

Weber Woman's Wrevenge

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WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE THIRTY-TWO

(Volume 5, Number 10, September 1988)

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This fanzine is available for contributions, letters of comments, artwork, interesting clippings, uncanceled postage stamps, arranged trades, editorial whim, or A\$1.50 or equivalent per issue (air mail extra). I prefer some sort of personal response.

I owe an apology to Cath McDonnell. In *Wrevenge 31* I remarked that 'Jack Herman organises the kind of con that appeals to me,' neglecting to acknowledge that a lot of the organisation of Conviction was actually done by Cath. (There probably were other people involved that I should acknowledge as well.) I say 'I like conventions organised by Jack Herman' mostly to counter certain other people (such as Terry Frost) who say they *don't* like cons organised by Jack -- all of us cheerfully ignoring the fact that a lot of other people are involved. Anyway -- thanks to Cath McDonnell, and anyone else whose contributions added to my enjoyment.



The Joys of Contracting

Computer-related contract work is the upmarket end of what office workers call 'temporaries' and journalists and others call 'freelancing'. If you've got saleable skills, are reliable, and have the right contacts (or sign up with a good agency), you can make lots more money than you can as a regular employee.

Of course, you have to give up such benefits as paid sick leave and recreation leave, some measure of security, and whatever other goodies companies may pass out (paid health cover, low-interest loans, and the like). If you don't use an agency, you may also have problems ensuring that your clients pay you on time. And until you build up your business, you may not get a lot of work.

Dave Stirrup asked me one day, 'Jean, how do you become a consultant?'

I replied, not entirely in jest, 'Well, Dave, first you say you are one, and then you convince people to pay you for consulting.'

It's been an interesting four months since I lost my job with Impact Systems.

I've done a lot of goofing off, a lot of studying, a lot of writing on topics that interested me, a bit of worrying (when the bills came in but the money didn't), and a lot of interviewing. Mostly I've enjoyed myself thoroughly.

I also had my first submitted magazine article accepted, signed up for unemployment benefits, worked at several odd jobs, and made a couple of potentially valuable contacts.

And when I do get work, it all comes at the same time, ensuring that I work my butt off for a week or two before collapsing in a heap while awaiting the next phone call.

The part I like least is marketing myself, so I've mostly signed up with agencies and answered ads in the computer press. So far this has worked reasonably well, though I did worry a bit when I didn't get a single assignment in July.

One of my ongoing (but sporadic) jobs is revising manuals I had written for Impact Systems; Gestetner (which bought out Impact) are having several major product launches in October and will need lots of manuals revised before then. They are, of course, waiting until the last minute to do anything about it.

Another job started as a referral from an agency, but due to a series of stuff-ups on the agency's part, the client is now dealing directly with me. It's one of these secretarial-help companies with dozens of small-business type clients, some of whom are moving into 'desktop publishing' technology for things they've formerly had typeset. The staff of the secretarial service are finding it rather difficult to find time to learn how to use the desktop publishing package.

One of their directors (Jennifer) asked for someone to do an urgent job for them, and the agency sent me. While I was there I explained that the work would be a lot faster and easier (and cheaper!) if the person who prepared the text on the word processor had done things a bit differently. Nobody there, of course, knew how to do it properly. So now Jennifer wants me to come back and tell them how to do it right, and give some lessons in the mechanics of using the program.

I guess I am now a consultant.

This is the sort of thing I'd like to do for small businesses like this, so I'm delighted. The fringe benefit is that this office is also the secretariat for an organisation known as the Society for Business Communicators, and a few words in the right ears (from a satisfied customer) could generate some more business for me. I'll also put a small advertisement in their monthly newsletter, but word-of-mouth is likely to be a lot more effective.

Mind you, this assignment also pointed out some glaring gaps in my own knowledge, so I had to rush off and do a quick crash study in how to do various things. So far I've managed to do this overnight so I can turn up in the morning all knowledgeable, and no one knows I didn't have the answers all along.

Meanwhile I've been writing magazine articles (on desktop publishing - I'm following Eric's lead in writing an article about any problem I solve that I reckon may have general applications for other people) and one has been accepted. The pay rate is a bit vague, and they may cut or edit large whacks of it, so I don't know yet how much that will be worth in money, but the main idea was to get my name in print. Better than advertising in many respects, and they pay me.

I've received several letters of condolence, so to speak, over losing my job, despite my original comments that I looked upon it as an opportunity rather than a disaster. For example,

Harry Andruschak
P O Box 5309
Torrance, CA 90510-5309
USA

3 August 1988

I am very distressed to hear that you have lost your job, since I was unemployed one year and it nearly wiped me out financially and emotionally... When I was laid off from JPL after working there 13 years, I had zilch retirement or pension benefits...

In a note to Eric, Harry continues:

I am over the age of 40, and not likely to find any kind of better job... ((he's now working as an Electronics Technician with the U.S. Postal Service))

These comments made me feel a bit sad, as they reminded me of some of the differences between America (the 'land of opportunity') and Australia. At minimum, there's the sheer number of competitors for any job opening in America (in certain parts of the country, in certain jobs, anyway). In Australia, in most skilled occupations and particularly in almost anything computer-related, it's a real seller's market (depending on where you live, of course).

I'm over 40 -- and female, usually another strike against one for high-paying jobs -- but neither appears to be a handicap to me in the least. So what if I have no 'qualifications' or training in what I choose to do? I'm healthy, a quick learner, and honest about my weaknesses as well as my strengths. There are many businesses out there that need my skills, and are willing to pay big money to get them. (Not as much as if I was a competent computer sales person, but well into the top tax bracket.)

This reinforces my belief that the only thing that could stand between me and resounding success in whatever I choose to do, is my own feelings that I

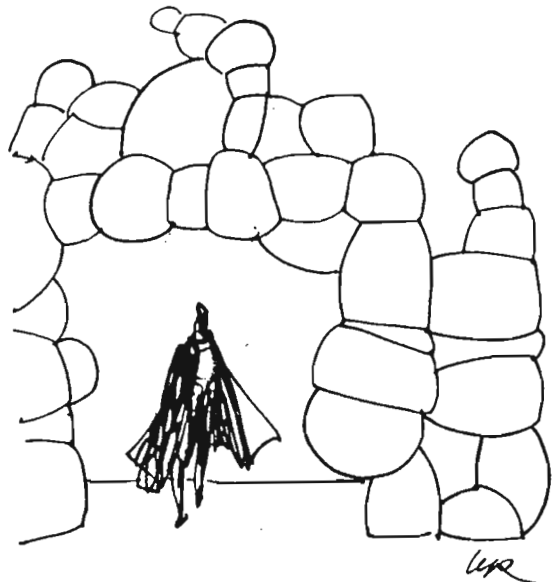
can't do something. As I tell almost anyone who'll stay still long enough to listen, one very important ingredient of success is believing that you can be successful. It's not sufficient, but it's necessary. (Success, in this context, I'm defining as 'accomplishing whatever you choose to accomplish', with no reference to money or status.)

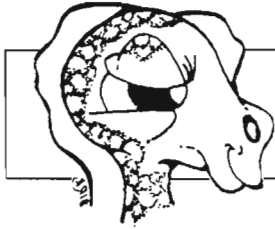
I think it's often necessary to re-evaluate exactly what it is you want to do, and what you are able to do. I've met a lot of people who don't recognise their skills as being saleable, or don't realise how they can turn their skills to better-paid work -- work which they would enjoy, too.

I am a good example. As long as I defined myself as 'an editor' -- even a scientific editor -- I was locked into relatively poorly-paid jobs with a fair amount of competition for those jobs. As soon as I re-defined myself as a 'technical writer', I was in a category with far fewer competitors and much higher pay. Now I wouldn't have gone into technical writing unless I thought I'd enjoy it (that's why I don't try to get into sales), but the point is that it took me quite awhile to even think of it as something I could do, and could convince others that I could do.

My opinion that there was big money in technical writing was further reinforced last week at a meeting of the Society for Technical Communication, where a survey of members' incomes revealed that (a) non-salaried members -- contractors and consultants -- generally made lots more money than salaried members did, and (b) there was no correlation between income and age, sex, educational level, number of years in the workforce, number of years as a technical writer, or just about anything else the survey compilers could think of.

Also, several people who've interviewed me for jobs have remarked that whenever they found someone with the skills they wanted, that person was not interested in salaried work -- all the 'good people' wanted to be contractors!





Natter

Sue Thomason
111 Albemarle Road
South Bank, York YO2 1EP
U.K.

30 July 1988

Maths problems set in school textbooks typically assume an interest in a whole range of things culturally assigned to boys: football, cars, construction. I remember being turned off maths myself by problems like 'Mr Smith squeezes 1.2 cm of toothpaste out of a 30 cm long tube every morning to clean his teeth. His wife uses 0.9 cm every morning and every evening. If the diameter of the tube is such and such, and so on and so on, how many days will it take to finish the tube?' This is crazy, I thought. Only a madman is obsessive to the point of using 1.2 cm of toothpaste very morning...

Attempts to make maths more relevant to women's concerns involve things like recipes, which also annoy me because cooking isn't governed by maths-type logic. If the cake batter is too sticky, you drip a bit more liquid in until it feel smoother. You taste the stew, and if it's not right you juggle the seasonings.

I remember being fascinated by topology, and by 'infinite pattern', reading everything I could lay hands on about Islamic art, and tessellation, and circle-arc patterns. But that interest was never encouraged (or noticed?) by my maths teacher, who always graded me poorly in geometry because my drawings were messy. Not neat, not exact. Not perfect. I began to associate maths with the idea of rigorous perfection, which fascinated (i.e. both intrigued and repelled) me. Perfect order implies a lack of organic wholeness, a lack of life and growth (and decay and death).

Hmmm. But I have some positive images now: the double-spiral pattern of the sunflower, the 'endless knot' that's one of the eight Buddhist symbols, and repeats in Celtic art. All the Pythagorean stuff about mathematics and music and proportion; we've done something very peculiar to maths by isolating it from the arts...

Lloyd Penney
412-22 Riverwood Parkway
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M8Y 4E1

29 April 1988

I wonder if Australians connect Christmas with cold and snow, same as Northern Hemisphere inhabitants, yet get heat and dryness instead. I wonder if there is a feeling of a cheat? Would you prefer a Christmas with cold and snow? Just trying to figure your antipathy towards Christmas, which while it is a stressful time of year, is one of the happiest times for my wife and our families.

Well, Lloyd, first the generalities. I have met a lot of Australian residents who were raised in the Northern Hemisphere and do miss the cold-weather traditions of Christmas, but as far as I can tell those Australian raised locally (and migrants from other parts of the Southern Hemisphere) don't think of snow and cold in association with Christmas at all. (Nor, I gather, do people who grew up in Hawaii.) Though I've noticed in the past two or three years a growing popularity of 'Christmas in July' parties, with all the foods and trappings of Northern Hemisphere cold-weather holidays.

My antipathy to Christmas arises from the over-commercialism of the season. I don't find it particularly stressful, since I have no family nearby and no obligations to entertain or be entertained, or to spend much money on gifts. For the past 20 years I've tended to hang around with people of similar views (and similar lack of family obligations) and/or similar non-Christian backgrounds, and we've enjoyed the 'festive season' despite, rather than because of, the relentless pressure to party and spend money.

You do recall, don't you Lloyd, that I lived most of the first 31 years of my life in North America? I think the southern summer Christmas is a great improvement. Although I also enjoy winter, of which Australia has very little.

John Purcell
4552 Cinnamon Ridge Trail
Eagan, MN 55122
USA

15 June 1988

I am greatly surprised that American newspapers have never 'discovered' this movement ((Kvennalistinn, the Icelandic feminist party))...

The article I quoted was published in the American feminist magazine Ms, but the author says she first heard about Kvennalistinn in The New York Times. I'm not surprised that few other newspapers ever mentioned it: most American papers, in my experience, hardly acknowledge the rest of the world exists, unless something happens that directly affects the USA. Besides, it's women's stuff, isn't it?



Opposing a Candidate (Revisited)

In *Wrevenge 30* I mentioned some local kerfuffle over events related to this year's DUFF race, and posed some questions to readers.

I've now had quite a few replies, but this time I'm only publishing the bits having to do with the general question, not the bits having to do with the specific incidents that sparked off the kerfuffle, because I am trying to keep the two separate. It's too easy to lose sight of the general question when worrying about specific ones. Something to do with the woods and the trees, I believe.

Jack Herman
Box 272, Wentworth Bldg
University of Sydney, NSW 2006
Australia

(reprinted with permission from *Necessity - Metonymy*, in ANZAPA 122, June 1988)

If you are going to campaign against someone, and such a thing has happened reasonably frequently in Fan Fund history, you should do it by openly stating your objections to a candidate, or, even better, by suggesting why another candidate is more qualified. At the very least, one should have the guts to do it openly, not by hoax candidates and back-stairs gossip.

Sheryl Birkhead
23629 Woodfield Rd
Gaithersburg, MD 20879, USA

If one honestly feels there is something about an opponent that should be known... is this revelation 'for real', sour grapes, or merely an attempt to discredit and opponent? Your list of activities... many are blatantly illegal and if information specifically pertinent to them is published, I'd suspect the potential of a lawsuit...

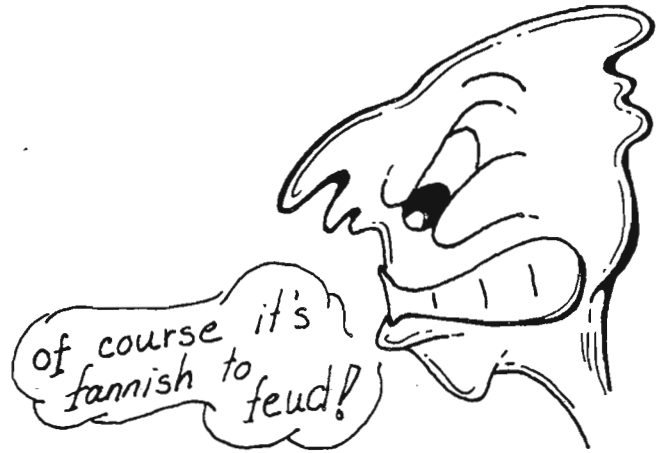
Yes, the possibility of a lawsuit is why I'd be unlikely to publish unproved assertions, even if I knew them to be true from personal experience.

Irwin Hirsh
2/416 Dandenong Road
Caulfield North, Vic 3161
Australia

28 June 1988

About half the activities listed are criminal offenses and the place where those charges should be tested is a court of law. I don't wish to put down the point you are making, which in itself bears thinking about, but I feel rather uncomfortable about fan fund voters being urged to make a decision on something of which there may be no conviction... I would hope that the

arguments used in a campaign have to do with the suitability of the candidates in meeting the criteria a fan fund sets out to honour.



Part of my point was that not everyone disapproves of certain illegal activities (dealing drugs, at least marijuana, is a good example; and a great many consenting sexual activities in private are illegal in some states and countries). There are other activities which, while not illegal, may be considered by some fans as inappropriate for a fan fund winner -- yet other fans may consider those same activities to be evidence of a 'really fun party person' (getting drunk, especially if generous with the bottle, telling sexist jokes and ogling the women, or getting into arguments and shouting abuse, for example).

Buck Coulson
2677W-500N
Hartford City, IN 47348
USA

11 July 1988

There is no way to campaign against a particular candidate without sounding offensive. What you have to do is decide whether the defects of a candidate are gross enough to warrant an attack. The general belief, at least in the English-speaking world, is that campaigning against anyone at all is at the very least bad sportsmanship, and elections should be decided solely on the candidates' good points. (They seldom are, of course, but the belief remains.)

The candidate, however, should be aware of possible points of attack, and decide ahead of time if the prize is worth the possibility of defamation of character based on his/her past activities. (Lying about a candidate and making up imaginary defects is even worse sportsmanship... though of course this goes on as well, particularly in political campaigns.) If the candidate is ashamed of his/her past activities, he/she should either not run or announce repentance; if he/she isn't ashamed, then there shouldn't be any personal injury if other people broadcast them.

Gordon Lingard
P O Box 1967
Coffs Harbour, NSW 2450
Australia

May 1988

Regardless of a person's public life, I strongly believe that a person has a right to their own private life and that this is none of the business of the press, voters, audience, government, whoever... unless their private life is in direct conflict with their public life. For instance, the sexuality of a politician should be irrelevant... (unless) that politician, say, voted against a gay right bill and was gay himself... then there is cause for bringing his private life into the public forum due to the hypocrisy of his stance.

I think we agree on the principles, Gordon, but the main problem is in determining what is 'relevant' in a person's private life. My personal criteria are probably much like yours, but I can understand how someone else's criteria could legitimately be different.

Maia Cowan
55 Valley Way
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013
USA

10 August 1988

Your list of 'hypothetical activities of which some of us may not approve' seems to assume that only a person's activities 'inside fandom' may count in deciding whether to support or oppose a fan fund candidate. I'd agree this is true only if the questionable behavior isn't going to be exhibited during the fan's 'tour of duty'. It's important to recognize that the fan fund winners may be the only members of their country's fandom that many of the host country's fans will meet, and that many people will base their opinion of an entire country on this brief encounter... Fan funds winners... must therefore be 'above suspicion'. I also think anyone who indulges in criminal behavior like dealing drugs, stealing, attacking people or property, or abusing children, doesn't deserve the honor and pleasure of a free vacation!

If a candidate were 'guilty' of controversial behavior, first I'd check my facts and then provide those facts to the people who might be voting. I wouldn't say, 'Don't vote for this person because...' but 'Before you decide, you'll probably want to take this into account.' I'd be reluctant to 'go public' with the information because that sort of thing tends to hurt and embarrass the person's associates (and victims, sometimes) more than it curtails the objectionable behavior or sways public opinion in the 'right' direction.

(In fact, this is exactly how I've handled a couple of situations where I considered someone a High Risk. Sometimes people agreed with my judgment, but when they didn't, I left them in peace.)

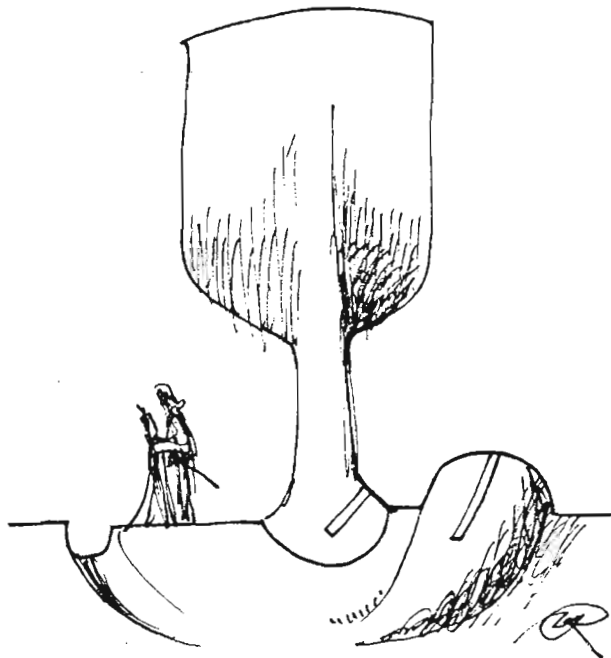
Actually I wasn't assuming that only a person's activities inside fandom were relevant, but I do know of people who do feel that way, so I phrased some of the points in that manner.

Sue Thomason
(Address earlier)

30 July 1988

I don't think I'd oppose a candidate's fanfund campaign by starting a counter-campaign within fandom on any of the grounds you mention, though in certain cases I would definitely want to contact the police, the RSPCA, relevant con committees, etc. I can see how a person would be a witty fan, good on panels, with an impressive string of fan publications, the life and soul of every convention he's attended -- and a convicted rapist. That person might well be an ideal fan fund candidate. For all I know he might now be a convicted, reformed rapist.

Perhaps the problem is that I don't take 'fandom' as seriously as I take 'the real world'. If someone has done something I disapprove of strongly enough to take action about, it would be far too serious (to me) to waste on a fan feud (I don't usually take fan feuds terribly seriously).

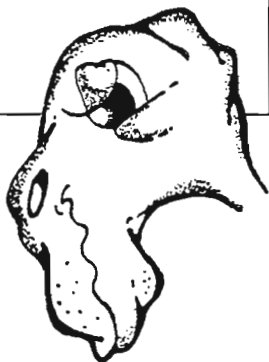


I Also Heard From: John Bangsund, Sheryl Birkhead, Pamela Boal, Harry Bond, Brian Earl Brown, Buck Coulson, Kathleen Gallagher, Bruce Gillespie, Michelle Hallett, Joy Hibbert, Garth Spencer, Lucy Sussex, and others whose letters I'm holding until next time or have misfiled.

Art Credits: Sheryl Birkhead, 2, 4(top), 5, 7;
Alexis Gilliland, 4; Bill Rotsler, 3, 6;
Julie Vaux, cover.

Book Reviews

... nice reading ... yeah...



The publicity department of **Transworld Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd** kindly send me stacks of Corgi and Bantam books for review, and **Pan Books** sends the occasional volume. Unfortunately, most of them are the sorts of fantasy that I don't particularly enjoy, so it's rather difficult for me to write fair reviews. Just because a book bores me silly doesn't mean you might not enjoy it thoroughly (and the opposite is also true). Now and then, of course, a gem crosses my desk, but usually I have to buy them for myself.

First, an apology to **Hugh Cook**, whose book *The Women and The Warlords* I rubbished in *Wrevenge 30*. I finally read the book all the way through, and found I enjoyed it. I still don't relate to Cook's brand of humour, and much of the action seemed rather too predictable, but I did like the (female) main character. Now I'm at least willing to try reading the other volumes in the *Chronicles of an Age of Darkness*.

Richard Grant's *Rumours of Spring* (1987, Bantam) is a gem, a bizarre, delightful fantasy which could be subtitled 'Nature Strikes Back'. It avoids stereotypes (except for some of the characters, but they are that way for a purpose), medievalism, and most variations of magic. The magic is in nature, not in 'sorcery'. I'll quote from the publicity blurb: 'Only one lonely forest survives on earth -- almost forgotten. Then, remarkably, frighteningly, the forest begins to grow, rapidly reclaiming the earth. Mankind's very survival is suddenly at stake... an unlikely group of crusaders venture into the heart of this dark and towering world of hidden wonders to see if they can learn the key to the forest's incredible growth. Instead they make a breathtaking discovery.' Recommended.

Douglas Adams' Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency (Pan, 1987) is another delight from the author of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and its sequels. This one is a bit different from the Hitchhikers volumes, but it has the Adams' touch of zany humour and utterly bizarre yet somehow logical twists of space and time.

I also enjoyed **Susan Shwartz's** *The Woman of Flowers*, Book 2 in the *Heirs to Byzantium* trilogy (Pan Books, 1987), set in an alternative history where Antony and Cleopatra established an empire in which their descendents have ruled for 1,000 years as Emperor and Pharaoh. The female lead,

Princess Alexa, following whatever horrific events took place in Volume 1, *Byzantium's Crown* (which I haven't read), is taken to safety in the north, and ultimately to Britain, by the Norsemen. Under the tutelage of the Druids, Alexa overcomes her guilt over her past, and learns to use her magic powers for good purposes. Eventually her brother comes to take her back to Byzantium, but she has her own life to lead now. The resolution of that situation, and the battles against the shapechanging forces of evil, made fascinating reading. I'm looking forward to the third volume.

Many other books I've received I couldn't really get into, so I'll just mention them here. *Forging the Darksword* (1987) and *Doom of the Darksword* (1988) are the first two volumes of the *Darksword* trilogy by **Margaret Weis** and **Tracy Hickman**, from Bantam. The blurb for *Doom* says, 'Joram, denied the throne of Merilon, lived for years amongst outlaws because he was born without magic. But now Joram returns home wielding the powerful, magic-absorbing Darksword to win revenge and claim his birthright.' If there's one theme I heartily dislike, it's revenge and claiming one's birthright.

David Eddings' Guardians of the West (Corgi, 1987) is Book One of *The Malloreon*: 'all the familiar characters from *The Belgariad* (a five-volume series) return... to continue their quest for the triumph of good over evil.'

Judith Tarr's *The Golden Horn* (1985) and *The Hounds of God* (1986) are Corgi reprints of Bantam editions: volumes 2 and 3 of *The Hound and the Falcon* trilogy: 'the saga of the worldly career of Alfred the elven priest', set in 13th-century Rome. These actually look fairly interesting.

Another book that looks interesting **Jennifer Roberson's** *Legacy of the Sword*, Book 3 of the *Chronicles of the Cheysuli* (Corgi, 1986). 'For decades, the magical race of shapechangers called the Cheysuli have been feared and hated exiles in their own land, a land they rightfully should rule... Now, in the aftermath of the revolution which overthrew the hated tyrant, Prince Donal is being trained as the first Cheysuli in generations to assume the throne. But will he be able to overcome the prejudice of a populace afraid of his special magic and succeed in uniting the realm...?'

Bantam is reprinting **Elizabeth Scarborough's** delightful series *Songs from the Seashell Archives*. The original four volumes have become two: Volume 1 contains *Song of Sorcery* and *The Unicorn Creed*; Volume 2, *Bronwyn's Bane* and *The Christening Quest*. I thoroughly enjoyed these hilarious send-ups of every formula fantasy cliché you can think of, though after awhile the humour seemed to wear a bit thin.

Corgi and Bantam have also recently published a small stack of novels by **Sheri S. Tepper**. Those I've read have seemed quite mixed in quality and certainly in their appeal to me. Several had a strong horror element, which is usually not to my taste. **Carole Nomarhas**, who says she does enjoy horror

novels, commented that she found *The Revenants* too hard to get into, and couldn't finish it: the characters were simply too distant. I don't have a copy of that book, but I could say much the same about *The Awakeners* (the paperback version is published as two volumes, *Northshore* and *Southshore*). Tepper has some things to say about human relationships (partially in the guise of human-alien relationships) that I consider well worth saying, and she's found an interesting framework in which to say them, but I felt too distanced from the characters to really get involved in the story. This was not helped by my antipathy towards stories about cultures rigidly adhering to religious doctrines that are clearly unrelated to the reality the people live in. Okay, I know this isn't entirely 'unrealistic', but it annoys me sufficiently that I can rarely enjoy a story with such a premise. The horror-type elements in *The Awakeners* (raising the dead to work in the fields, for example) rather put me off, too.

All of which is a pity, really, because part of Tepper's premise I found fascinating: here's a human colony on an alien planet, where the humans and the resident aliens had to make an uneasy truce many generations ago. The nature of this truce is slowly revealed as a question of food, and pride, and stubbornness, and includes some relevant lessons about what happens to a species that refuses to admit that it's destroying its environment, preferring to believe that its gods will provide.

Tepper's *After Long Silence* was more to my taste. Humans have colonised a world on which huge crystal 'Presences' constrain their movements by destroying anyone who disturbs them, unless pacified by very specific selections of music. Is it merely a matter of resonance, or are the Presences sentient? For that matter, are there other sentient beings on the planet? While powerful humans and huge corporations plot to control the planet's future, a few good people are seeking the truth -- but will they be allowed to live if they find it? If this is a sample, I suspect I'll like Tepper's science fiction more than her fantasy. The main characters in this novel were fairly approachable, though some of the premises were a bit hard to believe.

I did enjoy *The Bones*, the sequel to *Blood Heritage*, which I haven't read. It takes place in modern America, but involves voodoo magic surrounding a family with slave origins. I could really relate to the main character, Mahlia, though I found some of the action a bit too neatly resolved. I kept getting the feeling that Tepper had done a study on Haitian magic, and then wrote a book (or two) using what she'd learned, but didn't go into it deeply enough.

The last volume in the packet was *Jinian Footseer*, which appears to be part of a series including *The True Game*, *The Chronicles of Mavin Manyshaped* (shapechangers appear to be fashionable again this year, your reviewer notes cynically), and several other titles. This one appears

to be aimed at a younger audience; perhaps the entire series is. I didn't read it, but the cover blurb mentions 'a vast army of living and dead' against which Jinian and her compatriots must fight.

And now for some books that Eric Lindsay or I actually bought. Eric spotted J. Neil Schulman's *Alongside Night* (Avon, 1979) in a used book shop, so I had the opportunity to read an early work by the author whose *The Rainbow Cadenza* so impressed me (see *Wrevenge* 27 for a review). *Night* is a far less complex book, with less well-developed characters. I enjoyed it mainly because I like libertarian fantasies, but I can't claim I found it particularly convincing.

Exile's Gate is the long-awaited fourth volume (Daw, 1988) in C.J. Cherryh's saga of Morgaine; the other books are *Gate of Ivrel*, *Well of Shiuan* and *Fires of Azeroth*. You certainly needn't have read the first three volumes to enjoy this one, or to understand what's going on. Morgaine's duty is to close the gates between the universes, but powerful aliens oppose her. A fine example of the fast-paced Cherryh novel, with a strong female lead and a male companion who, while subordinate, is certainly not inferior to her. The cover could lead one to believe these books are sword-and-sorcery, but they're not.

Barbara Hambly's *The Silicon Mage* (Del Rey, 1988) is a sequel to *The Silent Tower* (1986). Joanna Sheraton, a highly competent computer programmer with a poor self-image, gives a ride to a hitchhiker and ends up in his, Antryg Windrose's, universe. She finds many things hard to believe, but since she's been exposed to the idea of parallel universes and to the notion that unknown technologies can be mistaken for magic, she is able to overcome her disbelief and put her own skills to work as required. This doesn't mean she always avoids making mistakes.

The Dark Mage is pulling psychic power out of the universe to fuel the computer with which he intends to gain immortality. As the power is drained, everyone feel 'drained' -- of joy, of hope, of energy. Joanna must learn that many things aren't her 'fault', but that she still must accept responsibility for her own actions. If she gives in to feelings of hopelessness, then she has failed. But she can choose to keep going, knowing that whatever happens, she's done her best. If she fails, it's not because she allowed herself to be a victim. She and Antryg must find a way to stop the Dark Mage's plans. I loved the combination of magic and computing.

ANZAPA

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