the next glass of water. Then it's a simple matter to open the 'fridge and add a squirt of lemon juice.



I still miss the unique function of my lemon tree in the maintenance of men's health. If you are restricted from using the mains there is another way of watering *your* lemon tree without having to install a tank.

Pax in bello

The Latin scholar in me translates the heading as 'free from indigestion'. A feature of Conflux 5 (regional SF convention in Canberra in Oct 2008) was a banquet with benign viands from the Flapper era of the 1920s. Here is the recipe for Vampire Dreams, a cocktail from the 1920s available from the hotel bar on the night.



Concerning Faith and Trust and Blind Obedience

In trolling through Anzapa mailing comments, I come across the occasional pearl of wisdom that sticks in the mind. If it sticks in mine it will likely stick in others' too, giving rise to conversations that, considering Anzapa mailings are two months apart, take place at the pace of the long, slow thoughts of trees.

One such remark was an affirmation to the effect that there is a big difference between faith and trust and blind obedience. The consensus is that it's probably a good thing not to be too certain about what God is about. Some people who are *rooted in certainty*, so to speak, might be disappointed when their *moment* comes and God doesn't measure up to their expectations of Him. In all charity, one could argue that they ought to be more concerned about what God might expect of them.

One member has even gone so far as to conduct what he calls a Faith Audit, spread over several mailings. Reading Part II, it surprised me that I still had a lot to learn about Pelagianism, the so-called heresy that was comprehensively put down in 418 AD at the second Council of Carthage convened by the fledgling Catholic Church that itself was established *de facto* (and allegedly *de jure*) by the Roman Emperor Constantine at the first Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354-430 AD) was a convert to Christianity out of the Gnostic sect Manichaeism (an elaborate Iranian cosmology describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness). When the British monk and teacher Pelagius (350-418 AD) taught that moral perfection was attainable in this life because of Free Will, he was opposed by Augustine who held that perfection was impossible because we are born with Original Sin and a bent will.

Augustine always had the wood on Pelagius in the Free Will vs Original Sin debate. Not only did he outlive the holy recluse so as to have the Last Word (in the year of his adversary's death, in fact), but he also had *The Name*. Rome was never so great as under the rule of General Octavian who, as Emperor, took the name of Augustus. Scripture says that he died shortly after the birth of Christ. Tiberias, his successor, neglected governance in favour of debauches on the Isle of Capri – the origin of its sobriquet '*Isle of Love*' that is celebrated to this day in song – after which the Roman Empire began its slow fall accelerated by uncontrollable outbreaks of tinea – an unmistakable sign of divine displeasure – in its understandably discontented army. Roman popes arrogated unto themselves the title Pontifex Maximus that was formerly an Imperial prerogative, so it's not surprising that the doctrines of Augustine of Hippo prevailed.

Bring on Part III when implications of this major wrong turn (?) in the history of Christianity will be explored.

Another member suspects that the popular horror view of Voodoo bears as much resemblance to the real thing as Samantha Stevens does to Wendy Rule. If the inquisitive readers of IRS want a glimpse of the Real Thing, albeit moderated by a story line that distracts from the grisly details, there is an episode of the popular 1980s TV series '*The Greatest American Hero*' where Ralph takes his problem charges on a field trip to Haiti.

The solar energy debate continues

Power companies are putting out the line that Solar Panels, because they are made from the innards of obsolete computers, are prohibitively expensive because of the limited supply of raw materials. Proponents of sustainable development have responded by pointing out cannibalising mother boards isn't the only technology available. They ask people to "*look to the implications of Moore's Law.*"

Moore's Law, I found when I googled it on the Internet, is the empirical observation that the transistor density of integrated circuits doubles every 18 months. If that continues to be the case, then electricity cost parity between Solar Power cells and Transmission Lines from power stations is seven years away, after which the efficiency dividend will lie with Solar Power. Hopefully we'll have a seamless transition from one technology to the other ... being solar panels ... or wind farms ... or tidal power ... or thermal power ... or whatever.

Given political and economic imperatives to reduce dependence on imported oil, it might be providential that the current recession is causing mass unemployment. Stripped of its esoteric finery, money represents productive work done. Therefore, governments should create money to put people to work in 'sunrise' industries that must, eventually, replace redundant structures. Real government has no need of profit. If it has a clear appreciation of its control over information and the means of violence, it can always override vested interests if it has a mind to do so. The weakness of democracy is that it saps political will to tackle major issues until consequences such as sliding into war become manifest. I'm a pessimist in that regard.

Paradise lost

I have been following the Fijian situation ever since, as Secretary of the Blackburn Branch of the Australian Labor Party, I sent a letter of congratulations to the then leader of the multi-racial Labor Party and Prime Minister Designate Dr Timoci Bavadra in 1987.

Former Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase's attempt to introduce a Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill was opposed by Indo-Fijians and the military on the grounds that it may free some of the May 2000 coup plotters and derail court action by dispossessed Indo-Fijian farmers. In spite of being substantially revised to address those concerns, this now-defunct truth commission bill succeeded only in sharpening conflicts within Fijian society resulting in yet another coup and establishment of the present unsatisfactory military government.

All parties have hardened their positions. Indo-Fijians want Constitutional Rule where compromises arising from parliamentary democracy are possible and decisions of the Courts are respected. On the other hand, the majority of indigenous Fijians favour their restorative justice tradition with relatively informal legal mechanisms via the Chiefly system. The question of who should oversee the transition to a form of parliamentary democracy that can accommodate both positions has pitted Fiji's two most powerful institutions, the Army and the Methodist Church against one another. Both favour indigenous control but the Army says that Fiji's transition to democracy requires the maintenance of law, order and judicial accountability; whereas the Methodist Church's rock-solid support of traditional chiefs has brought it into conflict with many of the civil society groups with which it had worked harmoniously in the past.

A circuit breaker is needed and I can envisage only one, the imminent rise of India as a naval power that will put aside its own communal conflicts in the cause of nationalism and become actively concerned about the welfare of its Indo-Fijian Diaspora. Time is running out for indigenous Fijians to get serious about real reconciliation or, in a ploy to stave off invasion, give themselves over to the tender mercies of Han Chinese overlordship as their only practical defence. Some indigenes are already flirting with just that.

Australian media (and politicians for that matter) haven't evinced much awareness of the complexity of the Fijian situation and of the evolution of the political mess Fiji has gotten itself into. Before and after WWII the Pacific Ocean has been an American lake with Australia and New Zealand having secondary spheres of influence that have included Fiji. That is changing with the rise and rise of China and India in the region. Fiji's military leaders have a distorted sense of reality from living in a fish bowl. Burning bridges with the West now could turn into a permanent breach when new lines of power are drawn. I wish them the joy of it.

Loosing the soul

I read a dissertation in Anzapa on *loosing the soul* in juxtaposition with the biblical rhetoric about *losing one's soul* with appreciation not unmixed with irritation at its unfulfilled promise. "*Where are the insights into the nature of the soul?*", I asked. Theologians argue that human beings are made up of three distinct components - flesh, **soul**, and spirit. You might say that's pretty damn obvious, but...

... in the ancient wisdom of the Pythagoreans, the *nous of the demiurge* proceeds outward into manifestation, becoming *living ideas* giving rise to a lineage of mortal human souls. Elements of each soul are:

- 1) the **higher soul**, seat of the intuitive mind (*divine nous*);
- 2) the **rational soul** (*logistikon*) (seat of discursive reason / *dianoia*);
- 3) the **nonrational soul** (*alugia*), responsible for the senses, appetites and motion.

Zeus thinks the articulated ideas (*Logos*). The idea of ideas (*Eidos - Eidōn*) provides a model of the Paradigm of the Universe that the Demiurge contemplates in his articulation of the *ideas* and his creation of the world according to the *Logos*. That's why you can pray to Zeus in your mind.

Secularists tend to compartmentalise the soul into *Sensation, Intellect, Memory* and the *Will*.

Materialists deny the existence of a soul that is independent of the body. They look for relationships between structure and function in the central nervous system and are notably influenced by observations to the effect that eyes are the first part of the notochord to emerge in embryonic development during the reproductive cycle. Eyes are seen to be, and recognised as, not only *windows of the soul* but an integral part of the brain itself. The implication is that consciousness and sensation cannot exist outside a living body. As a result, materialists tend to be cyber-consciousness deniers and debunkers of speculation relating to 'upload' of human personalities into computing engines. That does not preclude them from supporting human enhancement in all its forms including cyborg, with a proviso that the ethics of such need careful monitoring.

Renaming the worldcon

Where's all this nonsense about renaming the worldcon coming from? Let's *not* rename the worldcon.

Sure, it didn't start out that way in New York in 1939 but some members of that convention having appropriated the name, the world took Americans up on it. First to put its toe in the water was Toronto (1948), then London (1957), London again (1965), Heidelberg (1970), Toronto again (1973), Melbourne (1975), Brighton, UK (1979), Melbourne again (1985), Melbourne again (1999), Toronto again (2003), Glasgow (2005), Yokohama (2007), Montreal (2009) and Melbourne again (2010).

Since the mid-1970s, the late superSMoF, Bruce Pelz, has made sure Americans always have a NaSFic whenever the worldcon goes overseas. Pelz was to Fandom what Avery Brundage was to the Olympic Games. Both were organisational geniuses whose influence will last forever, or as long as our culture lasts which amounts to the same thing. The World Science Fiction Society (WSFS) is recognised globally as being only one echelon below the UN and the Vatican which have diplomatic status, ie. we are much like the IOC, FIFA and the ICA*. Let's keep it that way. [* ICA, I always have to explain to Americans, is the International Cricket Association].

Encomiums

A wonderful word is *encomium*, meaning a formal, often high flown, expression of praise.

The most famous encomium in history was delivered by the Roman poet Horace on the occasion of Augustus Caesar's hosting, in 17 BC, of the Secular Games - a peculiarly solemn event supposedly permitted only once in a century. Horace's 'The Secular Hymn' is reputedly the most successful poem of occasion ever written. Here is the first stanza. It is best read aloud.

*Phoebus! and Diana, you whose sway
Mountains and woods obey!
Twin glories of the skies, forever worshiped, hear!
Accept our prayer this sacred year
When, as the Sibyl's voice ordained
For ages yet to come,
Pure maids and youths unstained
Invoke the Gods who love the seven hills of Rome.*

How to deal with MDD

The President of Anzapa interprets MDD as *Motivation Deficit Disorder*, whereas Wikipedia says it refers to *Marcel Douwe Dekker* who was born in 1964 in Delft, Holland, and has been active on the Dutch and English Wikipedia and WikiCommons since Sept 2004. Between those extremes is its most common usage, *Major Depressive Disorder*.

There are other interpretations such as *Maximum Daily Dose*, *Mine Detection Dog* and *Modern Day David*. I have known a few blokes who describe themselves as the latter. I've had to tell them, though, that staying rock hard all day is insufficient to sustain a lasting relationship.

"If it weren't for pickpockets, I'd have no sex life at all."

--Rodney Dangerfield

