

WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE THIRTY

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Several recent events have had a common theme, which has moved me to write about the topics covered in this issue of *Wrevenge*. These events have included some personal correspondence, ongoing discussions in two apas, and recent happenings in Australian fandom.

Opposing a Candidate

Just how *does* one campaign against one or more candidates on a fannish ballot, whether for a fan fund or the fanzine Hugos or whatever, without sounding offensive to at least some people?

I don't know, and I've been personally faced with this problem several times. It's especially a problem when I have a specific reason for opposing someone's candidacy, but I don't feel it's appropriate to air that reason publicly. ('Not appropriate' could range from 'potentially libellous because I can't prove it' to 'this is only my opinion and while I want to influence other people's voting I don't want to hurt the people involved'.) Sometimes, from the reactions I've seen over the past few years, I think many fans consider it unacceptable to campaign *against* anyone in fandom.

This question became somewhat less than academic recently in Australia, when *Thyme* published first a flyer and ballot for the Door for DUFF campaign, and in the next issue a page of photographs taken from one issue of a series of magazines titled *Sarah Foster Tate in Bondage*. Several Sydney fans wrote to *Thyme* expressing their opposition to the publication of this material, especially the photographs. For those who haven't seen the photographs, or don't recognise the person in them, she is Kerrie Hanlon, a well-known Australian fan artist (her covers have been on *Wrevenge* several times) and a close friend (significant other?) of Terry Dowling, this year's DUFF winner. Everyone assumes that Terry Dowling was the photographer. The published objections appear to assume that the publication of the photographs was part of a campaign against Terry.

The editors responded in *Thyme* 67 (page 10) as follows: 'There seems to be a basic assumption in all the letters received about SFT that the people

involved have done something wrong in the eyes of fandom. Otherwise, how could it be wrong (or 'malicious') of us to mention the publication?'

I have two answers to that. One is that if SFT herself is upset by the publication, it's largely irrelevant whether anyone else thinks she's 'done something wrong'. And she is upset: see her letter elsewhere in this issue of *Wrevenge*.

There are probably lots of things each of us does that we don't really want spread around - not necessarily because they are 'wrong', or because someone might think they are 'wrong', but for any number of reasons. (See my essay later in this issue on 'Is this ideologically acceptable?') The fact that someone publishes under a pseudonym ought to be a fairly strong clue that she would prefer to keep her various lives separate.

I quite agree that in one sense the editors of *Thyme* have 'revealed no secrets nor intruded on anyone's privacy' (their words) - technically. However, there is the matter of basic empathy and consideration for others. Clearly the SFT magazines were not known to large numbers of fans worldwide. Was there anything positive to be gained, for anyone, by making their presence wider known? If not, would it not be considerate to determine whether the person involved would object?

But to go on to my second answer to the editorial question - yes, I'm sure a lot of people, fans and otherwise, would find something 'wrong' in the photos, and that's what I've written about in the 'Ideologically acceptable?' essay. Opposition to bondage etc need not be an objection to the sexual content, but rather to what appears to be a degradation of women.

But before going into that topic in depth, let's step back a moment and look at some of the other reasons one of us might want to oppose a fan fund candidate, or at least warn others of factors which we think should be taken into account when casting a vote.

Here's a list of hypothetical activities of which some of us may not approve. In each case let us assume that the fan's activity is known to you, and perhaps even to local fandom, but you suspect that overseas fandom is not aware of it. What is your reaction to each of them?

1. Fan A deals drugs.
2. Fan B borrows money and doesn't repay it.
3. Fan C gets drunk and disorderly and beats people up and/or destroys property.
4. Fan D cheats on taxes/unemployment benefits/other.
5. Fan E steals, but not from other fans.
6. Fan F has connections with organised crime.
7. Fan G has been convicted of rape, but so far hasn't raped anyone in fandom.
8. Fan H is a blatant racist, believing non-whites are inherently inferior to whites and should be treated that way.
9. Fan I is a blatant sexist, believing women are inherently inferior to men and should be treated that way.
10. Fan J belongs to a group (not connected with fandom) which advocates (fill in something you find abhorrent).
11. Fan K tortures small furry animals and occasionally kills them (or in some other way is hideously cruel to animals).
12. Fan L abuses children non-sexually, but so far not within fandom.
13. Fan M abuses children sexually, but so far not within fandom.
14. Fan N has a hobby which involves some behaviour not considered 'normal' or 'acceptable' in some circles, for example bondage or s/m (which can stand for sado/masochism or slave/master or several other things probably).

Presumably some of the above you approve of, some you don't but consider irrelevant, and perhaps some make you feel distinctly uncomfortable. If there are any in the last category, think hard about what *you* would do if someone in that category were nominated.

Is this Ideologically Acceptable?

Lots of beliefs and behaviours could be lumped under 'ideologically unacceptable', depending on which groups you choose or wish to identify with, or feel you have to be acceptable to. (The alternative word is 'politically correct', often used ironically.) For example:

1. If you're an environmentalist, it's often not ideologically acceptable to burn rubbish, use plastics when an alternative is available, throw away recyclable glass or other materials, drive a personal automobile, be in favour of peaceful uses of nuclear power, and so on.
2. If you're a feminist, it's generally unacceptable to be opposed to abortion.
3. If members of your family adhere to certain religions, it is probably not acceptable to admit that you're having sex with someone to whom you're not married.
4. You can probably fill in something appropriate for groups with whom you are familiar. (Many of us have had the experience of people

recoiling in suspicion if we announce we're interested in science fiction, or - even worse in some circles - roleplaying games.)

You may not care what the other members of the group think about your beliefs or actions, but you may well prefer not to be asked to defend yourself all the time. This is not the same as being embarrassed about your actions, or thinking that you have in fact done something 'wrong' but don't want to admit it; it is simply a preference in how you spend your time. There are times, of course, when you may feel that arguing (justifying, defending) *is* worth your time, but the point is that *you* choose those times.

It is definitely *not* acceptable in many groups, including many relatively 'sexually liberated' ones, to do, say or depict anything which can possibly be interpreted as degrading to women. This is an attitude which I certainly applaud as an improvement over the opposite (where degradation of women is acceptable), but can and does lead to some extremes of interpretation.

Just when is something degrading, and when is it a hilarious send-up? Or a personal fantasy that is neither of the above? The answer, usually, is in the intent of the participants - and in the eyes of the beholder. And therein lies the problem - because the intent of the participant and the interpretation of the beholder are frequently quite different. Who is 'right'? Often it's both parties.

In one apa, a member made quite a good case for the 'wrongs' of some private behaviour, along the lines that the personal is the political and that ideas (including fantasies) have consequences in the 'real' world. I didn't completely agree, but the writer had a good point which many feminists, amongst others, have been making for years: if we think that harassment or violence against women (or anyone) is wrong, we must be careful not to contribute to an atmosphere in which that violence continues to be acceptable. The problem comes in agreeing on what constitutes 'harassment' or 'violence', and in how much fantasy contributes to the acceptability of actions in 'real' life.

Some feminists (and others) include almost any depiction of female-submissiveness in the unacceptable list, regardless of the intent of the participants, or the relationship between those participants - and regardless of whether the activities are between consenting adults in private, or involve published photos, videos, 'live acts on stage' etc.

Other feminists take almost the opposite view, that anything is acceptable (public or private) as long as the woman is an equal, willing partner (let's not quibble here about what 'equal' or 'willing' mean, though that is yet another problem). In other words, the intent of the participants is the deciding factor.

Then there are dozens of variations in between, usually revolving around how much control the woman has over the situation, and whether the actions are public or private.

The question of whether publishing people's

fantasies (which are in fact based on equal, loving relationships) contributes to the public acceptability of non-equal, non-loving versions of the same activities - well, I don't claim to know the answer to that one. I suspect it does, but I'm not convinced that it will do any good to attempt to suppress those activities or their depiction, and particularly the non-exploitative activities. And I certainly don't think it does any good to dump on the participants. I think that such approaches overlook the *real* problems, one of which is the status of fantasy in our culture (see 'Fantasy in our Culture' for an expansion on this).

As for SFT and the publication of those photos in *Thyme*, I don't know the motives of those involved, but for the sake of argument let us assume that some or all take the view that while she has every right to do whatever she wants, in doing so she (and her male partner and anyone else involved) contribute to a view of male-female relationships which is unacceptable to many people. Is it valid to oppose a candidacy on the grounds of a person's lifestyle of which one approves? Is it valid to feel that the voters should be aware of this lifestyle so that their own views on the subject could influence their voting? I think it is valid, on both counts.

Opposing a Candidate (Part 2)

Which leaves us with the problem mentioned earlier: just how does one campaign against someone without being hurtful? This is a serious question.

One way to try to handle the situation is to do it humorously. The problem with humour, of course, is that one person's 'hilariously funny' is another person's 'maliciously offensive'. It seems to me that's what happened in the 'Door for DUFF' campaign. What distresses me most is that some people appear to have assumed that the campaign organisers' motives were malicious. Perhaps they were, but on the evidence available to me, I don't accept that interpretation as very probable. My worst interpretation is that the perpetrators display a combination of bad taste and a lack of empathy for the feelings of the candidates and their supporters. This may not be my idea of ideal behaviour, but neither is it evidence of malicious intent. (Heinlein may consider bad manners to be a capital offense, but I don't - except sometimes on the train home at night after a hard day at work.)

I've certainly been in enough situations where something I did or said was interpreted completely differently from my intentions - usually when I've tried to write satire. And there have certainly been many, many examples over the years of satire being taken literally, and the writer castigated. Does anyone remember the song 'Short People' from the early 70's, in which racist views were mocked by transforming them into prejudice against people

below a certain height? Most people fell about laughing when they heard it; some were incredibly offended and wanted to lynch the songwriter.

Another possible motivation which I haven't mentioned so far is 'stirring' - deliberately doing something utterly outrageous just to upset a lot of people, particularly in the belief that it's good for people to be knocked out of their complacent little ruts now and then.

Terry Frost and Eric Lindsay to my knowledge both enjoy doing this, and so do I at times. I'm sure there are lots of others. Stirring can be malicious, but it need not be. I'm sure many people have been hurt inadvertently by stirring, and if I'm involved I'm not too happy about that. But then, how much responsibility any of us has for the reactions of others is an entirely different essay topic!

Fantasy in our Culture

My view is that Western culture tries to beat all fantasy out of its children at a very early age, and they suffer for it. They have little or no outlet for legitimate fantasy other than violent fantasy (arcade games that involve killing the enemy, for example), and they have difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and 'reality' - because they cannot allow themselves to admit that they have fantasies. So when they slip into fantasy in 'real life', that fantasy is often violent.

Surely lots of us would like to playact at doing lots of exciting and adventurous things which we don't 'really' want to do, or aren't physically fit enough to do, or don't have the opportunity to do (living on the moon, for example), but not only are few outlets available for that sort of fantasy, but we are constantly told that it's 'juvenile behaviour' and we should 'grow up'.

I think the solution is not in trying to combat specific fantasies, but in trying to make fantasy itself acceptable again.

I reckon we should be positively encouraging people to take up fantasy-related hobbies, preferably of a non-violent sort. Surely there are role-playing games, for example, with activities other than trying to harm an opponent? Surely a detective fantasy can involve solving a mystery without mayhem?

But I think even violent fantasy would be okay if it were clearly recognised as separate from 'real life'. I reckon it's healthy to have some socially acceptable way of working off one's 'unacceptable' feelings and fantasies, so that they do not sneak their way into our 'real life' behaviour. For example, I find it very therapeutic to 'beat up' or even 'kill' people I am angry at, by bashing a punching bag or mattress, and getting the anger out of my system. Then I can approach the person, and the situation, calmly and rationally. This is a technique used in many therapies, and encouraged by, for example, the Japanese. I've heard it's become popular in

California in the last 10 years or so. The essential element, however, is in keeping the fantasy and the reality separate in one's mind. I certainly don't really want to kill anyone!

I am encouraged by the proliferation of 'amusement parks' for adults, but discouraged that so many of them seem to have a violent theme. Still, perhaps this could help people learn to separate fantasy (especially violent fantasy) from their everyday lives. They could enrich their lives through fantasy, and keep their fantasies from interfering in 'real life'.

My Opinion

Yes, yes, I see you in the back there, jumping up and down and waving your arms, frantically trying to get my attention. I know your question: this theory is all very nice, but what do I, Jean Weber, think about bondage and Sarah Foster Tate?

My view tends towards the 'anything goes' end of the scale, with the proviso that I often disapprove of actions and think people shouldn't do them, while defending their privilege to do so if they want to.

I mentioned earlier (in 'Is this Ideologically Acceptable') that many people believe (as do I) that we should live according to our beliefs, which may include an opposition to violence against women. But what if, at the same time, we believe that it's a good thing to encourage fantasy, that what may appear to us to be degrading to women isn't necessarily degrading to the individual concerned, and that it's healthier for society to allow people to do what they want (as long as they don't actually harm others - another full essay topic is 'what constitutes harm to others?') than it is to attempt to ban certain activities.

I believe that trying to regulate private behaviour between consenting adults is a doomed activity and one which is more likely to encourage people to participate in that activity (the 'you can't tell me what to do' syndrome). But more than that, I believe that fantasy is good for you and should be encouraged. Just because I don't like *your* fantasy is irrelevant. I have several friends whose private lives include activities which I personally find repugnant, but they don't try to drag me into those activities, and they are otherwise people I like, trust and enjoy the company of, so what business is it of mine?

So if I am going to live by my beliefs, I'm going to have to balance the desire to minimise violence and degradation of women with the desire to improve the acceptability of fantasy in our lives. I do this by encouraging people to indulge their fantasies in a way that enriches their interactions with other people, rather than being harmful to those interactions. From that point of view, I see nothing 'wrong' with Kerrie Hanlon's activities; indeed, by contributing to the publication of material created in a positive and loving

environment, in contrast to the large amounts of negative material on the same topic, she is doing something 'right' and positive for male-female relationships.

Kerrie Hanlon Writes

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25 February 1988

Originally I had intended to let the 'Hot Topic' of Sarah Foster Tate run its course and burn itself out without my comments.

Mostly I didn't want to enter into the situation where via answering other people's remarks I got myself embroiled in heavy discussions and found myself being on the defensive.

I don't believe that I should have to defend my personal decisions, beliefs or actions, especially where it doesn't affect my functioning within fandom. Regardless of the fact that some of the things I have done may seem unusual to some people.

Naturally I realised that sooner or later a magazine or two might be seen by fans, but the sad part in this is the fashion in which this information has been used. I cannot help but be highly suspicious of the motives of those people who have gone to such great lengths to defame and apparently hurt not only myself, but through me, my associates.

The surprising thing is that in our society, people who are involved in Science Fiction have always been the 'forward thinkers'. Usually they are open minded. Usually too, it is not difficult for people who have the scope of mind to appreciate Science Fiction to also appreciate the fact that their own realities and life styles are not the only set of beliefs that are valid.

Of all people, more than the 'mundanes' of this world (if you will forgive me for using such a term), we realise that there is more than one way of looking at reality. Mostly, we don't condemn others simply because they have a different way of expressing themselves or a different political belief. So I find myself asking 'What is really going on here?' One can't pretend that in all this attention I have received, nothing seems awry, especially in the manner in which this 'information' about me has been spread. Don't tell me that there's nothing unusual about that. Tell it to my friends in America who happen to receive *Thyme*. Tell it to Lucy Huntzinger. Tell it to all the people who were in at Galaxy [Bookshop] and who were greeted with the words 'Hey! Have you seen this?'

It isn't difficult to see that I have been deliberately made into a political football by people who didn't care what harm it would do me or what grief it might create in my present situation. In the respect of sensationalism, these people have been

absolutely successful.

As for the subject matter in the photography, I would like to try and lend some perspective, especially for those people who have only seen a few photos reproduced in *Thyme*, and out of context.

I have done some photographic work exclusively for one particular publisher. In every single magazine put together by this publisher, one *complete page* is devoted for the reprinting of what the company simply titles 'The Harmony Philosophy'.

This piece is meant to explain what the ideals of their own particular publications are. It is because of the philosophy that I agreed to participate. Rather than ask me how I reconcile the work I have done photographically with a feminist outlook, why not read what this particular publisher has taken a lot of trouble and valuable space to say about itself in *every issue*.

Thank you, Jean, for giving me this forum, and for your personal views.

THE HARMONY PHILOSOPHY

What is most discouraging to us about this business are the prevailing social misconceptions concerning bondage, at least the benevolent, romantic type of bondage that we produce. For the unenlightened, what we represent and advocate really needs to be clarified. In that spirit, the following general explanation is at least a start.

It has never been nor will it ever be our purpose to depict women as mere subordinates to men. These pictures and articles are not about that. The materials we produce are carefully and, we think, obviously designed for men and women for whom bondage is an important mutual diversion, a recreational and benevolent experience, a fantasy with a happy ending, a good-natured game in which everybody wins.

It is not the pleasure of our patrons nor our intention to offend or demean or abuse or exploit or disadvantage, be aggressive against, or cause even the slightest pain to our models, or to suggest that such is occurring to the ladies they are portraying. We do not characterize victims; we characterize lovers who are mutually involved in a complex and bizarre, but highly stimulating personal activity. The taste we reflect is mutually exciting and pleasurable - the bondage can be for the sake of sexual teasing or foreplay; or the acting out of a benign rescue fantasy with slightly juvenile undertones; or just the sweet and secret, simple sharing of a very special physical intimacy between caring person. Whichever of these it is, we have characterized it on our pages as 'Love Bondage'.

While we cannot police the motives and psyches of our customers, we can and do shape our materials for completely benevolent natures only - either the adult who was imprinted during adolescence by the thrilling and heroic adventure story rescue of a bound and gagged and ultimately loving female, or the male and female adult whose basic nature identifies with the female in bondage and craves to personally experience those same offbeat sensations for either deeply psychological reasons, or, to state this in the simplest possible terms, because it actually feels good, safe and comforting even. He or she is wrapped up tightly and snugly, there is a feeling of being protected, and the rope becomes surrogate for a protective lover's arms. It is to please and satisfy those two natures, and they alone, that we create these visual fantasies.

Conversely, those persons in search of darker, less pleasant bondage themes must look elsewhere, for there is really nothing for them here. Our materials are just not for people who enjoy scenes of human mistreatment. If such people do show up on our mailing list from time to time, they certainly have no reason to linger, since what they are seeking is probably the exact spiritual opposite of what we have to offer.

Good drama does not exist without conflict, and there will necessarily be the blending of bondage with actual danger in some of the text fiction that we publish. But these situations will be so obviously far-fetched or tongue-in-cheek that they are clearly not to be taken any more seriously than a comparable paperback tale or television episode containing the same elements. But in all of the photos that we present, be they from contributors or our own associates, the woman is there willingly, even gladly, and for her own reasons. Were she not, we could not publish the picture.

Therefore, the bondage that is dramatized here is an essentially gentle act used by lovers to intensify their physical and spiritual closeness. She gets to belong utterly to someone she loves, and to be adored for what he perceives are the prettiness of her dependency on him. She has surrendered for him that part of her independence she doesn't want. They are fortune-blessed soul-mates, theirs is completely a mutual act of trust, love, appreciation of themselves and each other. And the readers who look on perceive her bondage as physically and spiritually pleasing to her - she knows that it has more to do with being wanted than abused. Were that the case, we would ourselves be offended.

Our bondage has absolutely nothing to do with demeaning anyone. It is totally and utterly a bilateral activity, and, were it not, we wouldn't have anything to do with it.

Harmony Communications
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Terry Frost Writes

Editor's Note: Portions of the material in this zine have been published in ANZAPA, and copies were sent to several people involved in the dispute, but this issue of Wrevenge is being written before I see any of the responses, except for the following from Terry Frost, who sent his comments directly to me. Terry is the person Kerrie mentions in her letter, greeting people at Galaxy Bookshop with 'Hey! Have you seen this?'

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20 April 1988

Of course you realise that you're sticking your neck out by mentioning the whole Sarah Foster Tate thing without a safety net. But I like fanzines that take risks, so congratulations on the honesty and openness with which you're approaching the subject.

The weirdest thing about the Sarah Foster Tate thing is that I was flooded with requests to see the magazine by people who wanted to see the totality of them rather than selected bits, so they could be fair about what was becoming a big topic of dispute in fandom.

Yeah, I was naive to show the pics around (and nobody every thinks they're being naive), and I was wrong, but as much damage has been done by self-righteous fans in this town who drew the matter out over months rather than weeks and couldn't see that to condemn those who showed the pictures was to *ipso facto* condemn the pictures themselves. And the assumption of malice that some have expressed shows more about the character of the person pointing the finger than of the target.

My first reaction wasn't 'This is sleazy' or (as the paranoids imply) 'This is going to deep six a DUFF candidate' but 'This is *interesting*.' Stirling didn't enter into it until people began throwing holy water and garlic bulbs at me and I began to stir about their puritan reaction to the magazine.

My own opinion is that it takes guts to talk about one's sexuality so openly (even under a pseudonym), especially when pictures are taken and the style of sexual expression is so open to censure. I never said anything to condemn anyone involved with the magazine, unlike the people who whinged in *Thyme*, who did so by implication. My review of SFT (which is going to appear in *The Space Wastrel*) emphasises the mildness of the 'zine, quotes a bit of the philosophy behind it, and hammers the hysteria of some Sydney fans.

There's no doubt that some people in Sydney fandom have been profoundly shocked by SFTIB, whether they admit it or not, and this has led to the paranoid, hysterical reactions the revelations created. If, as one of the hoarsest voices has said, 'What the hell business is it of fandom what people do outside fandom?' why is it that the pictures of Eric Lindsay winning a computer magazine compe-

tion were pubbed? Or a profile of John Newman from a computer magazine was reproduced in your ANZAPA zine? No protests were to be heard then. I see sexuality as no less honourable or discussion-worthy than AI systems or UNIX: and the topic is a bloody sight more accessible to most of fandom. (Almost everyone's had an orgasm.)

On the whole I think you're done the right thing: getting the subject off the furtive, obliquely worded pages of apa zines, but as I said, you're taking a risk. What the hell, if the barbarians start trying to bash your downstairs door in, drop hot cooking oil on them with a wok.

Books



It's been far too long since I reviewed, or even listed, any of the books I've been reading. Hence the following mini-reviews of a few of them.

Ursula Le Guin, Always Coming Home, Bantam, c 1985.

Although I'm a fan of Le Guin's from way back, I was fairly dubious about this book when I first heard about it. The expensive hardcover version came with a tape of music, songs, readings etc to accompany the text, and I thought 'Oh yeah, another marketing ploy to get people to spend lots of money, and I hate singing anyway'. Now, after reading the paperback, I want to get the tape!

I was very taken with this book. My favourite sorts of stories are the kind where I can feel a part of the story, almost as a visitor to the community depicted. Bradley's Darkover books are like that with me, as are many of Le Guin's works, including this one. Those who like fast-paced action and consider detailed characterisation (much less a message) to be an optional frill, probably will find this book not to their taste. I loved it. I want to go visit the people and places described (well, the nice ones at least).

Le Guin has taken her vision of a pacific society based on consensus and an appreciation of the individual to a step further than any of her previous works. Through their own eyes we learn about the lives of these people, and as they meet outsiders, about their assumptions on the ways things are or should be. Thus we should also learn a bit more about our own assumptions on these matters. It's a book that can be read just for the narrative, or as a

starting point for some self-examination and reflection on our life and times.

Of course, my appreciation is enhanced by the fact that many of Le Guin's people's attitudes are like my own, but unlike those which govern our society today. For example, children are treated quite differently, as members of their village or clan as much as or more than as members of their biological 'family', especially since the family units are based around the female members, who may choose to take a male mate (or even a female mate) for the short term or the long term, but none of the adults 'belong' to each other as they do in our world. Children have a strong sense of kinship, but it's a wider kinship than just family; and teaching is much less formal and much more all-pervasive. Ritual is important, but not mandatory. Everyone lives close to nature.

Though one might call this a 'utopia', Le Guin doesn't fall into the trap of assuming that everyone likes this way of life. There are the rebels and the misfits, the quarrelsome and the violent, but they are dealt with rather differently than we do. On the whole! Some of the scenes with people trying to negotiate with neighbours who simply don't choose to negotiate, are humorous but also reminiscent of our own encounters - human nature doesn't change completely even when our childhood conditioning changes.

Much of the book follow a girl, Stone Telling, whose father is a warrior of another tribe, with quite different views on the world, particularly concerning war and women. As Stone Telling grows up, she becomes restless with the predictable life of her village and runs away to join her father, with romantic notions that she can travel about with him and see exotic places. Little does she know that she will be locked up with the rest of his tribe's women in a safe place while the men indulge in warfare. The contrasts between the world views of these two groups are well drawn, and through other interwoven stories we get glimpses of the societies in other parts of the west coast of North America.

One of the message I got from this book is that no society is 'perfect'. The peaceful ones, for example, trade conformity for security and can be stifling. Stone Telling's people do have rituals to help young people come to terms with this, but for some it is not enough. This is a theme I've seen in quite a few semi-utopian novels in the past few years, and I'm glad that more writers are acknowledging this problem. Few seem to have solutions, but then I don't think there are any easy answers. It is good to see writers exploring possibilities, as Le Guin is doing in this book.

Lisa Tuttle, A Spaceship Built of Stone, Women's Press, 1987

This is a collection of previously-published short stories and covers a range of Tuttle's themes. Good reading.

Gregory Benford and David Brin, Heart of the Comet, Bantam Spectra, 1986.

A 'Halley's Comet' book with a slight difference. There are life forms on the comet, and they make the most of a visit by humans. Once the humans are contaminated, they cannot return to Earth. How do they react? An interesting blend of speculative and hard sf, well worth reading - Benford and Brin are two of today's best sf writers, in my opinion; they are both good at the scientific stuff (both are working scientists), and also good at depicting people, especially people who work in science and technology.

Mary Gentle, A Hawk in Silver, Signet 1977.

This juvenile fantasy is enjoyable reading for adults as well. Two human girls help some of the survivors of the faery world. Nothing terribly original, but well written and with female lead characters.

Stephen Donaldson, The Mirror of her Dreams, Fontana, 1986.

I like Donaldson's works although I find them overly wordy. This one has elements similar to the Thomas Covenant books: a main character who passes from one dimension into another and is a key to saving the world she enters; people who are very unsure of themselves and spent tedious pages putting themselves down, doubting their own value, and so on. Yet they are able to rise to moments of heroic effort when necessary (generally not to help themselves, but only to help others, so low is their self esteem), and eventually they begin to grow to like and trust themselves. In this they are very believable - if you haven't suffered some of these feelings at some time in your life, surely you know someone who has. I often want to thump some sense into these people, at least partly because I can see so much of myself in them.

I find the female main character, Terisa, very familiar. I cannot recall feeling quite the way she feels, but I've certainly known quite a few women of whom she reminds me very much.

Mary Gentle, Ancient Light, Gollancz, 1987.

This sequel to *Golden Witchbreed* examines what happens when commercial interests poke around in an alien culture. The humans are convinced there are remnants of the advanced technology of The Golden, an empire which perished 5,000 years previously, leaving Orthe a damaged, post-technological world. They are not supposed to interfere in an alien culture, but do not appreciate how even their presence interferes, much less their efforts to dredge up the past.

Lynne de Lisle Christie, the lead from the previous book, is back, trying to sort out her peculiar feeling of 'belonging' to the world of Orthe

(just what *did* happen to her on that previous visit?), and trying to keep the humans and Ortheans from destroying each other.

This is a powerful book, with layers upon layers of messages for the reader, as well as plenty of action to move one's attention along. I was particularly stunned by the ending, which was utterly appropriate but which I did not expect. My appreciation to Gentle for not taking the easy way out.

Hugh Cook, The Wordsmiths and the Warguild and The Women and the Warlords, Corgi, 1987.

The publicity on these books suggest that the first is 'light-hearted humour'. I found them unreadable; the first was full of adolescent jokes and silly action. I've no doubt that people whose sense of humour differs from mine might enjoy them. I tried rather hard to read and appreciate

these because they are by a New Zealand author, and I am particularly interested in Australian and New Zealand writers. By my standards, these do nothing to enhance the reputation of the two countries; quite the contrary.

These are the second and third in what is claimed to be a *twenty*-book series. Is someone trying to rival L Ron Hubbard? I am not impressed.





Art Credits

The uncredited cover art last issue was by Shayne McCormack. My sincere apologies for neglecting to include a credit.

Artwork this time by Sheryl Birkhead.

The Rabbit's Progress

by Lyn McConchie
15 Rauparaha St
Waikanae Beach
New Zealand

<p>Are all the abstract paintings in this Exhibition done by you, Pablo? The prices on them are <u>huge</u>. Do people really pay that much for paintings like these? They aren't <u>of</u> anything, but you sell so many!</p> 	 <p>Yes, what do you think of them?</p> <p>I don't quite know how to describe them, Pablo. What do you say to all the people who pay for them?</p> <p>I speak of the tonal hues and integrity ... the tremendous over-painting ... the depth of the glaze ...</p>
 <p>I point out the structural perceptions and the dynamic symmetry. And then I tell them that this particular one is a real bargain because it is so compositionally iconoclastic, far in advance of other recent work!</p> <p>Gosh! What does all that mean?</p>  <p>About \$10,000 a picture, George.</p>	