

THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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THE MENTOR 72, November 1991. ISSN 0727-8462. Edited, printed and published by Ron Clarke, 6 Bellevue Road, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia. THE MENTOR is published at intervals of roughly three months. It is available for published contribution (fiction [science fiction or fantasy], poetry, article, or letter of comment on a previous issue. It is *not* available for subscription, but is available for \$5 for a sample issue (posted).

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The Editorial Slant

Well, I've now returned from my trip to Volgograd as one of the Guests of the convention. There were times I didn't think I was going - what with the coupe, but when the time came, after several phonecalls, I went. And I don't regret it. The Republics of the Soviet Union were, and still are, in a state of flux. When I was over there many people commented on the fact there was not much food in the shops, and I hadn't realised till I was shown, that the population are still using ration coupons for the basic foods - flour, sugar, etc.

While I was there, I had fruitful discussions with several literary agencies and several publishers. As far as the literary agencies and publishers are concerned - they would like to publish SF by Australian authors, but they wanted someone here to be an agent. So they asked me. I said yes, I would give it a go. The SF magazines in Russia have circulations of about 100,000, and the paperbacks up to 300,000. When I asked what kind of stories they wanted, they said they had plenty of stories with humour - they wanted stories "with a strong plot", of between 15 and 20 double-spaced typewritten pages. Most of the stories in the magazines I have seen are *short* stories. The idea was that Australian authors would submit them to me, I would vet them, then send the accepted ones over to the Tolocconnicou and Zavgorodny Literary Agency, where Igor would again vet them and send the ones that were within the parameters to the magazines in the USSR. So if you would like to be a published author in the USSR... the same conditions apply as to submissions to THE MENTOR. And please indicate with submissions whether the story is for TM or the USSR, or both (if not accepted for the USSR).

One little carp - I have noticed that more and more fanzines aren't publishing the full addresses of LoCCers. This isn't in the spirit of fandom, people. Other faneds can't expand their mailing lists without this type of info, and if you keep on doing it, *you* won't get any future new addresses from anybody! Sure there are people who don't want their addresses published. But they are in the minority and should say so.

Come on, faneds, do the right thing! Put in those addresses in the LoCcol. You are making it harder by limiting letter writing between loccers and hurting everyone, including yourselves. - Ron Clarke.

A Way With Women

by Margaret Pearce

First Engineer John Scarlett showed a discontented face to the cabin mirror. Today was his birthday. It was also landfall at Thetis, and the whole crew had been granted shore leave. Two things well worth celebrating.

Except the birthday he was celebrating was his fortieth, and revisiting a planet was depressing. The ten years of your absence was usually twenty to thirty years on their time scale, and looking up old friends and acquaintances was a sharp reminder of the intransigence of life.

Still, the mirror reflected a fine figure of a man. He straightened his shoulders and remembered to tuck in his paunch. There was very little grey in his thick dark hair, and if his eyes were starting to bag, and the lines around his jowls deepen, so what! Lines of experience and maturity gave a man character. Half these smooth faced kids looked like pansies. At least he looked every inch a totally masculine man.

The rest of the crew were in a riotously holiday mood. Thetis was the ideal planet to spend leave. Its reputation had spread through the galaxy. An ideal climate, magnificent scenery and an over abundance of beautiful hospitable women enhanced its other attractions.

There were no hostile life forms, diseases, or any political instability. The medikits and stunpacks were worn as a formality. The stage of civilisation was technological, but only advanced to where it made living more pleasant. There was heat, light, power and sanitation, but no slums or grim rows of factories. There were fully automated factories, but they were discreetly underground, and the airy council chambers, hotels, temples, amusement places and private residences were set among well kept parks and gardens.

John watched the swaying hips of the cute little biologist in front of him. She had a narrow waist and long legs that showed to full advantages in the tight silver uniform. He brooded for a few seconds on her lack of taste in deserting him for the blonde boy who looked as if he hadn't yet started shaving, and then he cheered up.

Thetis was one planet where there were plenty more fish in the sea. The women outnumbered the men by a ratio of ten to one. Men were such a novelty even the most miserable specimens of masculinity were rushed, and he was no miserable specimen. He inflated his chest at the thought.

'Getting ready to conquer the planet, Casanova?' jeered the voice behind him.

He looked around at his dumpy second engineer and hid his annoyance behind a patronising smile. She was sharp and smart, but after all, she was only a woman, and a dowdy one at that. Her attempt to beat him to the promotion of first engineer had been slick, but after all the position belonged with him. He was the best damn engineer on the space freighter. Women had their place, but not in the engineering profession.

'Enjoy your leave, Carman,' he retorted, and had the pleasure of seeing her face darken.

On a planet full of beautiful women, Carman was very surplus. Come to think of it, she was a surplus issue on a freighter light years from nowhere. Pleased with that last thought, he paused on the landing field, trying to decide where to go.

He could look up Llalla of course, but she would have aged twenty years to his ten. He was not a great one for renewing old romances. There was only a fortnight's leave, and the planet was crammed with so many beautiful women he felt he should share himself out generously.

'Just the man I wanted to see,' exclaimed the Captain.

John straightened to attention. Not that there was any need to. The Captain was in civvies, and very disgusting civvies at that. He wore high wading boots over stained and dirty cotton trousers, a torn shirt without buttons with an old hand-knitted cardigan over it. His bald head was covered by an old towelling hat threaded through with fish hooks and flies.

'Sir,' John muttered in a pained voice.

'I've got a fishing trio lined up,' the Captain explained. He handed over a thick satchel. 'It's the serum that the third temple asked for. Deliver it for me will you.'

A hovercraft tilting under the weight of several old men in the same state of undress as the Captain swooped over and bore the Captain away. There was a babble of old men's voices, and the hovercraft spun around, gathering speed as it headed in the direction of the ocean.

John shrugged, and hailed a silver hovercraft. The young man driving gave him a resentful look when he asked for the third temple, and slid up the partition around the driving seat. John ignored his driver, and tried to remember what Llalla had told him of the temples on his last incident filled leave. It was either her mother or her grandmother who were temple caste. He couldn't remember whether Llalla had a profession or not. All he remembered was her zest for being hospitable.

Most of the medical profession and all their attendant biologists and technicians were automatically temple caste. Temples were like hospitals and research clinics merged into one. They were still built in the high conical bullet shapes of the first disable space ship that the original settlers used as combined hospital and laboratory. Only now the high cones that reared over the gracious low buildings scattered around the countryside were worked of white stone or shining marble.

The third temple was unmistakable with its three blue lines of windows high up its smooth sides. The hovercraft drifted up the imposing steps to the wide landing.

As John stepped out two tall women in the regulation white sweeping robes watched him coldly. A lot of the temple women were tall, which set off interminable arguments among the crew as to whether height was related to intelligence. The temple women were the physicians, research scientists and technicians.

'First Engineer John Scarlett of the space ship Lucillus,' he reported. 'I have the serum you required.'

The women inspected him carefully. They were both young,

attractive with long glossy red brown hair and luminous grey eyes set in regular features. However, there was a rigid austerity in their faces that made them look almost identical. Their faces hinted of a regime of celibacy, poverty and obedience. All concepts that made John uncomfortable.

'You will take it to Llalla the third,' one of the women decided.

She snapped her fingers, and another young woman came forward. She was just as tall, but seemed less austere, her mouth dimpled into a smile, and her blue eyes glowing pleasure and admiration. She had a heavy mane of long golden hair.

'Please come with me,' she said in a husky voice.

John followed her up to the circular ramp and along the glowing antiseptic corridors. He wondered if it was possible that Llalla the third was the Llalla he knew?

The blond-haired girl paused at a door and knocked. It slid open. She winked at John and left. John stepped through into a small office. The black haired girl sitting at the cluttered desk looked up. She looked exactly like how John remembered Llalla, but it was twenty years later. Perhaps Llalla had passed on her striking good looks to a daughter!

'Llalla?' John questioned.

A frown gathered on the clear cut features and the brown eyes inspected him. Then they lightened to the flashing pools of pure gold in the way John remembered.

'It is you, John! I wondered if you were still with the Lucillus.'

John put the satchel down and grinned at her. She stood up and flowed into his arms and he kissed her. She was exactly the same as he remembered, with the almost physical aura of vitality and energy. The long black hair rippled down her back, and her face was smooth and innocent in its young curves.

'We are here a fortnight. Have you some time to spend with me?' he asked with his face in the remembered perfume of her hair. He immediately revised his ideas of choosing newer acquaintances for his recreation.

'It will takes some time to clear this lot.' She gestured at her cluttered desk. 'Why don't you go sailing, and I'll meet you back at the house when I finish.'

John nodded and patted her rump. He must have made some impression for her to remember over twenty years his fascination with the small sailing boats. It was where they had originally met after all. A spectacular collision and a tangled mess of ropes and sails they had to float to the shore before they could disentangle.

There was a spring in his step as he left the temple, and he nodded cheerfully to the two tall women on duty at the entrance. They looked through him with an untroubled detachment.

Llalla's house was as he remembered: a well built stone dome nestled into the side of the cliffs overlooking the ocean. The winding track still led down to the little boat-house. He thought it was steeper and further than he remembered, but the same pleasure came back at the sight of the sleek hulls and the carefully folded sails.

He settled to the delights of sailing. It was easy to ignore the open invitations of the other girls he met. He had something more important on his mind. It was the puzzle of Llalla's inexplicable youthfulness.

All the women on the planet were young and beautiful. It was one of the wonders of the galaxy that you took for granted after a while. Until this trip, he had never seen anyone old. It was a mystery where the Captain had dredged up his fishing companions. They were as wrinkled and gap-toothed, with their sparse white and grey hair as any of their earth counterparts.

There had been rumours that the colonists of Thetis had a longevity process, but it was not a fact that could be proved. Spacemen had nothing better to do on the long hours between planets than to endlessly speculate, enlarge and misinterpret the eerie, odd and unusual customs of the various planets. Most planets had their own collection of distorted rumours and hearsay surrounding some unproven superstition.

All the population of Thetis were handsome and possessed of vital good health. Vital good health meant that the aging processes were not as obvious as in an environment with problems of hostile life forms, poisonous atmosphere, viruses and incorrect diet.

John frowned, and leaned over hard as he tacked around. The oldest men he had seen apart from the Captain's companions were usually in a vigorous middle age. If there was a longevity process, would women, being the vainer sex, take it earlier in life? It did seem logical to assume that a male would prefer to stabilise the longevity process nearer his prime. What man would want to spend a few hundred years looking like a half grown youth?

The again, there was the fact of the old men to be accounted for. Where did they fit into the planet's culture? Were they rejects from the longevity process? Was the longevity just an accumulated genetic thing because of the favourable environment, or was it a deliberate process? Was

there some way he could separate the whispered rumours and speculations from concrete facts?

John got restless, and put away the boat and tricky orange silk sails. Llalla was still enclosed in the third temple. He spent hours drifting in the hovercraft over and around the scattered buildings, staring at the always youthful population. He was a man in the prime of life. It wasn't fair that soon he would have to step down or be pushed aside by a younger, greedier generation.

There were worlds he hadn't explored, and women he hadn't met, and technology he hadn't mastered. At the back of his mind pounded the remorseless reminder. Spacemen are grounded at forty-five years. Captains last until sixty-five, but Captains are insulated and protected on their control decks. Spacemen and women live dangerously, and their reflexes have to be nearly as fast as the ship's computers. Reflexes slow down with age, and radiation accumulates in bodies that are too long in space.

A reprieve from aging, was it possible? Young men and women were flirting and dancing in the amusement parks. There were a few men around in his own age group, but no old men or women. It was a planet of young people.

Some of the girls looked up and waved and smiled, but he ignored them. He was on the track of something indefinitely more desirable than a woman.

The hovercraft left the populated areas behind. John lifted it over the dense forest and jagged mountains. There was untouched wilderness, and then the trees thinned out to be the usual park-like surrounds of a village, but this village had no cone shaped temple rearing up.

Figures strolling in twos on the paths looked up. Some boys wrestling on a patch of green lawn stopped what they were doing, and seeing the markings on the hovercraft jeered and called something he couldn't catch. A cascade of well aimed stones thudded on the underside of the metallic craft.

John spun the hovercraft in a lazy circle to go back. An old man with a fringe of white hair on the edge of his bald skull looked up and spat with a contempt obvious, even from a distance. It was all very puzzling, because of the planet's unblemished reputation for friendliness and courtesy. John shrugged the incident aside and headed for Llalla's dome.

She was home at last, and the dome glowed with her presence. John looked at her fresh beauty with a more clinical eye. Of course the planet had

the secret of longevity, and he was determined to obtain it, as sure as he had a way with women. The subject came up without much angling.

'Sorry I'm a day late, but my grandmother died, and you know how long winded funerals are,' she apologised with a complete absence of sentiment.

'Was she as beautiful as you?' John asked.

Llalla just laughed. 'I don't take after her. She had red hair, big brown eyes and white skin.'

'Was she very old?' John asked after an interval. He didn't want to appear to be probing.

'About five hundred years I think,' Llalla said with a yawn. 'Goodness. I'm tired. We had the vigil last night, but I still had to do my normal clinic. I'll be glad to get some sleep.'

'What did she die of?'

John tried to keep his voice casual, and it was an effort. He moved away from her so she wouldn't be aware of his tremor. Llalla stretched on the bed and shut her eyes.

'Just the usual. She decided she had enough, asked permission, and did a ceremonial fade out.'

The next day they went sailing. John returned to the subject. In another five days they would leave the planet. In ten years when the ship touched down again, he would be a retired fifty, and grounded on his home planet. What good was a longevity process to someone fifty?

'Was your grandmother a doctor too?' he asked. Llalla tacked the orange sails in a sudden swoop that caused him to strain every muscle to sway around with the hull.

'Engineer,' called back Llalla. 'Isn't this fun? I haven't been sailing for ages. What do you think of the new sails?'

'Terrific,' John yelled back, gritting his teeth at the warning ache on his back.

That night he soaked in the hot mineral bath, and Llalla scrubbed his back.

'That's wonderful,' he almost groaned. 'God. I wish I was like you. Don't you ever get tired, Llalla?'

There was silence. She had stopped scrubbing his back. John turned to look at her. Was there a grim amusement in her eyes? She lowered her eyes and blushed. John decided it was imagination and all the steam.

'Would you really like to be like me?' she breathed.

'I would love to.' He put all the sincerity he could into his voice.

'You're an engineer aren't you?'

John nodded, and waited. Llalla looked thoughtful.

'Now that Llalla the first is gone we need another engineer. The elders won't let us recruit. The custom is that the men have to volunteer of their own free will for the longevity, otherwise it doesn't take.'

'What happens if it doesn't take?' John demanded, wondering if there was a grimmer reason for so few elderly men in the society, but Llalla didn't answer his question.

'So many of the engineers are men, and so many men,' she blushed again, 'Are refusing the longevity treatment. They never used to. It's all this men's lib.'

'Is it a long treatment?' John asked. He had four days left.

'No, but you would have to resign your commission.'

John was silent. His career was his life, but without longevity his span of life as a spaceman was finishing. In another five years he would be grounded. Space travel was not for geriatrics.

'I'll resign,' he said, and reached for a towel, avoiding her eyes.

With the longevity process the world was his oyster. The clause in his contract that demanded avoidance of other world's religions, rites and entanglements, physical, intellectual, emotional and psychical didn't really apply this time. The ship wouldn't be back for another twenty years by this planet's time scale, and by then anything could have happened. He could even transfer to some other ship that avoided this corner of the galaxy.

An anxious forty-eight hours went while the temple considered his application. Another ten hours went by as they checked his engineering skills, and gave him interminable IQ tests. It was twenty-four hours before the ship was due to blast off that the instructions came to proceed to the temple.

'You do understand what is involved?' Llalla asked, as she escorted him to the underground and secret operation theatre.

'That it's an operation and I am contracted to the service of the temple until I choose to fade-out.' He kissed her. 'It means, my love, we're going to be able to spend a hell of a lot more time together.'

A faint cloud crossed her face.

'If it is still your desire, my love,' she answered, and kissed him back with an unexpected passion.

John was disappointed at the secrecy of the temple surgeons. He was bathed and cleansed even to the unpleasant enema, and spread out on an operating table with a nasty resemblance to a sacrificial altar.

'You are volunteering to undergo the longevity process of your own free

will?' the masked face beside him asked.

'I am volunteering to undergo the longevity process of my own free will,' he recited, as Llalla had coached him.

It seemed to satisfy the listeners. Someone came forward with a hypodermic. He took one last look at the attractive austere circle of faces, anonymous in masks and theatre gowns, and drifted off into unconsciousness.

When he woke, it was morning, and he was back at Llalla's dome. He had a thick tongue as though he had been drugged, and a slight soreness in his side. He couldn't see or feel anywhere on his body where he had been operated on.

'You all right?' Llalla asked.

'Yeah, but where did they operate?'

'It's a deep injection silly,' she giggled. 'They never open anybody up these days. The instrument has a closed circuit t.v. camera mounted behind its head. They know exactly where they are going. It's only a ten minute job.'

'Why does my mouth feel so foul.'

'It's the drug to keep you knocked out,' Llalla explained as she gave him a colourless drink. 'You have to be kept immobilised until the process takes effect, and it's easier to keep you drugged than strap you down for eight hours.'

John took a long drink and immediately felt better, a lot better. His whole body flooded with a sense of well being and the soreness was gone, his vision cleared, and his mind felt cleaner and sharper.

'After a decent breakfast, what say we go sailing,' he suggested.

'There'll be plenty of time later,' Llalla promised with a smile. 'Right now I have to go back to work, and you're expected to start this morning. There are some repair jobs to be done.'

John went with her to the third temple, and learned that it was now his temple. The guardians greeted him with courtesy and escorted him to the lift that dropped with sickening speed below the ground. Once down he was handed over to the tall golden haired girl.

She dimpled with pleasure at the sight of him. She waited until the lift closed on the austere faces of the guardians, and put her arms around him and kissed him passionately.

'Welcome back,' she breathed in her husky voice.

John kissed her back with enthusiasm, but he felt a fraction uneasy as he stared into the sparkling blue eyes level with his own. Very

tall females were unusual on his home planet. Still, a man was adaptable.

'What about this repair work,' he suggested after a while.

Her name was Derfa, and she was an engineer also. John was almost shocked by the amount of her knowledge, until he remembered she could have more years of experience than her looks suggested. They worked together in the echoing flood lit corridors on the machines that provided the power for the planet. It was another world, and John immersed in the occupation he loved more than women, looked uncomprehending as Derfa repeated her statement it was time to eat.

They caught the lift up, and he emerged blinking in the well lit temple. It was just on sunset. He remembered the ship would be blasting off within the hour. He stared at the force-field thickening up across the arched entrance. It would have to be lifted!

'I'll just see Llalla,' he told Derfa, who pouted but blew him a kiss, and joined the crowds of white clad females streaming to the communal dining rooms.

John raced up the circular ramp that led to Llalla's office. Although the ship wouldn't blast off for another fifty minutes, all ports would be sealed within the next half hour. Once sealed up, they would stay closed. The Captain was not the sort of person to abort his lift-off for the sake of one crew member. Llalla smiled a greeting as she saw him.

'Llalla,' he blurted out. 'I've got to return to the ship.'

Her eyebrows raised and her smile faded. She looked shocked. 'You belong here now, John.'

'Of course.' John's mind was racing as he thought of the force-field across the temple entrance. Even when they were turned off, force-fields took minutes before they dropped enough in power to let you through them. 'I still have to give my resignation verbally, otherwise it won't be accepted.'

Llalla looked thoughtful, but remained silent.

'Don't you understand, Llalla?' He put all the sincerity he could in his voice. 'If I don't, I'm listed as a deserter, and probably shot next time the ship touches down.'

Much to his relief she nodded, and opened a channel on the television screen. John thanked providence for the cultural pattern of a society where a man's word was his bond, and a verbal contract in the presence of witnesses was considered almost sacred. It was one argument the guardians should agree to.

'You have left it a bit late, but that might have been our fault.'

the guardian admitted when she lifted the force-field. 'You have worked a long day on the repairs.'

'I'll come straight back,' John promised, keeping his face very earnest.

Naturally.' A shade of grim amusement crossed the austere face. 'You now belong here.'

John gave Llalla a last kiss, and pelted down the winding ramp, through the archway and hailed a hovercraft. He was free!

'I've got to make the ship inside ten minutes,' he gasped.

The spaceport pulsated to the roar of the engines, and John sprinted for the gantry with its lift leading to the one small cargo port left open. The Captain was bristling with indignation.

'Thirty seconds more, and I would've logged you as a deserter. Get to your post Mister Scarlett.'

John tumbled into the contour couch by his control board. Carman, the second engineer, gave him a sour smile, and handed over the sheaf of figures she was checking.

'Nearly did it this time, Casanova.'

'And you nearly stepped into a pair of boots too big for you,' he retorted.

The sirens shrilling the warning of blast-off sounded through the ship. The screens filled with the velvet blackness of space and the receding green and gold planet hanging like a jewel in it.

Elation swelled inside John, adding to his sense of joyous well being. He had got away with it! He now had longevity and his career. When he finished shift he went to his cabin.

He wasn't tired, but he was sure that the radiant energy surging through him would be noticeable. Of course it was too early for the treatment to show, but his cheeks were pink and his eyes sparkling. He threw his crumpled cap into the corner and inspected his hair. Was it his imagination or were the odd streaks of grey fading?

The weeks, and then the months slid by. They made landfall at first one planet and then another. All the time John felt better and better. The cute biologist left the blonde young boy and moved back into his cabin. He needed less sleep, and had more energy, his brain seemed clearer and retained information more easily.

His new found stamina was tested to the utmost when the ship was caught in the swirling tail of meteor dust. The whole crew worked around their shifts with frantic speed. John gloried in the long sweating back-breaking hours of work.

Other crew members dropped off stupid with fatigue, one by one. He noticed with secret glee that even Carman his second engineer had to drag her dumpy body off, and she was one tough female. Eventually the emergency was over and the damage repaired.

'Still as fresh as a daisy,' one technician marvelled. 'The man doesn't even need a shave.'

John grinned and went off for a clean up, a sleep and a feed in that order. He was whistling absently as he headed back to his cabin after his shower, when a sudden ideas struck him.

It was a puzzling idea. He fingered his smooth chin and tried to remember. When had he shaved last? With so much happening, not just with the meteor dust, but the trouble on the last planet, and the emergency on the planet before that, he had been working and sleeping with very little leisure time to think about anything.

He peered at his face in the mirror. It was a young face, smooth and olive skinned with the pink flushed cheeks of perfect health. His dark eyes were still sparkling under slanting narrow brows. Narrow? He stroked them with his long fingers.

They used to be heavier, and more bushy.

He looked at his hands. They were still the same capable hands he always had, but they were smoother and less knobbly, and there was no black hair left on the joints of each finger or the backs of his hands.

Stricken with a terrible suspicion he pulled off his coverall. He stared at it with distaste. He had just scrubbed and showered, but the clean clothes had black hairs all over them. By God, he was moulting!

The mirror reflected his bewildered face and heavily muscled brown body. He looked down at his chest, decorated with a few scanty hairs. Was it muscle or was there a flabby swelling around his nipples?

The door opened. 'Sleeping are you, Honey?' asked his green-eyed cabin mate.

He grabbed his coverall to hide himself. 'Out you bitch,' he roared.

He lay on his bunk in a brooding fury. Was it because he was overtired, or did the longevity treatment cause loss of body hair? Or perhaps, and he broke into a cold sweat as he thought of it, was there a female hormone in the longevity treatment? His hand crept up to finger the soft swelling around his nipple.

He had a sudden memory of the old man at the isolated Captain's four fishing companions. Five old men among thousands of the popul-

ation on Thetis. What became of the rest of the men as they grew older?

In the quiet cabin, he started to shake. His mind kept evading a conclusion that was lurking in his waiting subconscious. He kept his mind hammering rigidly at the only important point. Was the process reversible?

The weeks slid past. The voyage of the Lucillus settled into placid monotony. Planetfall would be some time in the next ten days. John's young face was sulky and morose, and although he worked like a demon on duty, he was no longer a gregarious crew mate off duty. After each shift he fled to the sanctuary of his cabin.

'Unpleasant bastard these days,' commented the green-eyed biologist who had long since found a more pleasant cabin-mate.

'Yeah,' agreed the pert nursing sister. 'Something must be bugging him. He hasn't made a pass at any of us for over three months.'

Alone in his cabin, John lay on his bed clenching and unclenching his fists. His body was changing. His body hair had rubbed off, and his breasts pushed further and further out. His hips were broadening, and the layer of fat collecting across his buttocks nearly had him weeping.

He could rigidly bind his breasts flat so no one would suspect, but the wider hips were altering his stride. He couldn't help but walk with a willowy swing.

Down in the stabiliser room someone limp-wristed him out of the room to a chorus of low snickers. Not only did the very sight of a female body, and there were plenty flaunted around the ship in the tight coveralls, make him physically sick, but his sex organs were shrinking and atrophying.

It was just before planetfall that it happened. He was bent over inspecting the bases of the stabiliser shafts. A passing technician pinched him on the bottom. He swung around and flattened him with an outraged fury.

The Captain stood watching, and that was unusual. It was not like the Captain to prowl the ship. There was a nasty gleam in his eyes.

'I'll see you in my office, Mister Scarlett,' he ordered.

John followed him up to stand behind the desk, and listen with disbelief.

'You're fired, Mister Scarlett. Carman is the new first engineer.'

'A God-damned woman in my job,' John seethed. 'I appeal, Sir.' The Captain just glared across the desk at him without replying. 'I'm entitled to my rights. I haven't broken any regulations.'

The Captain tapped his finger at the articles of the Company, set in plastiflex under his desk cover, and spoke.

'You've broken your conditions of contract, clause 10, sub-section 11 (a).'

John promptly burst into tears.

'I didn't know,' he wailed. 'And I'm still a better engineer than Carman. It doesn't change that!'

The Captain looked embarrassed and handed him a handkerchief.

'It's not sexism,' he explained. 'Transvestites attract all sorts of cranks and ratbags, and officially you're temple property, and can't be employed by the Company.'

'What will I do?' John sobbed into the Captain's large handkerchief.

'You're contracted to the temple,' the Captain repeated, and waved a hand in dismissal.

John lay in his bunk staring at the ceiling. The Captain came in with two orderlies.

'Sorry son,' he said mildly.

The orderlies put on the strait jacket. John fought, but they knew what they were doing. They pushed an injection into him, and went out, closing the door softly.

'What was that for? Sir.' John snarled, straining against the canvas folds and resisting the temptation to start weeping again.

'The logical thing in your condition is suicide.'

'Yeah,' John agreed morosely.

'The temple guardians will claim damages against the Company if you do. You are our responsibility until I can get you shipped back to Thetis in one piece.'

'In one piece!' John howled.

'We'll do some tests,' the Captain soothed.

The Captain visited a few days later. John's hair was growing. It was a glossy tousled black, clinging around his ears and neck, and his huge dark eyes were haunted and desperate. He blinked the tears away from the long curling lashes and tried to grin. It came out as a tremulous dimpled smile.

The Captain shifted uneasily and avoided looking at the deep breasts straining against the strait jacket.

'It's not reversible. Biologically you're a male, but they've implanted something. A parasitic tissue flooding something through your system. Your body is fooled into thinking you're a nubile female, hormones and glands and cells keep adapting to the messages they are getting. It's what's reversing the aging. Interesting really, the longevity is a female process, and a male body adjusts by turning female.'

'Operate,' John begged through dry lips.

The Captain shook his head. 'By the time we traced and cut out whatever is growing right through your innards you wouldn't survive. You're

not the first to land on Thetis, you know.'

'I don't want to survive,' John whispered.

The Captain shrugged and left the cabin. He was a humane man, but he was also the Company servant. The ex John Scarlett First Engineer would be kept under sedation until he was delivered back to Thetis. The guardians would probably brainwash him into acceptance of his femininity. They had their techniques. After all, they did it all the time.

The Captain's mind lingered on his fishing companions on Thetis. Four argumentative fishermen of integrity. The Captain wondered how the others like them on Thetis were managing. Men were prepared to ignore longevity with its fifty per cent risk of death, and to accept the option of remaining male and ageing.

He strolled back to his office to make out his usual disapproving report on Thetis. Not that the Company would be able to be talked out of its profitable trade with Thetis because of the occasional drain of highly qualified crew members. As the Guardians smugly pointed out, the men had always "of their own free will, volunteered for the process".

The Captain sat down and glared at his inoffensive dictaphone. Hundreds of spacemen enjoyed the hospitality of Thetis without being affected by contact. How did the Guardians manage to set the highly qualified spacemen they required so effortlessly, and without losing a single life in the process?

Was it a coincidence that it was only those crew members who fancied they had a way with women who were seduced into defecting? Did they have a latent feminine streak that attracted and accelerated a safe process of transition or were the highly qualified just plain stupid anyway?

The Captain shrugged. A female dominated society was unpredictable anyway. It was something he would never be certain about. He had managed to escape Thetis at seventeen. He started dictating. Fortunately he had never been cursed with an urge for female company, or a way with women. His pleasures were fishing with the few friends of his childhood who still survived.

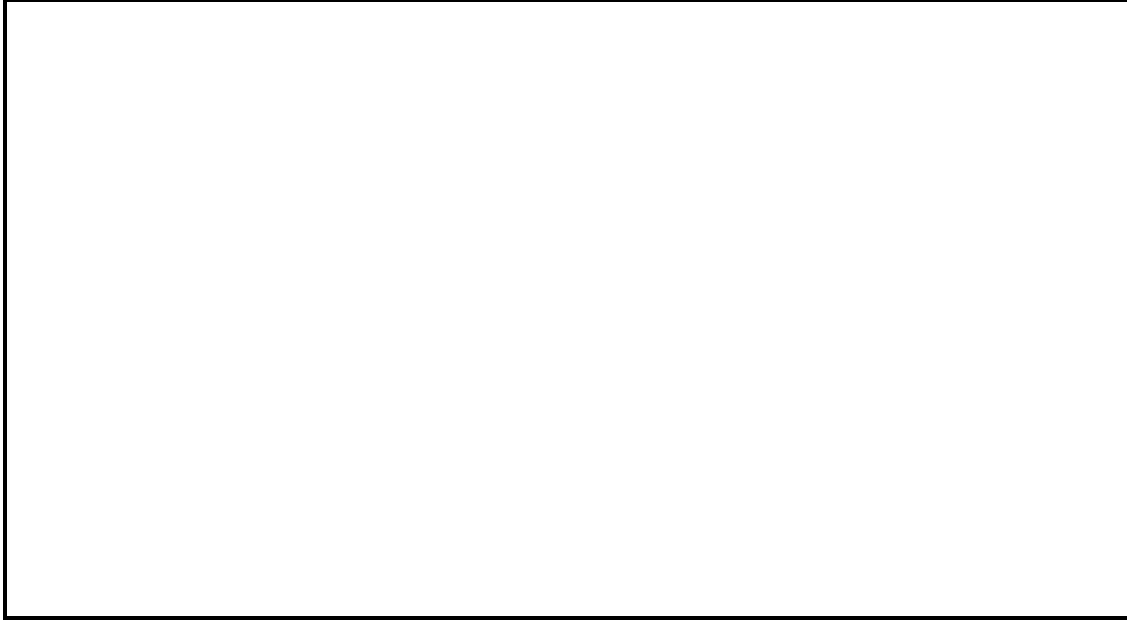
In Thetis a way with women too often led into the ultimate in empathy, the inevitable transformation into a female with a way with men.

- c -

THE END

VOLGACON! VOLGACON!

By Ron Clarke



It was roughly two years ago that Boris Zavgorodny and Igor Tolocnicou mentioned in correspondence to me that they were planning a convention in Russia. Early in 1990 they suggested that I and Susan come over. In March 1990 Igor mentioned that he and Boris agreed to invite me as a Guest of Honour. In a letter from Boris dated May 1990 on an earlier Volgacon letterhead he confirmed the invitation, and in a June 1990 letter Igor mentioned that the name of the project was Volgacon 91.

Throughout all this I was thinking: this sounds good, I had better start saving for the trip. It wasn't till March 1991 that it hit me I had better start planning something concrete when I received a letter from Igor with details of who to contact after I had flight details.

I received two letters from Atom, an Association of Creative Unions, in April inviting me to Volgacon as a Guest of Honour and stating they would pay my expenses at the con. One was in English the other in Russian. After receiving these I

wrote to Igor saying, yes, I would be going and he wrote back saying, good, and how about a 12 page report on Australian SF and fandom?

I went along to a local travel agent in Sydney in June and provisionally booked my flights. Igor had invited me over for a month, all expenses paid, but I didn't like to sponge on fans I had never met for that length of time, so I settled for two weeks - one week at Volgacon, the other week travelling around.

At about this time I thought, Ok, I've done about all I can for the time being, and let things ride till the 18th of June, when I confirmed my flights and paid for them on the 25th July and received my air ticket on the 29th of July. On the 29th of July I applied for a visa to visit the USSR, including the letter from Atom. The visa application was supposed to take 14 days to process. On day 12 I got a phone call at work from the Consulate of the USSR - my visa application had been rejected - the letter from Atom was not enough. There ensued about four early morning (3 am) phone calls and one telex to

the USSR. It being impossible to telephone Volgograd, I made my contact Michael Gakov, a translator in Moscow. I phoned him and he phoned Volgograd. He thought it strange that the Europeans didn't have any trouble getting a visa. Sure, I said, but I am.

The next thing, in the mail I received a lettergram from the Executive Committee of the Volgograd City Council, inviting me to visit Volgograd from 1 to 30 September 1991 to take part in the meeting of SF writers and Fans and my expenses would be paid by Atom. It was signed by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Volgograd City Council. With this in hand I visited the Visa Section of the USSR Consulate and showed it to the officer concerned. He took it away and returned ten minutes later: "Mr Clarke, your visa will be ready in five minutes." It actually took fifteen, but who was complaining?

In late August I purchased a Samsung compact camera with all the fiddlybits as I was determined that I would have good photographs to go with the article I was going to do on my trip. I also bought nine reels of film for it, a bottle of whisky each for Boris and Igor and a carton of US Marlboro cigarettes. I had my suitcases packed several days before "D" day, which was the 6th September, 1991.

* * *

The alarm went off at 3.30 am on Friday the 6th of September, 1991 and Susan and I got up and had a shower and a quick breakfast. I had packed the last things the night before and after breakfast I packed the Suzuki Alto. We left home for the 1.5 hour drive to the airport - 80 km away - at 4.45 am. After a easy drive through Sydney's suburbs we reached Sydney Kingsford Smith airport at 6.20 am. We had plenty of time before the plane left and Susan and I sat down and I had a glass of orange juice and Susan had a cup of coffee and a pastry. I booked my one large bag into the system and took my cabin bag through Immigration and into the holding lounge. Susan left as she had to commence work at Penrith at 8.30.

The Qantas 747 left on time at 8.45 am. The weather was good, though the ground was misty, and for most of the trip to Singapore we cruised at 10,000 metres and 970 kmph. The food was excellent and the movie watchable. We reached Singapore at 2.20 pm Singapore time, ahead of schedule.

There was a 4.5 hour wait for the Aeroflot connection, so I sat with a group of Russians who were going home on the same flight. I bought a

hot pastry from a shop in the enormous transit lounge - it was one of two such and each served over 100 aircraft bays.

We boarded the Aeroflot plane at 6.45 pm. It was an Ilyushin IL-62, with four engines on the tail - two on either side. When the crew sealed the doors, condensing air seemed to boil out of the fluorescent lights along the cabin roof of the aircraft. I didn't think the flight too bad - the food was good, though the cabin was spartan - no inflight movies.

The flight stopped to refuel at Dubai airport and I spent an hour walking around the duty free shops, looking at the gold coated cameras and brassware. After landing at Moscow International Airport at 5.30 am I waited till 7am in a hardly moving line. There was only one line open and Customs was processing one person and their mountain of luggage about once every twenty minutes. I managed to shortcut the procedure and on going through the gate met three young Russians in their twenties, one of whom was holding a small sign saying "Volgacon". They grabbed my bags and showed me out into the 3 degrees C morning to the car-park. We all climbed into the small sedan - a well used sedan, a typical fan's car - and drove off.

We were to go to meet one of the prominent Moscow fans, Alexi Byezoogly. The day was cold and mostly fine as we drove through the streets of Moscow. The fans pointed out some of the landmarks - including Red Square and some banners and posters which were left over from an Afghanistan demonstration some days earlier.

The three dropped me off at Alexi's ground floor flat and he introduced me to his wife Olga and son Denis. Denis was avidly watching some videotaped cartoons and while Alexi went off to meet someone, Olga gave me a meal and several cups of tea. It was around this time that I noticed that the sore throat I had in Sydney which had me coughing in the last few hours of the flight about every ten minutes, had gotten worse and as well, I was feeling some jet lag.

Olga had some idea of how I felt and let me sit down, sipping tea, eating biscuits and home-made jam and watching the video I brought from Australia of some early Australian cons (1966 to 1971). I was surprised that Alexi had a Pal video. It wasn't until I got back to Australia with two video tapes that Igor Toloconnicou had given me of Volgacon and they played ok on our VHS machine that I realised that Pal and Seacam are compatible. After that I watched some cartoons and Denis showed me some of his dinosaurs.

Alexi arrived back and at 1pm, after gathering up my bags, we went by car to meet Michael Gakov, who was to take me to Volgograd by train. I met Michael at a street corner and we walked to his flat - in this walk I found out just how heavy my bags were. I also saw the lack of maintenance that characterises Soviet buildings - holes in the footpaths and weedy lots.

After going up in a lift and unlocking numerous doors Michael opened his apartment door and introduced me to his smiling wife, Natasha. Michael then, after I had slipped off my shoes and donned slippers, showed me their small flat, his books lining the wall and the pile of them on the floor with slips of paper marking pages for his upcoming book. After I had a quick shower Natasha served a substantial hot lunch - cooked on a microwave oven - and after a rest Michael said goodbye to Natasha and we both hefted our bags to the Country station via bus and Metro.

Reaching the station we climbed into the green painted carriage and dumped our bags in the two-person sleeper compartment. While I settled down Michael visited the next compartment where three other Russians who were also going to Volgacon were sitting. I later met Mila, Edna and Boris, though because they didn't speak any English (I spoke no Russian) we couldn't converse at all.

The sleeping trains were very much like the same in Australia - vinyl wood with small compartments, with a long corridor on the outside, and pulled by diesel engines. It was here that I first met the lack of toilet paper in public amenities - luckily one of the blokes in my office at work had mentioned this and said to take a full pack of facial tissues - they doubled for several jobs.

* * *

The journey took from 3pm on the 7th September till 2 pm on the 8th - which was actually 24 hours because of time zones. I was coughing all the way. Most of the time I stayed in the compartment I shared with Michael and watched the countryside roll by. It was very much like Australia - flat, green/yellow and with not many people visible. What was different was the trees - birch and aspen - and the villages. Some were built roughly of wood, some were painted deep blues, greens and brown, some were grey and had steep galvanised iron rooves and some were painted white. All were in different styles, but all were square. Some had the US barn-like rooves.

We were met at Volgograd Central Station by Tatijna Pridannikova who, after we looked around the thriving

small fruit and snack market, directed us to a red bus as she looked for any other fans who had arrived. Eventually we set off for the Hotel Tourist, which was on the banks of the Volga river - about 20 minutes drive out from the Centre of the city. Volgograd is a long and narrow city, stretching about 100 kilometres along the Volga River.

Arriving at the Reception area, we filled in our hotel forms and met the three translators - Masha, Olga and Anna. All were dressed quite demurely, Masha in jeans and blouse, Olga in a bright red dress offsetting her blonde hair, and Anna in blouse and skirt. I was shown to my room on the eighth floor and told that lunch was then on. I hurried down to the main dining hall and as I was starting lunch I was told that the opening ceremony was starting in ten minutes, at 3 pm.

The opening ceremony was very enthusiastic, with a compere introducing the foreign guests and a chorus singing the Volgacon song. There was then a short skit, followed by Boris Zavgorodny giving the introduction. The ceremony ended with the whole audience standing up, joining hands and singing the Volgacon song.

After the ceremony was over I went up to my room to unpack. There was a knock on my door and Masha Pesikova, the translator in charge of all the foreigners, entered with a man in tow. I had told her of my cough and "ticklish throat" when I saw her at lunch. She had brought a doctor who worked for Atom. After examining me he said I had bronchitis. He gave me some tea and herbs to drink and they left, he to get me some antibiotics.

Dinner was at 7 pm. The doctor came to the door to take me to dinner: "Hurry," he said. Dinner was nearly over - I had not changed my watch from Moscow time, Volgograd time being one hour different.

Dinner was up in a gallery in the dining room - some of the foreign guests, myself included, tried to eat down stairs with the other fans, but we were firmly but politely shown the stairs. Foreign guests ate upstairs. The food was good, unlike most con food - at one point I said this to a Russian fan - and he said "You should come and eat the food downstairs!"

After dinner I returned to my room and lay down, feeling tired. Shortly after I entered the doctor returned with Masha, and gave me two types of antibiotic tablets and a mustard poultice on my back. After lying on my back for twenty minutes feeling it getting hotter and stinging, I was relieved to have them taken off, leaving the skin a swollen

red. It seemed to work; over the next few days, my sore throat grew less, though my cough persisted.

I had a good night's sleep at last - I had only dozed on the train - and rose to a sunny day - the previous afternoon it had rained.

* * *

At breakfast the next morning, the 9th, I met Friedel Wahren from the West German publishing house Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, Eric Simon, a writer and translator from former East Germany and Ivailo Roumev from Bulgaria. Later US authors Chris Stasheff, Terry Bisson and Paul Park turned up, along with Terry's partner Judy Jrusen. Across from us was author Jim Hogan from Ireland and Chris Chivers, president of the Birmingham (England) SF Group and a Japanese fan, whose name I never did get. Masha came in later with a harried look that intensified as the con progressed, followed by Olga, who went off to see what was keeping the next serve of breakfast.

At 10am there was a Reports Presentation in the Main Hall from sf groups half-way through which I was called up to the stage to give a talk on Australian SF. I gave a short history of Australian fandom, the cons staged and mentioned all the Australian SF authors I could think of, leading off with A Bertram Chandler. Of course I had left my notes in my room..

After my talk the main topics were the difference between Soviet and US SF. There was mention of a "New Wave" in Soviet SF. The point was made by the US guests that the "New Wave" in US writing was 1967-1973.

After the panel I looked around the rego desk - they had a huckster's section where people were selling paperbacks and magazines, then went to my room for another antibiotic. At the 2pm lunch I spoke to the young fan Valerii Ponomariov, who wanted to know what we had had for lunch the previous day when the foreign guests were sent upstairs. After discussing this we found that the fans downstairs had received a different meal - no ice-cream, for instance.

At my table for lunch were fans from Japan, Bulgaria, United Germany and myself. After lunch at 3 pm Chris Stasheff, Larry McCaffrey, Masha Pesikova and Jim Hogan were on a "talk to the audience" panel where the fans asked questions. There was general discussion on SF genres in the US scene, including science fantasy which Stasheff says he writes, sword and sorcery, "hard" SF and others. McCaffrey spoke on Feminist SF and its growing popularity in the USA. Hogan spoke about his novel, THE GENESIS MACHINE and the use of hyperspace and how some of his books, published several years ago, preceded scientific research in the direction the novels went. He then went on to talk of formula writing and Stasheff brought up Regency Romances as an example of how the author had to manipulate the events in a fairly rigid framework.

The Soviet fans asked many probing questions and all seemed pleased with the panel results.

Later at the 7pm dinner Terry Bisson and the others at my table discussed the language difficulties noted by the translators. Masha seemed bemused by the using of the word "sin" in an SF context. She also had not heard of the children's books using "painting by numbers".

After dinner as we were walking by rego, Jim Hogan was bailed up by an "inventor" who thought Jim could give him a lead into contact with an software manufacturer for his (unwritten) program for generating ideas for stories. Jim had been a computer salesman before writing full time. It took what seemed like half an hour for Anna (the other translator) to get rid of him.

Shortly after that I went off to bed, as I was still feeling extremely tired. The doctor came and applied more mustard poultices to my back and Igor Toloconnicou turned up to confirm my fanzine talk the next day. I got to bed about 11pm.

* * *

I had a good night's sleep and went down to the 9am breakfast, which consisted of tomatoes, melon juice, tea/coffee and scrambled egg, cooked flat with a browned top. There was joking conversation with Chris Chivers and Jim Hogan, both of whom were telling multi-cultural jokes. They were the same jokes told world wide, with different nationalities as the fall guys. After breakfast I was supposed to have a creative meeting with readers - but the room was locked. After about twenty minutes Boris arrived with a key, and after placing a note on the notice board, about 20 fans turned up. I answered questions about producing fanzines and why. Most of the fans in the audience were fanzine fans, from all over the USSR. I showed around covers of Australian fanzines, including ASFR, SFR, ETHEL THE AARDVARK and THE MENTOR. The talk went over well, with many questions.

After this was lunch, which was soup, lamb, tomatoes, and a pastry for desert. After lunch Professor McCaffrey gave a two hour talk on Cyberpunk and its connections with Post-Modernism, and Virtual Reality. Masha did a sterling job keeping up with the technical terms, with help from the audience. Apparently she had to translate word for word, and I'm not sure if some of the complex ideas got across.

After the talk, I met with the editors of the Kiev fanzine CHERNOBYLIZATION. (I came home with many Soviet SF fanzines (and SF magazines and books), some of whose covers are reproduced in this article). I also met Alexandre Nikolaenko, the fan who saw my address in an issue of the Soviet magazine TEKHNIKA MODLOJOZHI back in the early 1980s and gave it to Boris Zavgorodny who started the correspondence with me that eventually brought me to Volgacon.

Dinner was baked chicken - and very nicely cooked. All the meals were served hot and were delicious. At 8.30 that night all the foreign guests were taken by car to a party at Atom's office. The Atom executives were there: Yuri Baldayev and Margaret Kolobova and others. There was fresh red and black caviar and ham and tomatoes on thin bread. 67 year old Georgian brandy was served (very smooth!) and tea and coffee later. The party went on to 11.30 pm and was very well received by the guests. I met several Soviet SF authors and publishers and got to know the other guests better. Everyone had an excellent night.

When I got back to my room I contacted the doctor, as ordered, who had a room in the hotel, and he placed another set of poultices on my back.

* * *

With the sun streaming through the window facing the Volga, the next morning's (Wednesday's) breakfast went over well. After it everyone set out at 11 am in two busses to visit a "folk restaurant". This was a replica Cossack village, complete with Cossacks in national dress. We wandered through the village and the Cossacks sang songs and gave the foreigners a certificate which pledged the Cossack's aid in any future distress. The busses then drove about 100 metres to the restaurant - a very large ediface, and we had a full and leisurely lunch of tomatoes and ham, then mutton soup.

This was followed by chicken and vegetables, then by a pancake-like affair which was covered in honey. It was filling - and excellent. Of course vodka, as well as fruit juices and wine was served with the meal.

In the latter part of the meal one of the Russians announced he was a "Russian nobleman" and proposed a toast to "The Emperor" - one of the Romanoffs. Other fans heckled him and when he started singing the old Imperial song, they started singing the Russian national anthem.

At 2pm we left on the 2 hour, 73 km trip back to Volgograd, during which several of the drunk Russian fans tried to get the Americans and Chris Chivers to join them in a drink. It was a boisterous trip home to the hotel.

We had a late dinner at 7.30 pm. I then had a short talk with Efin (Eric) Sur, Editor-In-Chief of MEGA magazine about me doing an article on Australian SF and its history. He also invited me to see him if I managed to get to Minsk on my trip.

The doctor didn't turn up that night - I found out later I was apparently supposed to ring him. I didn't.

* * *

At breakfast a money changer sidled up and asked me if I wanted to change dollars to roubles. Olga came up and after some animated conversation, he left. After breakfast I went to my room for a rest.

Lunch was at 1pm, the auction and exhibitions being put off till 6pm. Judy Jrusen gave me her portion also and said she wasn't going on the cruise coming up later that day. Masha was running around trying to get everyone to the early lunch on time so we could leave for the boat cruise. She was looking more and more tired.

The boat cruise had been put forward to 1.30 pm and as we walked out of the hotel we passed a truckload of watermelons and beer being loaded from the hotel for the cruise. After a short bus ride the group arrived at Pier 13 and went on board. The ship cruised for several hours up and down a stretch of the Volga, and then it turned and ran its bow up onto the shore of the large island (several kilometres long) in the centre of the river. A gangway was lowered and we all got off to explore. The two Germans and I went off together in the same direction.

After about a half hour tramping over the sand-dunes we found Masha's group sitting on the ground on the way back, and joined them. There was much singing, accompanied by a guitar,

which was passed around by the singers. Beer was in plenty and later Masha went to the ship and got snacks and we had a cheerful dinner, though with sticky fingers.

After many songs, with the failing light the ship's horn summoned us back. With everyone back on board they moved out from the shore and started cruising again. After an hour and a half of this, the Volgacon organisers announced the Miss Volgacon competition. The five women entrants had been previously given a white bed sheet and asked to make a costume out of it. They had to parade, recognise SF quotes, name as many SF authors as they could, say why they read SF and what their costume represented. All of the women were beautiful and all received ovations. There were four thousand voting tickets given out among the 300 fans on the boat and thus the result couldn't be given until the banquet the next night.

After the competition it was nearly dark and there was a disco with pulsing lights. I had several dances with Mavluda Ibrahimova from Tashkent, until we got tired and went below decks where we saw the last 15 minutes of OMEN 3, which was followed by ROBOTECH, in Russian.

The ship pulled alongside the pier at 11.30 pm and we got back to the hotel at 12 pm. Some of the teenage Soviet fans were sick from the beer.

* * *

I woke at 8 am on Friday (the 13th) after a good sleep - having taken a Mercendol for my headache.

I had a shower and went down to breakfast. I arranged with Chris Chivers to walk that morning to the "Defending Motherland" monument to take photos. As we walked through the rego area a TV crew was taking background scenes (fans reading books and selling zines, etc).

It was a warm, though overcast, day as we walked up to the main road, across it, up the long flight of steps leading up the hill, down over the railway line (as the bridge was being repaired) and up more steps, then along the tree lined path to the large Pool of Remembrance. On the hill the statue is built on, some 70,000 Russians died in WWII defending it from the Germans. We reached it at 11 am, and we hurried to the tunnel into the hill as we had heard that the changing of the guard took place on the hour. As we strode up the tunnel we heard the stomping of the guard and we emerged into the large chamber holding the eternal flame as the six guards were high-stepping up the sloping path leading to the large

archway showing daylight. The chamber was enormous, with the hand holding the flaming torch rising from a polished marble floor.

After the guards had gone we went through to the enormous statue of the woman with the sword erect and took numerous photos. The statue was certainly large - there was a lift in the sword and windows could be seen in its blade. Unfortunately it was closed to the public. We walked back to the hotel, still sweating, but the wind rose and by the time we got back we were hurrying inside. I had a quick wash in my room - there was no hot water for a shower - and had a rest before lunch.

Igor Toloconnicou hailed me and asked which cities I wanted to visit after the con. I said "Minsk". He took my passport and Soviet visa for endorsement.

After lunch we attended the "Writers, Editors and Publishers" panel - and spent half an hour trying to get into the hall by jemmying the door - it was locked. Then someone turned up with the key. The panel consisted of Chris Chivers, Chris Stasheff, and Larry McCaffrey, with Michael Gakov, and later Anna, translating. There were general questions from the audience, but the following talk centred on the fact that Soviet SF writers needed to get an agent to sell their works, as the Western publishers work through agents. In fact the Western authors said that the Soviet writers need to get an agent there in the USSR, who would then contact an agent overseas.

After the panel discussion there was a break from 5.30 pm to 8 pm - the banquet had been put back. (All through the convention all the foreign guests commented on how Volgacon was like a Western con. The only thing which ran on time was the opening ceremony).

I was invited to a room party with Paul Park, Judy Jrusen, Terry Bisson, the Russian translator Sasha, Michael Gakov, and others.

Later at the banquet all the convention attendees ate together in the main dining hall. There was a small display of SF paintings. At my table there was Terry Bisson, Masha - whose duties were over and who was drinking vodka and was determined to get "shit-faced drunk". She was so tired the drink hit her fast and she retired early. Igor came and sat down and joined in the conversation.

Boris Zavgorodny introduced the sponsors of the convention, who were mostly publishers: "Ismerenie" from St Petersburg, "Eridan" from Minsk, "Asmadei" from Moscow, "Avesta" from Chelyadisk, "Yumi" from Novochoerkassk, "Daimon" from Dnepropetrovsk, "Ruskoe Kino" from Moscow, "Haiteh" from Odessa, "Vtompf" from Tiraspol, "Renessans" from Alma-Ata and "Atom" from Volgograd. He then introduced the winner of "Miss Volgacon" - Valeria. Illa Tiug, who came second, was married with two kids. There was a short dance by the organisers and then an auction of some tee shirts and one painting. The rest of the time was spent talking among the guests.

Several hours later the dancing commenced. When this started at 11 pm I went to bed.

* * *

Saturday the 14th dawned dry and warm. Breakfast was three thin slices of salami-like sausage on a plate with one tomato. There was also bread, cheese and apple juice. Seated at my table was Chris Chivers, Chris

Stasheff, Masha and myself. Mash was very quiet during breakfast. Later she left the table and came back with passports - she gave me mine back, along with my visa stamped for Minsk. About half the foreign guests were leaving today and were getting their things together. Some had already left.

On the way up to my 8th floor room there were six people in the lift - the limit was five. So Chris Chivers did what the Russians used to do when the lift refused to leave - leaned back on the wall and pushed the opposite wall with his feet. The lift started up again.

There were three lifts - one went all stops, the other two alternated - 1,3,5,7 etc and 1,2,4,6,8 etc. I usually used the stairs going down. There was a char lady on my floor who had a tea urn simmering and gave hot water and tea when asked. As a guest left their room to go downstairs they were supposed to hand their key (which was attached to a large aluminium cylinder about 6 cms long) to her to put in a little upright case on her desk.

I took the last Amoxyl tablet. I still had a "loose" cough, but my throat still tickled in air-conditioning.

Larry McCaffrey, Anna Prokofieva (the other blonde translator), Chris Chivers and I left for Volgograd city at 11 am, after dragging Larry away from an interview with a fan. We walked up alongside the two 20 year old apartment buildings to the light rail station on one of the main roads out of Volgograd. Anna gave us some of her tickets (they were 15 Kopeks a journey, about .5c US) and after we reached the city proper we went past 3 stations in the underground. When we emerged the sun was out but the wind was cold.

We walked down to the Volga river to a museum - one of the bombed-out buildings left from WWII when the city was flattened by the "fascists". Also on display were aircraft, guns and tanks. The planes had had no maintenance and were falling to bits.

After climbing over the tanks for a closer look, we walked up to "the best restaurant in Volgograd". It was a Chinese restaurant and was a hard currency restaurant - so the ordinary Russians didn't attend. We ordered mixed dishes. After we consumed several drinks of beer and coke they brought a pork dish, a beef dish, a vegetable dish and a lamb dish. When Larry asked where was the rice, the waitress replied they didn't have any. Everyone at the table laughed. This was typical of Soviet Russia. After the meal Larry commented that the only authentic Chinese thing in the meal was the

sesame sauce, which was served in a small china tea pot.

The bill came to almost US\$40, which included about 8 cans of beer, which were about US\$2.20 each. When Larry bought some cigarettes at the bar, they were also about US\$2.20 a pack. Both the beer - Carlsberg - and the cigarettes - Salem - were imported.

We then walked around the city and then Larry and Anna went back to the hotel by train. There was a "Festival of Volgograd" and one of the main streets was closed off. People were selling clothes, vegetables, onions, trinkets, flour, etc out of the back of trucks. I don't know if this was the usual Saturday thing, or if it was because of the Festival.

Chris and I arrived back at the hotel and commented how quiet it was - most of the fans had departed for home by this time. As I walked around the foyer after having a wash in my room I met Judy and Terry. They said they would be leaving the hotel at 6 am the following morning so I had a coffee in their room and discussed the convention and its points of similarity with Western Conventions. Apparently Volgacon was considered by the Soviets as the first "Western" style convention, with panels, fancy dress, banquet and visiting guests talking with fans. Most Soviet conventions were planned about two months ahead, were held over a weekend and had hard drinking both day and night, with possibly an awards presentation at some point during the day. Volgacon, of course, went for a week and sometimes had several strands of programming.

At 3pm we went down to lunch. There was a wedding with loud music in the upstairs level, so we had lunch downstairs.

We didn't linger over lunch - the music was very loud. I spoke to Igor about where I was going after the con finished - he said he and I would be flying to Minsk, but that the Aeroflot office didn't open until Monday to let us book our tickets. Since I was flying out of Moscow for Australia the following Sunday, this didn't give us much time. I told him I had nothing to do till then and he said he would look into getting something organised.

Things were very quiet after the 8 pm dinner and I went to bed after it. At about 9.30 pm Vladimir Larionov, the young bearded Russian who was nearly never sober, knocked on my room door and invited me up to see Boris Zavgorodny who "had been drinking vodka, but would be awake in an hour or so".

There was just enough space in Room 905 for one more person - Boris was asleep on the other half of the

bed - and I joined the other eight. The fans there were Alexandre Sudozovitch, Vladimir Larionov, Nikiushina Ludmila, Alexandre Olensenko, Vladimir Magnitogorsk, Nikolenko Titarpol, Vladimir Vasilyev, one other and myself. Several fans came in and left after a short time, including Tatajna Pridannikova.

Discussions ranged over many subjects: fanzines, prozines, the various fandoms in the various Soviet cities and in Czechoslovakia. Throughout I sipped from a bottle of beer. I had given up saying I didn't drink, but I had found that the beer didn't upset my stomach or give me a hangover the next day if I took it easy. Various fans handed around snacks of fish, sausage, cheese and bread. Alexandre Nikolaenko (the fan who had given my address to Boris) was there and I gave him the Australian and Singapore coins I had.

When I left the party much later Boris Zavgorodny was still asleep. I got back into bed and was woken at 1 am by Igor Tolocnicou to say he had been trying to contact me to get my large suitcase which I had been trying to get someone to take to Moscow, as I didn't want to drag it along to Minsk. I repacked it and Igor took it with him.

* * *

I awoke to the sound of crows (the only birds I saw in Russia were crows, doves and sparrows and the animals were cats and the occasional dog) and, after a shower, went down to breakfast at 9 am. I was the only one there. The hotel had laid out breakfasts for about eight on two tables.

Halfway through it Olga came in with another fan who spoke a little English who asked if I was staying for lunch. I said it was up to Igor. Boris Zavgorodny later came up and also asked me what I was doing. I told him the same thing.

I packed up the remainder of my belongings and sat reading. The hotel rooms were quite ordinary. Mine had two beds (the room the party had been in had only one bed, and was smaller), a B&W tv which picked up 1.5 channels, one of which showed hockey most of the time, and an empty fridge. The hotel was air-conditioned. The hot water seemed to work only in the mornings, but then this was the same all over Russia that I travelled.

At lunch the only other persons present in the gallery was Ivailo Roumev, the Bulgarian fan, and Olga. After lunch Boris Zavgorodny came up and we went back to the party in room 905. I stayed there with Boris, Igor, Tatijna and the rest until 5 pm when I

went to my room, picked up my bags, locked the door, gave the key for the last time to the char lady and joined Boris, Igor, Sasha and Ivailo to go to Boris' flat by light rail and trolley bus.

Boris' flat consisted of only one room in a two room apartment (the other room was taken by a woman and her daughter and large dog) plus a short corridor and kitchen and bathroom/toilet. Books lined four walls two deep and a double-bed mattress filled the remainder of the floor. Outside the bedroom was a short corridor packed with coats and next door was the kitchen with a table with Boris' two goldfish tanks, at which he also wrote and studied.

We spent the next three hours drinking beer and vodka, eating corn-on-the-cob and stewed meat, and

talking and watching a video of an earlier 1991 St Petersburg con. Sasha, Igor and I left for the train at 9 pm on which Igor's father met us, dropping off Igor's 3 year old daughter, Mary. The carriage had wooden slat seats which were quite wide, and many broken windows

Igor's wife, Masha, met us at the unlit station and we walked through the dark streets and parks (hardly any street lights) to their apartment building. Igor showed me around their quite large apartment while Masha heated rice and meat and made tea for supper, which Igor and I got stuck into. After the supper Igor and I stayed up till 1 am talking about publishing and agencies and I eventually went to bed in a fold-out divan in their living room.

(Continued next issue)

Voyage from the City of the Sun to Worlds Underground

by Andrew Darlington

20/8/1977
Earth separates
Voyager 2
at 25,000 mph

Derek is 18
predominately male, but
with occasional doubts,
indolent, evasive,
growing distancaes...

Jupiter: 9/7/1979
his scan-platforms tilt
at a slender ring
held in tidal gravity,
his eyes drink
Io's startle of
sulphur volcanoes, while
hunting chrysanthemums
of magma he hears
Mozart, birdsong,
a baby crying.

He's lost,
often adrift
between Mars
and Manchester

Saturn: 25/8/1981
there's debris within
the motion of moons,
10,000 strands of
braided satellites,
a carnage of scan-patterns
pulse weakening signals that
take 1hr 25mins to reach
him,
voices carry greetings
in sixty languages
through his spinal column,
the scars of Mimas glint as

he drifts over winter moons,
breathing Titan's
nitrogen air 200 below zero

He's stick-insect thin,
white face, acne giving
him a lunar aspect,

occluding by a greasy
black ellipse of hair,
dreams darkening

Uranus: 24/1/1986
complex magnetic fields throb,
weave veins of zonal laceration
through a single anthracite ring
as he watches
Oberona nd Titania
shatter and re-form

he waits for something
vast to occur,
no point expending
energy unnecessary
exertion until it does

Neptune: 25/8/1989
a 4hr signal
a 2,800 millionmile
separation. Derek is 30,
travelling at 60,000 mph
feeding low over
Triton's methane ice,
its iridescent chill
slipping beneath his skin,
silent storms of
700 mph cyclones
race behind his retina

as the Pakistani girl
in the corner shop
smiles at him

20/8/2017
beyond gravity's rim,
the heliopause,
Voyager 2 accelerating
to 65,000 mph after
4.400 million miles

Derek separates,
smiles back
to Earth

each guessing
at unimaginable
connections
to come

An Open Letter From The Paranoid Android

Dear Sasha,

On behalf of the Volgacon Escape Committee I must congratulate you on bringing the U.S.S.R. into the real world. The last seven days have been an education to us from the free worlds of fandom, and we would like to congratulate you and welcome you to fandom in general. As you have been able to withstand the "pundays" of James P. Hogen, (he of INHERIT THE STARS, ENDGAME ENIGMA, THE PROTEUS OPERATION fame) you are gaining the resilience of a true Science Fiction addict.

The reserves of unpublished novels and short stories in the ex-Eastern block must be vast due to the repression of the seriously bad non-fans that have held the reins of power for so long, and when possible you must come to see how a convention is run in the West, but I beg you not to fly Aeroflot as the pilots seem intent on attending a Kamikaze reunion, and we would prefer you to be reasonably sane and not due for a rest in a Siberian holiday camp.

We found the food, after many hours searching, wholesome and tasty, but 300 calories a day does not let you do any serious drinking, that is if you can find the beer. Even Chris Stasheff would wish that his Warlock series could conjure up a decent steak, and we have been worried that his loss of weight would let him fall down one of the many open manholes in the road.

When we were able to open the convention hall we were able to participate in the numerous panel discussions, and the search for knowledge by the Russian authors about Western publishing was indeed prodigious, but the previously mentioned non-fans must realise that they have to pay royalties on an author's work! The trip down the Volga river was interesting, but I thought the idea was to ride on the boat, not to tow it along, so bringing a whole new meaning to the Volga boat song. The Miss Volgograd contest

showed a new side of some of the ladies attending the con and opened up a new of Anglo/American Soviet relations.

Larry McCaffrey (not the progeny of one M/s A McCaffrey) author of such tomes as CASEBOOK OF CYBERPUNK, STORMING THE REALITY STUDIO, felt very much at home in the Virtual Reality world of the ex-communist state. Larry even had the dubious honour of finding the only Chinese restaurant in Volgograd; but really Larry, did we really have to provide our own rice!

Even Ron Clarke, the editor of Australia's oldest fanzine THE MENTOR, was making remarks that the seriously bad-fans had a lot to answer for in the way that the quality of the Con's organisation had been set up. I mean, where were the Gophers? Not one to be seen, and almost no dealers; where could we spend our money, all those smuggled-in U.S. dollars?

ATOM Ltd, the hosts of the convention, entertained the foreign guests at their headquarters, and Yuri Baldaev, the managing director, was hard pressed to overcome the official government inertia to provide an excellent evening for us. I must, of course, mention our over-worked translators Masha and Anna who were always there to help whenever needed, and gave unstinting of what little free time they had.

But what would make a grown fan really cry was the lack of a bar in the convention hotel. Gasp! shock! horror! what, no bar!!! but as usual yours truly managed to find a converted hotel room that sold Dutch lager and snacks that passed for a (bar)? area but definitely did not have the same ambience as a normal convention booze pit.

The Eastern block is definitely making great strides towards a Western life style and Soviet fandom I'm sure will become a major force in the SF world in the years to come. How the hotel services will measure up could be a stumbling block to fans from the West who wish to attend future

conventions in the former Eastern European countries; and a certain amount of give and take must be allowed, even if a meal does take over two hours to arrive. At the present time basics like food, toilet paper, bath plugs, sweets and decent beer are in very short supply, or even non-existent, so a Soviet con is definitely an adventure. The one thing that the Russians have got down pat is the current rate of the Rouble to the Dollar, and what rate of exchange to give to the "tourist" in Moscow's infamous Arbat (Black Market).

I must take my travel agent to task. Thomas Cook may be able to arrange Tours of the Galaxy, but the information that they have concerning an independent traveller to Russia is falling way behind the actual truth of the matter. You must allow at least four hours to travel between Sheremetyevo II airport and your departure airport in Moscow. When dealing with "Intourist" you must make

sure that they take you to your aircraft at least half an hour before your scheduled departure time, otherwise the representatives can tend to overlook you, and leave you stranded at the internal airport (Domodedovo) till the following morning. The taxis in Moscow are supposed to be regulated to only take Roubles, but if they hear any trace of a foreign accent the fare is immediately quoted in Dollars regardless of what is shown on the clock. Also, trying to find a taxi in the evening is almost impossible, as the taxi drivers seem to have cornered the market in the illegal vodka trade.

But on behalf of all the Western guests at Volgacon, we are looking forward to next years convention. Cheers!

Regards

Paranoid Android.

Twelve Bar Access

by Bill Congreve

Dor was feline. Retractable claws, a short, tawny pelt, and slitted golden eyes graced a tall, lean figure that moved with cat-like agility because her lifestyle demanded it. This was wholly her choice. Her family hated her, had cut her off from her birthright because of it. About it, they could do nothing. The family wasn't important; she could Access her birthright despite their restrictions, and the operation/change had been paid for many years before.

Independence. She had no regrets. Passing time had brought her normality, but she would never be ordinary. Techno-respect was a new term, but Dor had ample of it from her peers. She was comfortable.

With her truck docked behind her, Dor stalked the centre of the arrival foyer of the stati-sat. She chose the centre because that allowed her the greatest distance from any danger that may appear from walls or ceiling. Night, and the diversion caused by the explosion of a corporation shuttle, should ensure her isolation. She left the foyer and chose a corridor that led around the rim of the sat.

It was easy for a feline to stalk in low-g, especially when the forward direction sloped up around the rim of the sat. She constantly held her head low and looked ahead and up in order to see the greatest distance. As for stalking? It was unconscious; a reaction brought on by the circumstances. It looked good.

The Hope was lost inside, and it was her business to find him. Balls to her family who had taken him. Sentiment meant nothing to them. It was a mindless corporation that had done the deed.

From ahead came the strains of music. There was no wall of sound effect and amplification - just a single six string guitar. Dor stifled an audible reaction. The sound was live, unexpected, and totally alien to this place. It was years since a

person had dared so much on this station.

The player sat on the floor with his back to the wall. He could see further around the up-curve that way and would have seen her before she saw him. The music didn't miss a beat. A view of the Earth, forty thousand kilometres distant, slowly rotated before him, but she wondered how much more of his attention was on that. He was young, unChanged, and wore faded and not quite dirty jeans, a T-shirt that read "Stonehenge or bust", and a faded paisley dinner vest. A string laced with worn silicon chips hung about his neck. She almost laughed to see someone so innocent, harmless and anachronistic. There was an upturned hat next to his feet that had one coin in it.

A busker. That had never been done here before.

*Fight for me
Won't you fight for me
Because if you do
I'll die for you*

Simple blues, key of B, and balls ancient. The man - balls he was young to be unChanged, and now even parents Changed their kids without being asked - looked up as he continued.

*Caution flies in the
wind
In the places where you go
Won't you fight for me
And I'll die for you*

Suspicion flared into certainty. It was close. Too close. She kicked him, hard, and didn't retract her claws as she did so. He winced, and blood trickled from a shallow cut on his leg onto the sterile floor.

'What do you know?'
'I came here.'

She pricked her ears, and he recognised the question. Good, he knew that much then. She would've killed him outright if he hadn't seen it.

'You are seeking Ramez.'
Again Dor said nothing. This time there was no need. Not ten

people in the system knew the Hope by that name, and they were all his friends. Perhaps the Company... no, they weren't good enough.

'Someone must walk behind you.'

There was that problem. Link only took seconds, but there was before, and there was after, and there was the time it would take her to find Access.

She nodded and moved on, searching for Access, and still not certain she shouldn't have killed the man.

Dor found Access too conveniently just around the curve and out of sight of the busker. There was a public use terminal, a VDU, and an interactive users plug in a cubicle near a window that faced away from the Earth. A serious user was going to Access in the middle of a public corridor? While she was under she would be comatose. Possibly it was safe, but she ignored the set-up and went on until she came to a door with a sign that read something about air-conditioning and maintenance personnel only. Inside she found better Access. The equipment was the same as the other, but it obviously saw heavier use, and some of that was for vital functions.

Not ideal, no, but it would have to do.

She activated the terminal, plugged the interactive jack into the female socket mated to the spinal cord in the back of her neck, and shuddered at the icy, intimate, privacy-lost shock as her mind and her entire nervous system rubbed edges with the live hardware. She sensed rather than felt the anticipatory tingle of live data that waited the other side of Access. It was delicious and shocking at the same time. It was a feeling of give and take, like the best sex, but with no information flow either way. Good, she thought, there was real capacity here.

Dor settled herself on the couch, drew the keyboard above her, and regarded the screen. She began.

[Systems Operations] - easy.

[Create file - authorize Access]

Still easy; these codes and passwords she knew!

READ*: {-----} Nobody would discover that name - ever!

ACCESS*: TIGER

TIGER/Dor was interactive. The last thing she remembered was her thighs instinctively clenching and her body trembling into an orgasm that would last until she broke Access. She would come out of this with her body feeling fresh and relaxed.

A binary image of a large, female Bengal tiger built up in the processing unit of the network. Her intellect assumed the dimensions of the CPU, and part of her mind became

software directed by the permanent neural connections of that CPU. Her consciousness was free to move about the network, and to initiate action within it. All thought was now, by definition, rigorous. Emotions must be logically deduced from data available in memory. This is how she knew she must come here and do this; every time she Accessed, she reinforced her knowledge of her love for her son, the Hope.

The tiger was the vanity with which she chose to clothe herself in this place. In this silicon maze it was more real than the changes in her own body.

Dor was feline.

She was free to find Hope, and to rescue him from the software that held him trapped away from his body. Shit! She wished she had some choice in the matter. Balls, did the corporation (fuck the family anyhow) think that napping Hope's mind would cause her to support them? The corporation was too big. It had to go.

A quick check of the capacity of the network revealed several databases large enough to hide Hope. Security didn't bother her. With time she could Access and rewrite any software, and there was always some method to transfer across boundaries between hardware.

She instituted a search at the top of the data. If data is not equal to Hope, then return. Go to previous step. Call next file. Else shout! If data is not equal...

She set that program free and began another search after one third of the data. She began another near the end.

Dor didn't expect it to work, and it didn't. The procedure was too simple and would fool nobody, but it did give her a list of files and addresses large enough to contain the data that was now the mind of a fine young hack. The files were larger than those normally used to contain human personalities. She had to stop that. Sentiment wouldn't help her here.

Nothing about the set-up reassured her.

She set an automatic command about herself. If search is equal to zero, then RETURN*, {-----} and stop. It was basic security. There must also be traps here for her.

Microseconds later the search routine finished and stopped. A new piece of data was read from an outside source into the banks she was accessing.

Hope is not equal to zero

Dor computed an impulse to run, to get out before she too could be engulfed in software against her will. She stopped it before it could

process, and then momentarily cursed the old-fashioned sentiment that caused her to be there. Running was what they wanted. She looked carefully and found the trap. If... She had come blundering in here, making noise for all the world to hear, and they had heard. To get out, she had to think.

Your hold on me is thin

Query

She ignored the question, and instead investigated its source.

This was another trap: of that there could be little doubt. She couldn't penetrate it in any way. There was no wall of security; this was an entirely separate processing and storage unit connected to the rest of the network only by a one-way, "read only" link. The hardware allowed only a one-way passage of information, and her attention had been called to it by a noisy little subroutine in the main network.

A subroutine had to be called by something. The culprit was probably the program that had detected her search.

She was stymied, and hated to deduce it. What action could she take now? RETURN*, and start lugging hardware wholesale back to her truck in the hope she had the right unit?

That would only get her killed. At least she would kill that shit for brains busker first. He knew something or he would not be there "guarding her back". She deduced hatred for coming this far only to be frustrated by a smartarse. But if he knew, and he was no expert, then there had to be an answer.

A trap for her?

There was little she could do that Hope could not also do, even at his age, but did the family know that? They could not yet know how good he was; that he could do so much more that she couldn't. I'm good. I'm going to be the best! he had boasted to her only once. Only she knew it; she had watched the potential growing in him over the years. More importantly, he shared her motives.

There was little point in them leaving the trap as they could not by doing that prevent what she wanted to do from being done. The corporation only had Hope's mind, and that in a medium where he could adequately defend himself. They didn't have his body and so couldn't torture him. The only influence they had was coercion. They could hold Hope's mind from her, and from his body, and attempt to use that either to influence her, or to entice her into the same trap.

Dor had inherited fifteen percent of the corporation, and the control of that share was to pass to her upon reaching her majority. She had opted for her Change before that

time, and had made obvious her distaste for family sponsored corporate life. Her family had reacted by locking all financial control of her shares behind very elaborate security software. That was okay for awhile, she was better off without them all, but now the sheer size of the corporation was impinging on her life. It was too big, and too dangerous to her and to those she loved. She no longer denied her responsibility. If she gained access to her shares, she would sell them short, start a rush, and destroy the family.

Balls to them anyhow.

So now the corporation had laid a trap, and the only people who knew it was absolutely pointless were those caught in it.

The situation had all the right settings. The only thing missing was motivation. Surely the corporation knew her well enough to know that she wouldn't blindly follow Hope into the trap simply because he might already be there. She had some use for sentiment, but she wasn't that stupid.

There had to be something else; something immediately obvious to her, or it wouldn't serve its purpose.

Her first search had been of active units - software and powered up hardware. Her second investigation was more thorough. There was a completely inactivated unit attached in the hardware of the trap, and when she flashed a small amount of power to it she found a program which would transmit information out of the entrapment data bank before it was erased and new information recorded. Hope would be returned to the network as she entered the trap. So, Hope was irrelevant; it was her they were after.

Dor investigated again.

There was a mechanical counter on the unit. The return loop could be used once only. She would be trapped then, and Hope would be free. That was just like her family. She was meant to see this trap, know that there was no choice if she was to save the Hope, and to torture herself with the full knowledge of the event as she sacrificed herself. And it would all be pointless because Hope would then destroy the corporation as she would have done. She may as well stay out of it if one of them was to be sacrificed anyway.

Dor cursed all sentiment, and activated the unit.

She found it strange as she observed the tiger she manifested herself as being read, byte by byte, into the small restrictive space. It was like diving into a mirror. In other circumstances she would've delighted in the purely intellectual observation of her capacity outside

the trap diminishing as her capacity inside it increased. The part of her in the trap detected nothing. It wouldn't have processing capability until the transfer was complete.

She was rewarded by detecting a ghost of Ramez, the killer whale, manifest in the network just as the part of her which remained there became too small to maintain processing power. Her last thought was that the whale became very busy. The Hope was free, but his actions mystified her.

The process took microseconds.

With the transfer virtually complete Dor prepared to explore the bounds of her new environment. She wasn't allowed the opportunity.

With no cessation in the transfer of information, and hence no opportunity for the counter to click over, she found herself being transmitted back into the network - a tiger with its claws dug into the tail of a killer whale. A block of strange information was replacing her in the trap.

Immediately her capacity in the network became large enough she registered surprise, delight, and amusement.

Laughter

Query the enemy software sent.

Noisy

Yes

Dor observed the flow as the remainder of a string of telephone directories replaced her in the trap.

Hope had been quick enough to initiate the caper, and more importantly had thought of it at a time when she was too busy pitying her situation.

Escape.

A lesson.

When I get out of here I'm going to laugh until I'm sick

I told you I was the best, mother

Get out of here

Dor observed as the whale swam away to a maser communications link. Hope was showing off now, and water appeared in front of him. The whale

dived into the water, and disappeared from the network as he did so. The water grew misty and evaporated. The Hope was gone. How did he do it that way? His body, forty thousand kilometres away on Earth, would be receiving him now. Perhaps she would see him in a week or so. Perhaps before then she would find him minding somebody else's business in some other network.

RETURN*, {-----}

Dor rushed over familiar terrain to her Access hardware and then did her own vanishing act for an audience of one. She began by biting her own tail, and then swallowed her whole body, like the worm Ouroboros, until she disappeared with a puff from the network and...

... opened her eyes.

Dor shook her head. Even in enemy territory she regretted leaving Access. She stretched luxuriously and yawned. Her nipples were hard and sensitive. She wished she had a joint and time to enjoy it. She laughed as she remembered the directories.

Head high, still stalking and watchful, Dor abandoned the maintenance room and headed for her truck. It was time to leave before the family could react.

The busker was still present, and he was still singing. But it was a new song.

*Fly little bird fly
Fly high as the sky
For we will always love you*

The man sang, and he winked at her as she approached. It was so unforgivably sweet that Dor almost gagged. This time she had to fight very hard not to kill. The only thing that saved the man was the presence of two coins in his hat.

Her claws were fully extended as she dropped a third coin and stalked on by.

If he said anything more she would rip his throat out.

Fini s

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #12

by Buck Coulson

Browsing through my pulp collection today, I happened to look at the magazine that portrays the quintessential ^{American} hero, and decided it would be useful for a column. The original title of the magazine was THE WIZARD, but the only copy I have is #6, by which time the title had been changed to CASH GORMAN, with "The Wizard" as a subtitle. Thomas Jefferson Gorman, nicknamed "Cash", is neither a muscular super-scientist nor a shadowy figure dealing out justice with .45's. His wizardry is financial, which puts him at the peak of American desires; not everyone here wants to be president, but nearly everyone wants to be rich.

Gorman has only one assistant, in keeping with his ideals; assistants have to be paid. Jimmy Ranger is a former college football player who is both an accountant and an engineer, an expert driver and the supplier of whatever muscle the story requires. The author of the stories is "Phil. R. Sheridan"; he might be a descendant of Civil War general Philip Sheridan, but I suspect a pseudonym.

The story I have concerns the mayor of a California town who is rigging a swindle on a dam that's supposed to turn the surrounding valley into prime agricultural land through irrigation. The mayor has acquired most of the land before the dam was announced, and sold it afterwards at a whopping profit. Next, he arranged with the contractor to incorporate a weak point in the dam, so that it will fail at that spot and start a panic. He can then buy

back the land cheaply, and sell it again once the dam is repaired. A couple of people who have discovered the plot have already been murdered.

The story really does involve financial transactions and sources of information, in between shootings and the usual superhero impediments, though Gorman isn't a brawler, and prefers to use his brains. Along the way, he manages to buy up part of the land at a suitable discount, which will probably turn him a profit, once he's broken up the scheme and put the mayor and his crooked police chief in jail. It's a perfect example of the American Way, and I'm surprised that the magazine lasted only a few issues after the one I have. (I obtained mine, and a few other oddball pulps, from Dean Grennell, shortly after he moved from Wisconsin to California.) The two short stories in the issue were also about financial skullduggery.

I wonder if Street & Smith ever sold rights for a Japanese reprint?

One of the most interesting things about the pulps, at least for someone with an interest in history, were the ads. Street & Smith mags, being adequately financed, had fewer ads than most, but a Clayton magazine titled FIVE NOVELS MONTHLY had more than the usual assortment, though it did keep them out of the story area and into several pages of straight advertising in the front and back of the issue. My copy of this mag is the May 1930 issue. The mag is heavy with ads for correspondence schools and job offers; this was the Depression, when

people were desperate for ways of making money.

The inside front cover is devoted to an opening for agents to sell a "New Million Dollar Can Opening Machine", which is based on the same principle as most of today's can openers, with a sharp roller that clamps to the can and cuts the lid out in a neat circle. The old-style openers of the time were composed of a knife-blade and a means of leverage, and left a ragged edge on both can and lid. Most of the people who used them cut their fingers sooner or later; I certainly did. In the ad pages, Educator Press is looking for salesmen for their pictures "direct from Paris". (It was a simpler age; even Parisian pictures then couldn't equal today's PLAYBOY.) The Process Corp. wants salesmen for their lines of greeting cards, stationery, and "Pictorolls", whatever those might be.

There's an ad for International Correspondence Schools; well, I once took an electrical engineering course from them and promptly got a job as a draftsman, so their courses did work, if you stuck to it. Lewis Training Institute will train men to manage hotels, restaurants, etc. The First Hawaiian Conservatory of Music, Inc. (located in New York), will teach you by mail how to play the Hawaiian guitar. Be the life of the party; maybe you can marry money. "Learn Electricity" in the Coyne Electrical School. Standard Business Training Inst. head their ad, "Be A Railway Traffic Inspector" - now we're getting into the glamorous occupations. You could also learn to be detective, repair radios, or be a door-to-door salesman for a shirt manufacturer.

The North American Accident Insurance Co. offers a \$10,000 accident insurance policy for \$10 per year. A Listerine ad promises to get rid of dandruff; just pour the stuff over your head. It also claims to kill typhoid germs; the government put a stop to that claim some years later.

Juanita says she got Listerine poured over her head when she was young. I didn't; my parents were sceptics. There's a house ad for ASTOUNDING STORIES, featuring a Murrey Leinster story. Harley-Davidson shows a handsome young motorcycle rider in a suit, tie, and cap; not quite the image Harley has these days. "How To Obtain A Better Looking Nose". From the drawing, you put this rig over your head and it squeezes your nose into the shape you want. No thanks... "Buchstein's Fibre Limb is soothing to your stump"; aimed at crippled WWI vets and perhaps at railway traffic inspectors. Parisian Products Co. offers a perfume that's almost guaranteed to attract men - well, that sort of ad hasn't changed much, though now it's usually in a slicker magazine. The National Poultry Institute offers "Big Money In Poultry"; in 1930 there wasn't big money in anything, but at least you'd have something to eat.

Then there were muscle builders, a gadget to recharge used batteries (in 1930; right), "How To Secure A Government Position" (the gravy train there was already in operation), "Free To Men Past 40" was a booklet explaining gland disorders (three guesses as to which glands the men were most interested in), "Pants Matched To Any Suit", full-page ads for Old Gold and Lucky Strike cigarettes, and at least 3 ads for ways to kick the tobacco habit, and save money. Major emphasis was on making or saving money; becoming attractive to the opposite sex came in a poor second. It gives an idea of what the Great Depression was like; we've had "recessions" since then, but none that were so clearly reflected in our advertising; sex has been in first place ever since then.

- c -

- Buck Coulson

P.T.B.

by Jim Verran

A friend once asked, 'Where did you learn all those technical things that you mention in your stories?'

Until then I'd never given it much thought, most of the ideas came from reading technical and scientific articles, and that old mainstay of the SF writer, imagination. But the question was worthy of an honest answer, so in a rare moment of inspired candour I coined the phrase: Pseudo Technological Bull...

Anyone who loves *Nuts and Bolts* science fiction has encountered P.T.B., in fact it is difficult to avoid. P.T.B. has been an indispensable tool of the writer's trade since SF was invented. After all, where would Captain Kirk be without his Warp Drives, Transporter Beams, Phasers and Dilithium Crystals?

Futuristic fiction, set in the distant and highly improbable future, is sprinkled with such terms as: Hyperspace, Stargate, Parallel Universe, Time Warp, Alternate Reality, and the like. Writers of speculative fiction have invented imaginative variations of current terminology, to shoehorn *hard science* into their work.

As writers and readers become more familiar with Black holes, Event Horizons, and the Space-time Continuum, the fictional hardware to exploit these phenomena prompted the invention of appropriate names.

The worlds of Science Fantasy and Fiction have arrived at a point where they warrant their own lexicon. Which raises an important question: "Is there copyright on the terminology generated by the P.T.B. published in books and magazines today?"

Many writers have used terminology not of their own invention, in stories where *Space Warps* and *Force Fields* are employed, and *Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics* are religiously adhered to, in fact the latter is now part of SF lore.

The practising SF writer is faced with a dilemma, particularly when writing short stories. There is

seldom room to fully explain the technologies behind the successful resolution of the character's problems. What should the author do, invent new technologies that accomplish the same end as those with which the reader is familiar, or resort to jargon borrowed from other writers? This trend to borrow has become accepted in popular *blood and guts* fantasy.

If Pseudo Science is used, it must at least ring true: the writer must get the science right. Although suspension of disbelief is a powerful factor in fiction writing, patch ups seldom work. The characters must use devices that are part of the scenario, and not just dropped in to cover a poorly planned development in the story line. Such plugging of holes may be likened to creative lying: it may provide an immediate solution, but as events unfold, more lies are needed to reinforce the first lapse.

Credibility may wane when a fantastically compact weapon with a seemingly endless power source, wreaks devastation for several encounters, only to be foiled by some bozo with an equally remarkable, personal force shield.

Hard core P.T.B. provides the means by which futuristic characters will conquer their universe. It allows instantaneous travel and communications over cosmic distances, discourse with alien life forms, and colonisation of this or any other galaxy that man fancies.

Mankind of the future will Terra-form planets while conquering belligerents, usually from more advanced civilisations. All the while, arrogantly applying the same practices that are destroying our precious planet, and with the same motives: profit and self gratification.

With unlimited hard core P.T.B., a futuristic hero, or more frequently these days, heroine, may encounter a situation like this:-

Some Droids have Warped in through Hyperspace and locked a Tractor Beam onto her/his Dilithium powered Astro Clipper. So she grabs a Blaster and Beams aboard their Battle Cruiser while the Shields are down, to neutralise the Infinite Improbability Drive, before they can make the return Jump.

The above example is certain to cause an editor to regurgitate his cut lunch, and must surely be plagiarism of the most foul kind, but Hollywood once raised it to an art form.

Soft core P.T.B. on the other hand, is less disruptive to the digestive process, and may take this form:-

When the AI circuits went down, Roland knew that he was in trouble. Traces of the outer atmosphere had already heated the thermal shielding as he cranked up the old, light operated back-up. A real antique, gas cooled laser shunts, and no vocal input: he'd need to brush us his keyboard skills pretty damn quickly.

Not a radical departure from current technology, and a little more down to earth (pun intended), but enough P.T.B. to qualify as *science fiction*.

The trick is for the writer to seem to know what he is writing about, while at the same time hinting at technological developments that may conceivably evolve from those already known to the reader.

An increasingly popular solution to the multiplicity of terminologies

is the Shared World, or Universe genre. Any writer knows that it is easier to see problems in another's work, this is one reason why writers' workshops and reading groups are popular. Shared theme anthologies might best be looked upon as commercial workshopping, a way to relieve some of the creative burden, while providing stimulation through interaction with other writers. Of course, the writers must be compatible, and agree upon a theme with commercial potential. Although a big name writer will help the sales, prima donnas need to be eliminated before the project is commenced.

Reading and discussing stories or ideas within a common interest group, is a sure-fire way to generate P.T.B. and test its true potential. There is no point in using P.T.B., if at the end of the story, the writer/inventor is the only person who knows what the strange words meant. Therefore, unless the Pseudo Technology is in common literary use, and/or in the public domain, the writer will have to satisfactorily identify its function to the reader.

For the benefit of starving SF writers, confined to cold, leaking garrets (or tin sheds), using P.T.B. requires observance of the following:-

Be original, be concise, but above all, when using recognisable technology, get it right.

- c -

THE END

Lucy and the Lightning

by Blair Hunt

The big old tree at the bottom of the garden was a blackened smoking stump. The Lightning had blown its leaves and branches all over the yard.

Seven year old Lucy sat in the midst of the wreckage. She was laughing and pointing towards the sky.

'Are you hurt? Can you stand? Oh thank God you're all right.'

'Zring!' said Lucy.

'What was that Darling? How don't be silly. Mummy's trying to find out if you've been hurt.'

'Zring.'

'Oh God.'

'Zring?'

* * * * *

'She's been like this for days, Doctor. She seems as bright as ever but she doesn't speak, just makes that awful noise.'

Lucy sat beside her Mother and did as she had been asked. She watched the little moving light in the Doctor's hand and listened to his voice.

'You are feeling tired, very tired. Your eye lids are heavy, very heavy... Speak to me Lucy.'

'Zring.'

* * * * *

She could sense that her Teacher was upset. It wasn't just that her hands were shaking. It was the way she shouted into the phone; 'Come and take Lucy home. She's got the entire school at it now.'

The sound of two hundred young voices, raised in harmony, floated through the window.

'Zring.'

* * * * *

An emergency meeting of Parents and Teachers was in progress at the School.

'As Headmaster, the last thing I want is bad publicity for the School.'

However I can see no alternative but to call in medical experts to assist us with this crisis.'

As he resumed his seat the group remained silent. A murmur of sound drifted into the hall. Faint at first, it grew steadily in volume.

In the darkened school yard the children had formed a circle. Two hundred small voices chanted. Two hundred small faces turned to watch the spinning silver Disc that slowly descended, on a column of flickering light.

It came to rest in the centre of the circle. A section of its gleaming hull swung out and a ramp slid to the ground.

A tall figure emerged. He smiled down at the child standing at the foot of the ramp, her hand raised in welcome.

'Greeting, Lucy. You rang?'

- C -

- END -

Missed it, by ' - - - - ' Much

by Alan Stewart

After days of silent flight,
radio pulse began the unfurling
of metal flower known as Viking.
Slowed into orbit, camera tests,
antenna swivel, around planet
between moons.
Fourth of July, is go, is P.R.,
is planned in seventy-six.
Nature or Murphy or something
whips up a storm, red dusts
valley to delay.
Later Viking keeps its date
with destiny, somewhat tarnished
for politico-historical purists.
But wonderfully out of this world
gibber plain scenes,
and we wonder, what's just out of view?

-----0-----

Mirrors and Slivers

by Grai Hughes

The Starspikes were so tall as to cause one to imagine that, from orbit, they must appear as a beard of icicles depending like an old man's goatee from the round face of the Earth. But, of course, they are not so tall. Still, the mirrored, three-sided spikes ascend so high that, on clear days ball lightning gathers around their tips, curious sparkling entities that discharge to earth in a violet flash that runs the length of the spike. And when the big storms that scour the surface of the Earth rush over, the tips of the spikes score iridescent streaks in the soft underbelly of the cloud. On these stormy days the mirrored sides of the spikes boil with the reflected swirling darkness. When lightning strikes amongst the forest of spikes its momentary illumination is re-reflected and multiplied so that hours later, in the stillness after the passing of the storm before the *aurora* *tempestuous* envelopes the evening with its spectral shimmerings, the lightning can still be seen, dancing amongst the spikes.

Rigelspike is launching today. It is more than the lightning of storms past, still trapped within that gold-tinted sliver, that today draws our eyes toward it.

The mirrors of this city, (for it is now merely that; there is no longer any escape velocity to defy the Earth's thickening gravity) seemingly ascend further into the sky with each passing week. Of course, this too is an illusion. Maybe it is only our own increasing burden that makes the spikes seem, on a calm autumn day like today, so much more towering.

Though fractured on the surfaces of the Starspike, each reflecting back the sky coloured by its own tint creating a jagged and multiple horizon, the blue space and cloud mottle reduced and captured there is ordered too.

It's curious, each workday I ascend those structures and descend

their outer surfaces, yet from here, on the edge of the deserted metropolis where we Grounders live, they seem so alien, so unfamiliar. I'm not really suited to my employ as a window washer; I think too much about falling. That doesn't scare me, though. I see the gulls and pigeons still defying gravity wheel in the strange high places between Starspikes, they traverse the empty geometries so easily, I sometimes imagine that I would too.

Up there the air hums, the noise of traffic below is little more than background static, and when the wind that precedes a storm rolls in, its currents pull at you and you feel the Starspike sway.

I stare at myself in those enormous lying mirrors, and watch my self's image blur with soapy water when I sponge, and materialize so clearly when I squeegee.

At certain conjunctions of space and light I glimpse my tertiary, quaternary and higher orders of selves transformed and reflected back so that occasionally I wonder if in fact that distant person deep within the glass is not some other yellow coveralled and capped window washer who merely delights in mimicry of me.

No, it is not the prospect of falling to the ground, that toy landscape, that scares me, but falling into myself in that infinite space... that fear grips me and sends my imagination reeling so that I must stare and stare into myself, into glimpses of these deeper selves, to ride out that vertiginous fear.

Up there clouds drift by so close I could easily be seduced by their materiality to step out, but only into the glass. I prefer not to wear a harness when I'm out in the cradle, though Silverman, my Supervisor, insists I must, guild rules and insurance clauses, nor am I supposed to work alone but Silverman has, in his twenty years of cleaning and re-mirroring the spikes, developed

an assortment of voyeuristic liaisons which he relishes in describing to me. So, as soon as he has seen me buckled into my harness and left for such a perverse meeting, I unbuckle and hang precariously over the cradle rail, laughing and crying out in sheer defiance. Such are the petty amusements we perform to assert our freedom.

On chill mornings I often drive the cradle directly where the sun blazes in the glass, and revel there in ecstatic luminance, suspended in my harness. Such enlightenment, when I blink open my watering eyes and glimpse my reflected self within that blazing orb, Icarus triumphant in helioplatory, is beyond understanding.

Once, while driving the cradle horizontally across a spike for just such an exultant self-apotheosis the sun exploded outwards and a chair fell in a rain of glittering shards. A man quickly followed and I noticed his smile. The hole left in that infinity was a jagged edged blackness.

On certain shrouded days, when my primary reflection is little more than a ghost, I can see the adumbrate figures behind the glass. So empty, the orderly toings and froings of these shades, trapped by mirrors and screens and glass in the line of sight hierarchy that makes a spike a functional organism, broken only when they notice me noticing them and they pull faces and perform curious motionings to see how well I see them. Of course, I act oblivious to their gestures and they find themselves, observed only by their hierarchical superior, acting the fool. These are the only times, it seems, they pause, as I, to reflect.

But today no doubt many of them are reflecting. The Pinnacle of Rigelspike has commanded an attempt to launch. The last such attempt occurred seventeen years ago, when I was three. My family deserted the Proximaspike and became Grounders only that morning. To my three year old eyes it was a beautiful thing to see; that sliver reflecting the yellow dawn lift itself up above the other spikes so that it blazed in the sun, and then explode in a downpour of golden daggers. Of course, gravity has grown so much heavier since then.

So we Grounders in our bright-coloured coveralls and caps watch from the edge of the deserted metropolis, and a young family, deserting Rigelspike, their meagre possessions packed in an electric car, crosses the cement field towards us. Through the black and yellow striped checkpoint without looking back.

They arrive in our small celebration.

'Hi. I'm Daniel Windows,' I say. 'Welcome back to Earth.'

'Why are you crying Daniel Windows?' their child asks me.

'These mirrors are a curious-sad wounding of time and space. For everything in the world that is beautiful and futile, and everything in the world that is tragic and purposeful. For these mirrors, aspiring to the night. Don't you see, my eyes are laughing also.'

And we watch Rigelspike rise into the blue. And there is as much laughter, as tears in their eyes, but only wonder in the eyes of their child.

END

NED BROOKS, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, VA
23605 USA.

What is the purpose of the sheet
of flimsy over the Contents page in TM
70?

(When I had the cover printed I forgot to
ask for 110 gsm paper and they used 80 gsm, When I
saw the show-through I put the 50 gsm paper there
so you couldn't see the print through the cover. -
Ron)

I wouldn't touch the squabble
between Anderson and Coulson over the
manner of destruction of the library
at Alexandria with a ten-meter pole...

Your two pages titled THE HUMBLE
DUPLICATOR are puzzling, to say the
least - are you trying to be funny, or
what? You don't give a brand name of
this device, but it is certainly far
more complex and sophisticated a
duplicator than I ever saw a fan use
at home. Chalker's fancy 4-color
Gestetner rig that he bought after he
got rich may be something like this.
It seems to be more like an ABDick
with the single drum though. I never
used anything fancier than a Gestetner
320, and that is really just a manual
with a motor to turn the crank. And
at that doesn't work as well as the
even simpler RexRotary M4. I have
gotten lazy lately and do even
apazines at the local copy shop -
partly excused by the fact that I
can't get good Rex ink any more and
the desire to do solid blacks that
would only back a mess in the mimeo.

Enjoyed the account of the 1970
bus trip in TM 69 - as you say, not
likely anyone could do that again any
time soon! (26. 5. 91)

MIKE GLICKSOHN, 506 Windmere Ave, Toronto,
Canada M65 3L6,

Many thanks for TM 70 (and for
pandering to my rapacious ego by
putting my loc first in R&R: I'll put
a good word in for you with the
Fanzine Police and with my awesome
influence I expect the first of
several consecutive Hugos for you is
assured... Where do you find all
these fruitcakes in the letter column
anyway?) This loc will be shorter

than usual since so much of the issue
was either fiction or people
commenting on previous fiction and I'm
still staying away from such material,
I'm afraid.

[Your letter was first in TM 70 because it
just missed the previous issue - the same thing
nearly happened this time also. - Ron]

Interesting cover, very nicely
printed and executed. At first I
thought it was another alien landscape
scene but upon closer inspection I
realized that what it is is a
depiction of a very slow and very
inexplicable migration by a race of
rocklike aliens who rest periodically
before starting on their mysterious
way again. Very evocative and I'm
sure there's a story to go with it
that might someday appear in a future
issue of TM.

I knew we were contemporaries
but I either didn't know or had
forgotten that you pre-date me as a
fan by a year and a half. I don't
know about you but I don't *feel* like an
old phart yet.

A couple of things intrigued me
about your early fannish ruminations.
The first was just how much the cost
of things has changed since those
halcyon days of First Contact, of
course, and the second was all that
information you were able to provide
about what happened at those early
cons a quarter of a century ago. I
can list the first three cons I was
ever at because they were the 1966-67-
68 worldcons and I suppose if I looked
long enough I could find the programme
books for them and tell you who made
the introductions or whether the
program ran on time. And after those
first three I'd not be certain I could
set down a list of what other cons I
was at. (At least for a period of
several years: eventually I started a
list of cons as I attended them and
have pretty complete information on at
least the names of those cons for the
last seventeen or so years.) I'm left
to deduce that either (a) you have a
phenomenal memory, (b) you kept an
amazingly detailed diary of convention
attendance, or (c) you can fake it as
well as anyone I've ever read!

(The answer is simple - I've kept the Con booklets and Progress Reports for all the Cons I've attended. Also I could have (but didn't) gone through the fanzines of the day, which also had con reports. With most of the early cons I can still remember some events at them - and I did also take Super 8 movies of some of them. - Ron.)

Your first con interaction was also slightly classier than mine. I drove my motorbike to Cleveland, pitched a tent in a park ten miles outside of town, drove to the hotel and ended up sleeping the first night on the floor behind a bench on the mezzanine floor. (And at the end of June I'll drive down to Cincinnati with a friend and probably spend the night sleeping on the floor of the consuite because the hotel is all booked up. Plus ca change, eh?)

Steve Sneyd's locs often give me the impression that if I only had someone to translate them into English for me I'd be really impressed by the seeds of wit and erudition he sows through them. Sadly no-one has yet published a Sneyd-English/English-Sneyd dictionary so more often than not I'm left scratching my head and wondering what he was trying to tell us.

Interesting juxtaposition of the Ortlieb and Tansey locs to demonstrate the massive misunderstanding *re* the Ditmars that are apparently rife in Oz fandom. My empathic reaction is to side with Ortlieb and that's considerably reinforced when Tansey creates a vast credibility abyss with his ravings about an SF/fannish "mafia". (The Tansey's of the world will never realize that they musn't make this sort of knowledge commonplace by expounding on it in fanzines. The Men With Big Sticks will no doubt have paid the late David Tansey a visit long before you get this letter and Our Secret will be safe for another generation.)

When Peter Sellers made small black and white comedies for Ealing Studios I think he did have comic genius. But too much of the last part of his career was wasted on utter rubbish so that he rarely achieved that potential once he became a "star". The last thing I ever saw of his was that awful Fu Manchu parody: what a tragic end to a career that could have been so much greater.

Having read the Tansey letter I was ready to nominate him as "Nutter of the Month" but Peter Booth must also be given serious consideration. Booth has passion and enthusiasm and a fiery iconoclasm which are all to the good but until they're tempered with a better understanding of fandom and tolerance for other people doing things their own way he tends to come off more as a raver than a young turk. Still, any healthy fandom needs a thorn in its side and I sense Booth will enjoy filling that role.

I have to believe Glen Chapman is wrong about his story of the fight at the cricket match. I know Australians are famed as heavy beer drinkers but I seriously doubt someone could drink over seventy cans of beer in five hours and still be conscious. I can pack away a fair amount of drink myself but that would be completely beyond me. Thirty cans, sure. Maybe even forty. (Then pass out, wake up and feel shitty for two days so what's the point?) But I won't believe 70 + until I've watched it happen.

At *Ditto* 3 last fall the Gestetner rep demonstrated their top of the line continuous-stencil-roll mimeo (at something like \$8,000) and It Certainly Was A Wonderful Thing. I enjoyed your tongue-in-cheek presentation of the Humble Duplicator and will think of it when eventually I dust off the old 466 in the basement and crank out (literally) another fanzine. Real Soon Now, you betcha!

Phew, for a minute I thought the only book I was going to have read in your several pages of reviews was an almost quarter century old Philip Dick paperback but Butler snuck in right at the end to give me a second title and raise me all the way to almost ten percent of the books listed. How in hell do you find time to read that much and still publish such large frequent issues? (I bet Sue does all the laundry and the bathtub scrubbing!) (4.6.91)

(I travel 160 km each day to Sydney to work and back. In the morning I snooze and in the evening I read. I also read at morning and afternoon tea at work. - Ron.)

PAMELA BOAL, 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, UK.

Congratulations to Mark McLeod for his cover painting on THE MENTOR 70 and to yourself for its reproduction. I thought at first it was a photograph and wondered where on earth it could be or how could such perspective be achieved if it had been a table top mock-up with pebbles. Just about the most convincing imaginary landscape painting I have ever seen.

To me one of the greatest pleasures of Fandom is in its international contacts. The opportunity through fanzines for armchair travel, discovering how fans in other countries enjoy their fandoms and how the genre of SF is developing professionally in different parts of the world. Your editorial and RUMINATIONS really fitted the bill for me.

That is not a humble duplicator, it's positively up market. A humble one is my Gestetner, no buttons or controls at all, just ink the screen, lay the stencil on the drum, load up the copy paper and crank the handle.

True mine does have such refinements as a copy counter which doesn't always click over with each turn of the handle, and some coarse adjustments can be made via lever and ratchet arrangements. Treated with TLC it still produces cleaner copy than some early photocopiers.

(I came across the material on that "duplicator" and thought I would share it with other fans. The duplicator I still have is a manual Roneo 250, which is still working, sort of. - Ron)

The story line of HUMAN ERROR is not particularly original but David Tansey handled what I call the still frame format very well. Yet another writer you have featured that I hope to read again. The same with Margaret Pearce. I found her scene setting economical and effective and loved the tongue in cheek title, BOIL THE WATER. Anne Stewart's poetry is rather down beat for my tastes but effective enough. I can do without rhyme but would prefer more rhythm, when poetry is written to be read with normal inflection the rhythm emphasises the chosen words and enhances the mood of the piece. Then again poetry is so personal and the unused rhythmic emphasis I perceive may well be in the way I read it.

Thank you for the reviews. Thank you Peter Brodie, *Forbidden Planet* may be an oldie but I've always thought of it as a goldie, now I know why.

At any time or place in fandom one can find an individual making a bid to be the latest enfant terrible. This adolescent state of mind bears no relationship to the individual's physical age. The adolescent feels simultaneously repressed and ignored by the adult world, so, makes a bid to be recognised by attempting to shock by making ill mannered aggressive statements. These adolescents either grow up and become interesting people to know or they leave fandom because people who affirm they can take it as well as dish it out seldom can. Let up hope Peter Booth follows the former course. I suspect he does have something to offer fandom when he attains his majority. (5.6.91)

THE MENTOR 71 had just arrived, with yet another stunning cover. How sad that this will be the last of Mark McLeod's work we will see in colour. As I mentioned before his work loses so much in the translation to black and white.

Some British fans may have difficulty in believing that Buck Coulson can perform legal marriage ceremonies on the strength of an ordination certificate obtained by a friend as a joke. I do not doubt his veracity one bit.

Some years ago, Burt, a friend from America was visiting with us and as the wont of correspondents meeting

face to face for the first time we talked of cabbages and kings and many other things. During one of our conversations in the wee hours Burt asked, "Would you like me to make you a Doctor of Divinity, a Minister or a Bishop, in fact you could be the Arch Bishop of Great Britain."

Somewhat mystified and obviously not taking him seriously my unwitty reply was, "Oh wait until I'm dead Burt, then you can make me a Saint." Well, it was the wee small hours!

As it happens Burt has made it to the Pearly Gates before me. No doubt the heavenly host can recognise a good person when they see one but saints are nominated on earth and as Burt was a non religious of Jewish parentage I guess neither of us will get to be Saints. Had he lived two thousand years ago... but that's another story.

Burt was a lawyer who lived in Tucson Arizona. His story was that it seldom rained in Tucson but when it did anyone with a modicum of intelligence stayed where they were until the deluge was over. One such downpour trapped him in his office and as his work was up to date he decided to embark on an exercise of setting up a tax free organisation. At that time a religious body was the most advantageous, especially if it had charitable and educational aims and overseas ministries. As long as all the educational niceties were properly and legally laid down the actual beliefs of the "Church" need only be stated in the vaguest of terms. A friend trapped by the same storm indulged his hobby of calligraphy and design and created all the certificates for those who would be ordained by the founders of the "Church".

Betime the weather abated and the "Founders" were able to return to their respective homes all the needful documents had been created and the exercise completed. A few days later Burt being something of a completist and wishing to verify the accuracy of his work sent the documents off to be registered. Burt's work was accurate and his "Church" became legally registered without question.

I believe Burt only actually used his "Church" on one occasion to gain tax advantages for a young man who's studies Burt considered to be worthy and humanitarian. To think though, had I been less flippant, I could have been the Arch Bishop of Great Britain.

I do indeed sympathise with Joy Buchanan's daughter. I have a mild degree of left right confusion which is compounded by the fact that I taught myself to read and write. Despite those handicaps I ^{was} able to escape into the written world as a

child but to this day I have problems. I can, for instance, read policeman where in fact the word is politician and it may be several paragraphs beyond the word before I realise that the context doesn't make sense and have to back-track to find where I went wrong. Now that my eyesight is so poor the need to reread becomes an exhausting chore. As for my spelling, the spell checker on this computer programme is a big help but I can select the wrong word from the list of alternatives supplied for the queries word. Having taught myself to look up f and ph, c, s, sh, ch, followed by ee, ea, ie, and any other likely or unlikely combination I have better luck with finding things in the dictionary but it takes a magnifying glass and a very strong desire to know.

However, today a child with such problems is less likely to be regarded as stupid or lazy. Understanding, let alone help, is still in short supply but a determined parent can track down relevant organisations. In America there is the Institute for Special Children (which caters for gifted children as well as dyslexics and children with learning difficulties) in Britain there is an Association for Dyslexics, and I feel sure there will be some such helpful organisation in Australia.

Please don't despair, Joy. Many studies of brain damaged people show that while a dead brain cell does not regenerate, with suitable training, other brain cells will take over the function of those dead cells. Development of our understanding of the human brain seems to have lagged behind other medical advances, though it seems to be generally agreed that we all have parts of the brain that are unused, cells sitting there almost like spare batteries. I am at the moment teaching a woman to play chess. Hardly a startling fact until one knows that less than a year ago she was shot in the head and discharged from the hospital into her mother's care as a virtual cabbage. She is now living independently having recovered her speech, balance, full use of one arm, some use of the other and some use of her legs. She is confident that one day she will walk again. Before the incident it never occurred to her that she had the capacity or desire to follow more intellectual pursuits. Now she has discovered an appetite for reading and hobbies that stretch her mind, such as chess. (20. 8. 91)

MIKE DECKINGER, 649 16th Ave, San Francisco, CA 94118, USA.

I continue to be ultra-impressed by the time, effort, and money that you are putting into the magazine.

With the color covers and overseas distribution, it must be running you a small fortune.

What it calls to mind is the "Amazing Stories syndrome". The prozine, AMAZING STORIES, has a new editor, and is being published in the large, "bedsheet" format, the same size it appeared during the 1920's and 1930's. The first two issues have slick paper, full color cover and interior illustrations, and a very limited distribution, at least partly due to the ungainly size, which makes newsstand display impossible. I've received three please for subscription funds to help keep the magazine going. I am reluctant to do so, only because AMAZING is *too* good. I can't imagine that my subscription, or even a thousand more, will be sufficient to support this venture. Had the magazine begun in a more modest format, then I could well believe that it would have a greater chance for survival.

Thus, I look at THE MENTOR, and imagine the tremendous overhead associated with publishing it, and wonder how long it can keep going.

(Yes, I saw several copies of AMAZING on the counter at the newsagents at Wynyard Station (one of the main commuter stations in Sydney) and wondered why they didn't have it in the stands amongst the computer magazines or in with the UK sf prozines.

TM doesn't cost all that much. I own the offset press I am using and don't pay Sales Tax on the consumables. I would say an ordinary issue costs me about \$80 to print and an additional \$180 to post. In the last three issues, the full colour covers cost \$1.65 each. When I was offered the opportunity to have the paintings as covers I had to have them done in colour to show TMs readers in Australia there are good sf artists here. - Ron.

The fiction all seemed weak and unremarkable. I don't believe in providing forums for unsaleable fiction, as all of this was. Of far greater interest were your RUMINATIONS on early Assie fandom. This pretty much paralleled my era of activity and thus I could better relate to the events depicted.

I can well recall the consternation among both the fans and non-fans when 2001 was first released. Contrary to what some may feel, 2001 was not universally accepted by the sf world. In fact, 2 of the 3 leading prozines (ANALOG and GALAXY) had strong denunciations of the film and its "message". ANALOG, offered by far what turned out to be the *dumbest* review of 2001. G. Harry Stine ranted for two pages, finally closing by calling the film "an insane LSD hippie-trip".

I was pleased to see the anti-Scientology statements, particularly Brian Earl Brown's comment that: "WOTF exists to legitimize L. Ron Hubbard and through him, Scientology..." Of course it does. Who else is paying to publish Hubbard's 10 volume posthumous

abomination? I'm amazed that a number of reputable authors have lent their good names to Bridge Publications. How many more cultists have they managed to lure into Scientology ranks, I wonder.

Of course, I'm also pleased to see a reissue of FEAR, which I feel is Hubbard's crowning work, and is still capable of evoking chills today. (9. 6. 91)

R. MILEVA, 51A, Bigla Street, Sofia 1126, Bulgaria.

Hello, dear Fan, Greetings from Bulgaria.

Although you probably never suspected it, there are many ardent fans over here too. Their major problem, though, is that for the last fifty years they haven't had the chance to read anything except the books approved by the Party and its Leader. Would you believe that the Bulgarian translation of LORD OF THE RINGS was published in 1990? Thus, most Bulgarian fans know very little about the English language SF of the last decades, though many of them would be able to read, were they given a book!

And this brings us to the reason for this letter.

We, the English-speaking and reading fans in Bulgaria, have embarked on the ambitious project of building up a library of SF books and movies, so that East may meet West at last.

So, our appeal: send up books, new or used, hardcover or paperback, then ask your friends to send us some more; send us video tapes, if possible (VHS only, please).

You probably won't get a Good Conduct badge for helping us, but you will have our gratitude and the knowledge that you have helped spread the light of SF in this part of the world. (21. 4. 91)

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, PO Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510-5309, USA.

THE MENTOR 70 is a most impressive addition to your long string of quality fanzines. I chuckled a lot at the picture of your duplicator on page 53. My ditto machine is *primitive* compared to your high-tech duplicator, and at least you don't have to worry about print run limits. Nowadays 130 copies is pushing it as far as readability goes, which is why the *worst* 30 copies go thru APA-L and/or LASFAPA.

But you are right that traditional duplicating methods are on the way out. Here in the USA, more and more traditional fannish zines are photocopied or offset. And I know one reason why. My next fanzine will have a 9 page Worldcon 1990 report by my good friend Betty Knight. She is a

good typer, and her 9 pages were a joy to read. Now I could have re-typed all that onto ditto master to be run off. But here in Norman, there is a print shop that does photocopy at 3c a page. And no extra charge for 2-sided work. So I had 100 copies of the 9 pages printed up while I waited. I must concede a certain superiority of time and convenience to photocopy, especially at 3c a page. I figure my ditto is about 1c a page, but includes a substantial investment of time.

Anyway, to save Betty the horrors of my re-typing on ditto masters, I did run off her 9 pages on photo-copy. Just as my Chilean Vacation report was run off on mimeo by Lee Gold.

Next to admire in this zine are your Editorial and your fan history. I'll have to send a letter to Peregrine about that Chandler omnibus. I have always felt that A. Bertram Chandler has been tremendously undervalued as an SF writer. And your fan history is most welcome for its insight into the early days of Australian fandom.

I don't know what the situation may be like in Australia, but here in the USA we don't have the "Writers of the Future" contests and publications! What we do have is *L. RON HUBBARD'S WOTF* contest and books. The name of Hubbard is always as big or bigger than the phrase WOTF. As far as I am concerned, this is an attempt to rehabilitate the Hubbard name for the gross scam of Scientology. Sorry, but a crook is a crook is a crook, and I have never bought a single book or pamphlet of *HUBBARD'S WOTF* and never will. The swindler didn't get a penny of my money when he was alive and will not get a penny of it now that he is dead.

And no amount of cash spending from front-organisations for Scientology, publishers or otherwise, will get an ounce of respect from me for the creep. Short snort...

R Lorraine Tutihasi is quite correct in saying that my con going experience is very limited. 1 or 2 a year, 3 at the most. However, I get enough fanzines with con reports to agree that there is a *trend* towards more no-smoking spaces at cons, as well as less emphasis on alcohol, and heavy drinking.

In fact, last weekend I attended a small *media-con* held in Oklahoma City, about a half hour from Norman. Thundercon One was about 500-600 attendees, but felt more like 200-300. All function rooms were no-smoking, and that included the con suite. Said con suite did serve beer, but strictly enforced ID control, and if somebody showed up drunk would refuse to serve. Room parties were cautioned about the laws of under-age drinking, and all in

all the con went quite smoothly. Media con or not, I had quite an enjoyable time, and would certainly be able to attend a few more cons like that. (6.6.91)

BRIAN EARL BROWN, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA.

THE MENTOR 70 was lovely with its Xerox cover, now sadly detached due to some rough handling on my part.

Your reviews of recent Australian sf publications was interesting, but I'm a little confused by your comment on p92, the last paragraph: "But for the fact the several stories were set in the USA the others had an Australian flavour". This seems like two incomplete clauses and *not* a balanced sentence. But, are you saying that Australian written stories set in the US are not "as good" as Australian written stories set in Australia, or are you saying that Australian writers should only write with Australian settings? You're probably trying to say that 'tis a pleasure to read stories that feel free to invoke a distinctly Australian landscape, instead of aping after generic US settings.

I'm glad to see that you're continuing your fannish memoirs.

Peter Brodie offers quite a parcel of reasons for regarding FORBIDDEN PLANET as a monumental SF film innovator. Some (like #18: "Entire story set in another solar system") seem minor or a duplicate of another item (viz. #73 "Journey to legitimate extra-solar destination (Altair)"). But his list does point out how different this movie was from what also was being made back then. FP *feels* like it was a part of the mainstream of SF whereas the others were made Hollywood re-inventions. (10.6.91)

PETER BRODIE, 15/16 Waratah St., Cronulla, NSW 2230.

Julie Hawkins: it depends on how up him or her self each fan seems to be. Some fans are great, others are dorks. Just like real life.

Glen Chapman: The FORBIDDEN PLANET list relates to SF movies, nothing else, as others seem to realise. I suggest you have your brain dry-cleaned. All your observations are completely wrong due to you not reading *exactly* what I wrote, paying much attention to what was written and lack of real research and understanding. I won't clarify all the reasons you flunked as the only reason I wanted the list published was to get any clunkers deleted by more knowledgeable fen. So far, the list is still intact. I have done a *great deal* of research on this list and movie, believe me. If future investigations

show any of my observations to be wrong I'll send in amendments, telling what and why, to Ron for publishing. Ah me, it's tough being right so often. And for those of you who think I'm getting out of it cheaply I invite you to compare my exact wording in the list with Chapman's numbers. You'll see what I mean. (17.6.91)

JOHN TIPPER, PO Box 487, Strathfield, NSW 2135.

Congrats on the look of ish 71. The new layout is just right and should - should - satisfy everyone. MM has come up with his best cover yet, although it may have been a better idea to use it on a Summer issue. The general effect upon looking at the cover at this time of year was to break into fits of shivering...!

Both CASSIOPEIA-B and A CHANGE OF HEART were very depressing stories. It was a good move inserting IS ANYBODY THERE? and ALDERSON IN THE DOCK between the two. And DISCONNECTED was an amusing little insert. No doubt someone will write that "It's been done before", but hasn't just about every story been reworked from something earlier? Can anyone tell me if there have been *any* original stories written lately? (No doubt I'll regret asking that question...)

Of the two stories mentioned above, I thought A CHANGE... to be the better, as it had far more depth of feeling. It would probably film really well, as an ep of THE TWILIGHT ZONE, when this series is revived once again.

THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE was my own favourite story in this issue. Extremely well-written, entertaining with a touch of macabre humour thrown in for good measure, it also contains a good measure of *suspense*. I'm sure everyone else will disagree with me on the following point. That is, very little fiction, SF or otherwise, contains this most important ingredient, these days. Nice artwork from Steve Fox.

The QUIZ was so very, very close to the truth; it *was* the truth!

Lots of encouraging letters in this issue. Glen's letter will encourage not a little feedback - from one character, at least. My long ago remark that spaceships are easier to draw than dragons was, after all, just a personal view (as are everyone's remarks). As is my thought that Mike Glicksohn's sole talent is most probably self-abuse! I've always found it far easier to draw animals, etc., than machines, which generally require balanced designs and the occasional straight line. Well, they did back in the 40s and 50s, folks!

Gary - criticism of moi is greatly appreciated. I wouldn't dream

of giving you a serve for your amusing observation. The only people I lambast are those who direct undeserved criticism at other contributors (undeserved, in my 'umble opinion, naturally...). In fact, I'll agree with you concerning your observations on Hubbard. (20.6.91)

JULIE VAUX, c/- Wright College, Uni. New England, Armidale 2351.

I particularly liked the first short story in TM 71, CASSIOPEIA B. Excellent work!

Locs - Sigh, Peter's letter. Ol Mr Booth. The Tuareg kept Negro slaves just as the urban Arabs did, *but* also, you may be interested to know... let's repeat your exact quote/error:

"... the Turkish people, linguistically, extend from Asia Minor to about Sinkiang anyway," [this is true *presently*, *but*]... "and have done since the days of Republican Rome..."

SIGH, SUCH APPALLING IGNORANCE... Unfortunately for Booth I am a student amongst other things (including classical Greek and Latin) of *historical* linguistics. I don't know exactly what were the boundaries of the *Turkic* speaking areas in 753 b.c., but one of them wasn't Asia *Minor*! Evidently Mr. Booth has never learnt or studied ancient history or he would know from the days of Republican Rome up to the Seljuk and Ottoman Turk's invasions and migrations in the Middle Ages *Greek* was the dominant language in Asia Minor - well, the coastal regions and major river valleys, and most of the surviving speakers of the Anatolian languages would have been bilingual during the Hellenistic and Imperial eras.

Please read Freya Stark or my article.

(Yes, I'm being more feline than anything else, but I'm in the middle of revising for exams and an error so easy to pounce upon is hard to resist. Besides, it's appalling enuff when one meets uni. students who haven't grasped pleasurably the concept of reading for pleasure - I prefer to maintain the illusion that at least some fans are well-informed readers with broad interests - y'all know that mythical being, the Renaissance fan?) (25.6.91)

GRAI HUGHES, 22 Blue Hills Cresc., Blacktown 2148.

What's in a name? as a renowned bard once wrote. Title and *nom de plume* are as much a part of text as text itself. I have written under a range of signatories: Grai Hughes, Staktepos Apochroia, Steven Thron and South are just a few, some of which also appear as characters in the stories of these other mythological players. As any writer knows, the invention of names and the significance behind them is

one of the pleasures reserved for the author. Name calling is also a curious phenomena. Take Peter Booth's mistaken apprehension of last issue, that my name is "Craig". I would remind Peter Booth that what an individual chooses as a name is solely the decision of that individual.

By his name calling, however, he has hung himself by his own petard.

Petard, a curious term itself, meaning, according to the unreliable MacQuarie Dictionary, "an engine of war or explosive device formerly used to blow in a door or gate, form a breach in a wall, etc.". An amusing etymological chain is derived: *peter* from the French meaning to break wind, from *pet*, meaning fart, from the Latin *petitum*, from *pedere*, break wind. *Peter* also means "to diminish gradually and then disappear" while a black *peter* is "a punishment cell devoid of light or furniture" which, by coincidence, is rather like a booth.

Thus, while I derive *Grai Hughes* from the following poetical transaction: *Have you ever looked at the sky on a overcast day? What colour is it? Grey. Wrong, the sky is blue, it is the clouds you see. Grai is that which is mistaken for. Peterbooth is etymologically derived as an odious toilet in which occurs the breaking of wind, a small fart, which, if he will take the following as advice, gradually diminishes and disappears.*

I am a man and have never claimed otherwise. Some of my stories have female leads, and if the characterization has inadvertently convinced readers that they were authored by a woman, I can only consider it a compliment to my ability. It is because women are a consuming passion of mine that I try to characterize them passionately, lovingly and well.

Regarding *errata*, a correction incorrectly corrected; the ultimate line of EXPERIMENTALISMAN should have read, "No more to dream, at last I sleep." (26.6.91)

PETER BOOTH, PO Box 44, Woodridge, Qld 4114.

The laser-printing is a giant leap for zinekind. The Imagewriter (or the like) font you used was a bitch to read at times. First ETHEL THE AARDVARK now TM, it seems the minimum standard for zines seem to be laser-printing...

CASSIOPEIA B's style reminded me of Flaubert's. Marie-Louise appears to be influenced by the French Romantics. The story itself was OK.

Ron, how did DISCONNECT make it past your editorial mind? That had to be the 9 billionth time I'd read an epigram like that.

To this date I've wondered to the meaning of THE YANKEE PRIVATEER or Mae Strelkov's discourses, neither contributed to SF or fiction itself in

any way, but it is a comment you attached to the end of my last letter which I feel goes against everything I thought TM was about. To get to the point, I'll quote you: "There is a big difference between SF readers and SF fans - the fans have usually lost that "Sense of Wonder" with SF and no longer read it." Then what are you doing producing a fanzine? Your zine carries both SF and related fiction and book reviews. If you're a fan, then by your own definition, you shouldn't have a skerrick to do with zinedom and book reviewing; perforce - you have grown up, lost your sense of wonder and no longer read it, remember. So, you're doing us kids a favour by printing fan fiction and reviewing books, then? Every fan I can think of reads the shit in some profusion. Most fanzines don't have SF, true, but they are music, film and sport zines, so they don't have to, to they? Frankly, your comment is ridiculous and enforces an earlier allegation I made concerning a "been there, done that" attitude.

I can refer to a recent letter Jean Weber sent me, where she riles me for claiming her fanzine, WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE, is SF based. She swore black and blue it was nothing more than a glorified letter to friends, despite the fact she reviewed books as well and talked about conventions. Is TM an overblown letter to mates as well? Be prepared to back up incredibly dumb statements Ron, no matter if you know more than me, or seen more of the world. Sure half the things I say are offensive, but I'm still able to answer any challenge. If my letters "shed light on the LoC writers' personality", well more fool them, because the written word rarely reveals a damned thing, but despite claims that I know zip about fandom when I call all nerds, is just a cry from the wilderness.

I have the advantage of being an outsider looking in. You are all likely to class punks and skinheads into the same boat as well, although diversity does exist amongst their ranks.

So, brownie points to guys like me, David Tansey, Peter Brodie and Glen Chapman for exercising their vaunted right to bigmouth. I've gotten enough letters from David to know exactly how he feels about fandom, and his views echo mine. He just hasn't voiced himself in TM to make people realise that.

And, to throw a wrench into the sombrero factory, TM has to be the best-looking zine in Australia, even if its contents fall short of its cover. I do look forward to getting each issue, not just to be carping either, and #71 is good, but... come on, Ron, what are you? A jaded old man

ready for a retirement home, or an enthusiastic man who is wise enough to know that innovation and surprise are out there. Your Sense of Wonder may be gone, yet you have made a zine for the last 25 years, why? To prove futility? Really, the comments you hung on to the end of my letter are stupid. Think about it. (23.6.91)

(Well, I was a little unclear there - I should have written sf faaaan, though nowadays, those people call themselves sf fans - witness the nominations for Ditmars. In that regard I am an sf reader, rather than an sf fan. Depends on your depth of knowledge of sf fandom. Reading Chuck Connor's reprinting of Harry Warner's ALL OUR YESTERDAY'S essays, you can see it all happened before, in the 1930's and 1940's, let alone the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's. - Ron.

SHANE DIX, 2/26 Diagonal Rd, Glengowrie, S.A. 5044.

THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE by P. J. Roberts had the promise of a good SF/horror story, though I felt the overall effect was spoiled with excessive amounts of useless information. The story could be considerably tightened, for example, by getting rid of the rubbish about Louise recalling scenes from the BLACK LAGOON movie, and Shane's own preference to modern horror flicks. Something along the lines of:

Feeling something nip her foot, Louise called out in panic, 'Something bit my foot!'

'Jaws lives!' Shane teased.

... would work a lot better in my eyes, and would not detract from the horror atmosphere which was trying to be established. And I also think the ending could have been improved markedly by not elaborating on what happened in the years that followed the cordoning off of the lake. A more suggestive ending would have been suitably more chilling, with, say, the mentioning of heavy rains and the lake overflowing into the river... Thus it implies rather than explains, and leaves a bit more for the reader to think about. Of course, I could be completely off the mark and the whole thing could just as well have been an elaborate parody of early pulp fiction (the title would tend to support this theory). Maybe. Anyway, the best of this issue's fiction.

Another good looking glossy cover with Mark McLeod's artwork. Pity you're going to be losing the full colour cover though. Never mind. As long as you don't lose the contributors themselves, we should be alright.

And no, Mr Brodie, I've no intentions of changing my diet just yet. (2.7.91)

BUCK COULSON, 2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348, USA.

Most of the FAN QUIZ questions in TM 71 didn't include answers that fitted my reactions at all. #1 (e) 'So What'. #2 (f) Write the damned letter. #3 (d) #4 (f) Books, what else? #5 (e) Who needs a special place? #6 (g) None of the above. #7 (e) It's the only con that hasn't had me for a GoH. #8 (f) None of the above. #9 I never attend costume functions. #10 (d). Incidentally, in question 7, answers b and c are reasons for accepting the alleged honor of FGoH; not reasons for it being offered; even humor should be consistent.

Not at all bad fiction, though I didn't find any one story vastly superior to the others.

As for the fifteen credit cards that Jackson mentioned, 7 are for assorted brands of petrol (on a long trip it's handy to be able to take whatever brands are available), 4 are cards for specific chain stores, one is for telephone calls (for help, and that one has come in handy more than once), and 3 are actually general-purpose cards, VISA, Mastercard and Discover, the last of which I've never used.

In real terms, "memory metal" is metal which can be treated in a specific way; usually heated, if I recall correctly, and it will reform to its original shape. (The first shape into which it was formed, not back into the original ore.) However, I don't even remember it being used in FORBIDDEN PLANET, or whether it was used in the laboratory first.

Seems to me that the relationship between the pound and the \$ that Terry Jeeves questions was about right for that period. I do know that the pound slipped to less than two dollars at one time, because I was buying books and magazines from Ken Slater back then. Of course, that was the English pound... did Australia have pounds or dollars? (Yes, I *should* check the original article before commenting.)

[Australia had pounds, then when we converted to dollars back in about 1966 we took the ten shilling note as the dollar, while the UK stuck to the full pound as their main unit - pun intended. We also went metric a few years later and most people found that a lot harder for the old brain to come to grips with; even now I find it easier to visualise feet, as against, say, 40 cms - Ron]

Well, originally a science fiction fan was a devoted reader of science fiction, just as football fans are people who get out as often as possible to watch the games. It didn't require a fan to read only science fiction, or do anything besides read the stuff. Then came fanzines and conventions and various authoritative fans decreed that a fan was (whatever the authority was interested in) and all others were

"fake-fans". We're not over that stage yet, though very few fans pay much attention to it. There's gender bias in fandom, too, but mostly less than there is in society in general.

Unfortunately, the "Five Civilized Tribes" (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and I believe Seminole) not only competed with white farmers but they were a minority which could be ousted with comparative safety. Though the Seminoles gave the whites a nasty surprise.

Err... review of GREENMANTLE. "... the last man he had killed had been found. His boss and his girlfriend had also been found dead.. the hit men of his previous quarry opened fire..." And then you say it's "for those who like a good fantasy, without the blood and gore." Right... (17.6.91)

STEVEN PROPOSCH, 8 Bogong Crt, Forest Hill, Vic 3131.

To begin with I'd like to thank you for replying so promptly to my submission. Your rejection letter is, without doubt, the *best* rejection I have yet received!

It sounds weird, I know, but I shall elucidate. The two rejections I have received from AUREALIS magazine were, believe it or not, *form letters!* The ticked box on one had something like "insufficient dialogue" written alongside it. I was, at that time, largely ignorant of the SF scene in this country, so I asked if the editors would be able to supply any information on it. I'm still waiting. I'm still largely ignorant.

The one other rejection I have received, (I haven't been writing for long enough to collect many), was from Penguin Books. I had sent them a bunch of poetry to peruse. They gave me the distinct impression that it was returned unread.

"Penguin publishes very little poetry, and on the whole we only consider work by poets who have had a substantial amount published in literary magazines."

See what I mean. Not a word of advice or constructive criticism. Nothing to help a young writer to grow and develop. But I'm sure you've heard all of this before.

Your letter, on the other hand, forced me to read my stories again (for the hundredth time), but *with your criticisms in mind.* As a result I have rewritten (). BUT I have also lost my previous doubts about my writing abilities and my style.

I like the stream-of-consciousness beginning and largely disagree with your criticisms..... (26.6.91)

MARIANNE PLUMRIDGE, PO Box 735, Mulgrave North,
Vic 3170.

I thought that at least this issue (TM 71) deserves comment. Mark McLeod's cover grabbed me as soon as I released TM from its plastic prison. What a superb piece! As you know, Ron, my own artwork often involves the sea and its creatures, so this one definitely appealed. Enough for me to dig out issue #69 and reread Mark's biography attached to his portfolio. It's nice to know that someone shares one's outlook for the future. Even in light of misnomers and atrocities to the Earth and its inhabitants one tends to try and find some saving nobility about the human race. I think it's called hope.

I've been dropping quite a few of my media art and writing commitments in the last six months. Trying to get back to grass roots I suppose and find out what I still love about SF. I've been doing more fantasy work of late in protest against my media deadlines. There is more of "me" in my personal stuff than there is in the media material, besides there are only so many ways one can flog an inspirationally dead horse. Don't get me wrong. I love the media stuff, and more often than not, I enjoy creating new perceptions, but it has been a long time since I actually enjoyed it like I used to in the beginning. I guess I'm feeling jaded and am trying to regain my sense of wonder of SF. It has been working a bit too. The fact that I'm really starting to enjoy the literary efforts in TM are a start. Media artist I may be labelled, but I was an SF lit. fan before I ever joined media fandom. I was writing straight SF (all now safely buried in a box somewhere) before I was twelve. So now I'm going to try and find out if lit. fandom is any different than the current media society. I'm not looking for anything in particular in fandom, except camaraderie, a little fun, and a sharing of ideas. Besides when you lot bicker, you seem to do it a lot more cleanly. Honestly? And I'm getting to know some of you through your letters to TM. Maybe I'll even meet some of you at Syncon next year. I've been hearing all these stories about lit. cons...

I really enjoyed the stories in issue #71. It's hard to put my finger on it, but CASSIOPEIA B really appealed to me. Perhaps because it is written in the first person. A very personal concept. The story is about someone being worth enough to be saved, but read in the right frame of mind, the reader can easily put themselves in the place of the heroine. Consciously or not, everyone likes to think that they matter enough to be the one chosen to go into the

lifeboat. It was well written with uncomplicated themes. Nice.

I enjoyed Buck's column. It's always good to find out new things about fellow fans. Makes for a three-dimensional picture, instead of just a face and voice seen and heard at fannish events.

Blair Hunt's IS ANYBODY THERE? was a thought provoking read. Did I miss something in the conclusion or have I guessed correctly? That Max kept his vigil longer than he thought? In the darkness, and possibly given the non power to life support, turned sleep into death. That determination to see the experiment through, made him open the door at the right time (however ghostly) so that the signal might be heard. The alien saved, and contact made. Or was Max just precognitive and the "many years" just a slip up on the author's/typist's part? I enjoyed this story very much.

A CHANGE OF HEART was okay. A good idea that could become part of something bigger. THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE was an entertaining read, with good characterisation. I thought this one very good too.

To Joy Buchanan: I too can read several books in a day. But I can appreciate your daughter's disorder. I have trouble with small series of numbers (i.e. post codes, that kind of thing). Give me a ten digit phone or publication number and I can rattle it back to you no problem. But the smaller ones escape me. My baby sister thumps me occasionally for my reading talent, but she can knit a jumper in three days... I take twelve months. So even though your daughter has difficulty reading, be assured that there is a talent elsewhere waiting to show itself. Congratulations on her determination.

I enjoyed your trip report on your 1970's tour, Ron. It was an engrossing read. Please don't wait 21 years for the trip report on the next one, I couldn't stand the suspense. I'll be seeing you and Susan in San Francisco in '93 for ConFrancisco.

Another thing I wanted to comment on was the way you've been reviewing past (I mean "really" past) conventions and fan activities. It's really great to hear about what "made" Australian fandom, and where it came from. No matter how cynical people get about fandom, we were all wide-eyed and enthusiastic in the beginning. It's refreshing to see that fans still go to conventions to share ideas, meet people and enjoy and share their chosen interests. Perhaps I've seen too much of the "what can fandom do for me" instead of the "what can I share with my fellow fan". (4.7.91)

LAURRAINE CORMACK, 15 Gannon Pl., Chamwood ACT 2615.

THE MENTOR 71 impressed me enormously. It's definitely one of your best issues. The layout was lovely, a real pleasure. On the whole the contents lived up to it.

A CHANGE OF HEART is possibly the best thing I've read from Shane Dix. A good, interesting idea which has been very well executed. I was both interested and touched. I don't think I could fault this piece at all.

IS ANYBODY THERE? was a little predictable, and some of the dialogue was a bit clumsy, and the end a little rushed, but despite all that I enjoyed it.

Lyn Elvey came up with a real gem in DISCONNECTED. Short and sharp, exactly the right length. It was amusing and effective. Joy Buchanan's piece about her daughter's reading difficulties was touching and gave me pause - exactly what she intended, I suppose. It seemed a slightly surprising inclusion, but was all the more effective for being a little unexpected.

THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE was both nasty and effective. I liked the way they didn't find a solution. Doom and gloom seems to be fashionable these days, but there are still a lot of clever heroes ready to save the day at the drop of a hat. It's refreshing when one fails to turn up.

And now for the negatives. I found CASSIOPEIA B very clumsy and derivative. This theme has been done dozens of times in dozens of ways. This rendition wasn't particularly well thought out, and lacked life. The end seemed to be tacked on because it had to be said, although we all knew what was going to happen.

ALDERSON IN THE DOCK struck me as a bit pointless and definitely self-indulgent. It looked at first as though it might be a clever little piece, but this never eventuated. (30. 6. 91)

STEVE SNEYD, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, W. Yorkshire HD5 8PB, UK.

Sad to see so little art in TM 70, though the stunning cover should I suppose be enough for any but the greedy. I presume from the curious sunken rimmed areas round each stone that these are literally rolling stones, perhaps even sentient ones, or pulled about by some mysterious force? A picture instinct with half-comprehended mystery, and beautifully reproduced.

Responding in no particular order - good to see SF poetry getting a place at VolgaCon - the wording is a bit gnomic in the con descrn, but I assume the con is actually taking place on a river boat (or flotilla of

same) - presumably this must be some sort of first, or is it?

COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD (re your review) has one scene which deserves mention as the ultimate writer's nightmare - that as time runs backward, writers have to expunge their manuscripts line by line. Your comment "when he was giving religion a glance" is I think a little misleading - there is very little, certainly of his novel-length work, that is *not* exploring religious ideas in one way or another within the fabric of events, though usually the ideas are so deeply heretical in any orthodox sense that Dick's own statement that he was basing such explorations on the beliefs of the Episcopalian (American branch of the Church of England) Church seem a curious self-deception even allowing for the present theological diversity of that church.

Have often heard of the Amtrak Wars - my problem is I can't take the concept seriously enough to try any because the word Amtrak is so associated in my mind with the American passenger rail network - like calling a British SF series the Britrail Wars! Another unfortunate name choice is I think Rocall for a fantasy realm, since the real Rocall is a granite North Sea outcrop just big enough for an observation station of some sort; hence Rockall immediately associates with efall!

[Interestingly enough, the Amtrak War series reached the Best-seller list in Australia, which is why the publishers had Patrick Tilley out here on an author's tour. The waggon-trains featured in the novels brought in the Amtrak name. I think, as noted in the last book of the series. - Ron.]

Glen Chapman's loc comment: "There is no set way to build a castle, so you can configure it any way you like" must be the understatement of all time - anyone who can find two identical castles, of any period, even when built as a group by the orders of one person, as with the Edwardian castles in Wales, or the f10 towers of the Dublin Pale, has pulled off some sort of a miracle! Now if it'd been identical Roman forts, then "can be done".

This question of claiming more and more cultures as of Black African origin (brilliantly parodied many years ago by Waugh in BLACK MISCHIEF's account of the Azanian Embassy) does seem a pointless ahistoricity; when sub-Saharan Africa has a wide range of genuine high-order achievements to boast - Zimbabwe, the Benis sculptures, immense achievements in orally transmitted poetry in many places, etc etc - why muddy the water with bogus or dubious claims? The latest one surfacing here is the demand that Cleopatra should be played only by black actresses. Since she was Macedonian descent (and, as I

understand it the Ptolemies followed the previous Pharaonic tradition of incestuous marriages to maintain the bloodline, so legitimate children will have remained fairly thoroughly of that "blood-group") this seems merely silly. Since there are possibilities of a fairly high order that the original megalith builders were from North Africa/Malta (possibly a proto-Berber group), I await the claim that Stonehenge was built by black Africans - or perhaps it has already been made somewhere?

Seeing Harry Warner's loc reminds me that I recently treated myself to a copy of ALL OUR YESTERDAYS - not the original one, which I believe a highly expensive rarity, but an omnibus of HW Jrs' writings about fanzines and other matters, 40 reprinted articles dating from between 1951 and 1975. This megatome was produced by Chuck Connor, and the UK price is an amazingly reasonable f4.50 (no idea what Oz price wd. be - as Chuck is in the RN, he'd presumably have no problems if paid in Australian currency) - anyway, excuse the gratuitous plug, but it really is a feast for anyone interested in entertaining writing and ancient fanzines. (Chuck's address: c/- Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, nr Haleswroth, Suffolk IP19 0NF, England.

[I've read that volume - or at least most of it at this time, and heartedly recommend it to any fan serious about fandom - at least serious in the sense of being a part of it. A MUST for any fan's library. - Ron.]

His (HWJ's) loc mentions that he'd never been able to pin down the originator of "the usual" re sending out fnzs. It may be of interest that Derek Pickles, editor in the '50s of PHANTASMAGORIA over here, and who's just recontacted fandom after many years' gap, believes that he himself originated the phrase/system.

The Peter Brodie list is a stunning bit of research - just wish he'd revealed how many viewings of the film it took to compile it!

BOIL THE WATER, though the concept is pretty cliched (the most memorable use of the particular idea of human beings pulled into a mutational eco-cycle of linked beings I can think of being the ending of the first of Vance's DEMON PRINCES series.. Aldiss also draws on it in a beautiful man-to-seal image, reminiscent of the Border ballads, in a story, etc etc ad inf) is handled in a lively way that pulls the reader on, though I found implausible in hindsight the fact that if this time the watchers were able to get so much information, nearly up to the point of George's final transmutation, why had so little been learned with the same technology in previous agent-ops?

Incidentally, enthusiasts for this mutation genre might enjoy a new Sheri S. Teppell novel, GRASS, which handles the theme very vividly.

Your con history obviously would fascinate those who know the people/places, but equally obviously I can't comment (nor, casting back a page or so, do I feel impelled to comment on the poems this time.)

HUMAN ERROR is very readable, the story-within-a-story element is handled in a tidily non-confusing way, and as a parody of a certain type of cliché SF it is a smile-raiser, if not a belly-laugh. But I feel it is either much too long or much too short - much too long for the import of the joke, much too short if the intent was to also parody the interactions of writers and editors (and indeed the coming to "unwanted life" of their material).

I thought I was badly paranoid, but (one final cast-back to LOClard) to think that o'seas locs were at the front to pander to the poms is really conspiracy theory time gone mad - if you put em last the cry presumably wd then be "Clarke's giving foreigners the last word!" Reminded me of the theory here that the First Class carriages of HSTs (High Speed Trains) are at the back leaving London for "the provinces" so first class passengers can stay nearer London than anyone else, and at the front going toward London so they get there first!

The whole question of whether a publication is actually paying contributors is a matter of very complex definition - one semi-pro here, in a time of stringency, gave contributors free ads to the value of the cash payment they shd've had, to promote their books or etc. Some US ones pay home contributors in cash, overseas ones in subs or stamps or other items in kind. One here sends the money it makes as a surplus to charity, so authors, though not getting cash, do get a "warm glow". It seems to me, that unless a so-much-a-word cut-off is imposed and the organisers demand to see evidence an actual cheque/check has been paid out, then the vast cloud of unknowing generated by pointless attempts at definition is unleashed yet again!

My congratulations on achieving the grand total of 70 issues - remarkable figure, and sterling proof that the theory that using "fanfic" puts the black spot on fanzines belongs with the belief in phlogiston and that the Berlin Wall would last for a thousand years. 23.5.91

An extraordinary cover again on #71 - sentient semi-metallic flying icebeast-city-aircraft-war machine? Curiously symbolic today hearing the news of the coup in Soviet Union, something vast and powerful out of the

Northland with the tiny glimpse of a warmer green world crushed into a squeezed threatened bubble... anyway, too early to say anything sensible abt the news but as I say yr cover takes on a curious new meaning in the context.

Enjoyed Buck Coulson's tale of his "religious operations" - I too have Universal Life Church ordination, given by a friend in America years ago, but have never been tempted to try to "practise" whatever the faith is - I suspect in any case I would not be allowed to perform any ceremonies of legal validity here anyhow.

Of the stories, Shane Dix's A CHANGE OF HEART is genuinely moving - successfully converts a technical/mathematical concept into a very convincing human dilemma. DISCONNECTED was an amusing shaggy dog/black comedy tale. CASSIOPEIA B began atmospherically but the happy ending seemed to come too easily to be wholly believable, and THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE, while if filmed I think it would make a super B picture thriller/horror in the '50s genre, had characters so uninteresting that it was hard to care on the printed page how many bits of them the hungry "water" chovelled.

Julie Hawkins' comments about castles tempt me towards the idea of a lengthy riposte, but I will spare you... I am genuinely impressed, though, how many oversimplifications and misleading statements she has managed to build into such a short space. To take just the easiest example to deal with briefly: "Concentric" means one life of defense fully enclosing another; having a common point. Therefore, an earthwork fully enclosing a keep *is* a concentric structure. Anyway, as said, will forbear from "taking up swords" on this one, but I do politely suggest she studies a few books on (medieval) military architecture somewhere along the line before laying down the law on this particular topic.

If memorability is a test of an SF writer, I must admit "Elron's" SLAVES OF SLEEP has struck with me at least in outline for decades when many other (probably much better) SF novels I've read are totally forgotten - I don't think the fact he proved to have a sinister genius for cult-creation necessarily makes him a bad writer: the two things are surely not mutually exclusive. (19. 8. 91)

GARY DEINDORFER, 447 Bellevue Ave., #9-B, Trenton, NJ 08618, USA.

Another lovely color cover on TM 70. It is always a pleasure to receive an issue of THE MENTOR from the Antipodes, definitely one of the visually most beautiful fanzines I get. The only other one that can at

all compare with it is the British fan John D. Owen's SHIPYARD BLUES.

I am pleased to hear from your *Editorial Slant*, Ron, that there are some new venues for Australian sf writers to publish their work. Perhaps it is partially due to the sterling influence set by THE MENTOR in encouraging indigenous talent. And by all means, encourage your indigenous talent. Don't have your writers imitate the US and British SF writers. After all, I sometimes think it is because Bertram Chandler was a sea-going man living in your part of the world where the night sky is completely different from our Northern hemisphere sky that he might've gotten the idea for the Rimworld series. By the way, I yearn to gaze upon what must be your astonishing Australian night sky. Maybe if I save my pennies I can get to your Land someday.

I think David Tansey's story is the winner of the issue. A stories-within-a-story story. I like that kind of thing since I have a Douglas Hofstadterian fondness for such recursions. It is interesting that unlike some avant-garde fiction where recursion is all too typically used (because literary critics always seem to love it to death, eh?), this device in the Tansey story is the entire *raison d'etre* of the plot. I like the idea, and the story is deftly and economically told. My favorite piece of fiction for this issue.

Your ruminations are fascinating. I always like to hear about fannish socializing in other countries because that way I get to discover all sorts of ways your mores differ from American ones, fannish or otherwise, and I find such information of interest. As for that orgy, why not hold an Orgycon where the main activity would be daytime and early evening orgies, after which the sated and exhausted fans would gather in their hotel rooms to watch movies, game, hold panel discussions, smof, etc.? Well, it was just a thought, I never expected it to become reality.

I like the angelic girl on page 16. A beautifully drawn piece of work, the line is so flowing and light and deft. My compliments to the chef!

John Danza's daughter is very pretty. I'll bet she has the lascivious young malefans running after her, eh?

I have a better idea of what you look like now, Ron. You are tall and rather studious looking in a pleasing sort of way. A photo of you next issue, please, Susan? As for me, I am medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, moustache, glasses, hair combed over my forehead Julius Caesar style (to conceal the high, receding nature of my hairline), somewhere between very stocky and slightly fat; that is, I

have too big a gut, and heavy legs and large shoulders, but nothing else but the gut is fat on me except for a pair of what have gotten to look like puffed out chipmunk cheeks. I would cast around for a recent photo to send you both but can't find one at the moment.

I think Margaret Pearce's story is too much a replay of her story in THE MENTOR 69. You have the homo sapiens, the hermaphroditic aliens, and their absorption of the humans into their strange life cycle. Is not that a run through of the other story? The other story was very good, and I hope that Margaret, whom I feel shows great promise of being able to sustain a professional writing career, isn't running thin on her ideas.

Peter Brodie's list is awesome. It has been some years since I have seen FORBIDDEN PLANET, certainly one of the finest sf movies of all time. I'll have to rent a copy and refer to this exhaustive list which must have been exhausting for Peter to compile, but I am glad that he went to all that trouble. By the way, wasn't actress Anne Francis a doll back in those days? And any movie with the magnificent Walter Pidgeon can't go wrong. By the way, you are aware, I believe, that it is said this movie is based on Shakespeare's play THE TEMPEST, with Pidgeon as the wizard Prospero and the robot as his slave Caliban?

Always good to see a Mike Glicksohn loc. He writes them so deftly and unpretentiously, and perhaps it helps that he's pleasantly soused while he's writing them. I can't write when I'm bombed; I would have to keep hitting the "correct" key on this electronic typewriter every other word or so. The fireworks I expected to see in Glicksohn's reply to John Tipper's provocative insults aimed at the Glick in #69 fail to take place this time. Maybe next time, or next Glicksohn letter, hmmm? But I jest. I don't think feuds help fandom. They hurt it more, as witness the Bergeron and Ashley brouhahas.

I don't begrudge you Aussie's your Ditmar awards. No reason I can see why you blokes shouldn't have your own awards. It means very little to me otherwise, because awards for writing, movies, music or whatever don't influence me very much.

I agree with Shane Dix that DR. STRANGELOVE is an immortal classic. Peter Seller's, Sterling Hayden's and George C. Scott's performances can cause me to chuckle inwardly to myself every time I think about them. My favourite scene is where Peter Sellers is humoring Hayden as General Jack D. Ripper whom he realizes wants to start a nuclear war and is also completely bonkers. He chuckles and keeps saying

as Hayden launches into his schizophrenic tirade against the Russians, "Haha, right, Jack," "Haha, yes, Jack." Have your ever had some nut talk to you and have felt that way? I have. Not only that, I dare admit sometimes I have been the one mouthing off that the other person was forced to humor, but not so much any more as years ago when I used to overdo the psychedelics.

We all live and lurch.

I love Julie Vaux speculating that European cultures are descendants of psychopaths ejected from more southerly matrilineal cultures. Who knows that this might actually be the truth? Anyway, it's a canny observation or insight on Julie's part.

Harry Warner is also typically canny on the Eloi being a long-term-for-little meat source for the Morlocks.

Mae Strelkov certainly has me wondering about the redness or the lack thereof of the star Sirius.

Laurraine Tutihasi is someone whose intelligent locs I have seen in fanzines for over ten years. May she keep writing her perceptive comments in fanzines and maybe someday (one hopes) in prozines for decades to come.

Nice illo on page 52.

I am beginning to realize that Grai Hughes has a real talent for word magic. In other words he or she is a real stylist. I like this story very much.

By the way, the new album from Midnight Oil is really beautiful. They capture the feeling of what I imagine Australia to be like outside of the citified area; that is, it's lonely mysterious holy vastness. (5.7.91)

SUE BURSZYNSKI, 11/127 Brighton Rd, Elwood, Vic 3184.

What a superb cover on THE MENTOR 71!. There were also many other things to like about the zine. I do like reading book reviews; with books as dear as they are nowadays, it's nice to have the chance to read about new releases before shelling out your hard-earned money, and to find out what's available.

Buck Coulson's column was entertaining. Makes me think of that scene in BIMBOS OF THE DEATH SUN where a fannish couple want to marry at a con, in Starfleet uniform, and invite along a visiting folk-singer to play the role of Scotty... You'd get some weird requests, I should think.

The SF FAN QUIZ was fun. I go a score of 33 and gave myself a pat on the back, but then, one never knows with these things; I know of a happily-married mother-of-several who did a quiz in a women's magazine

according to which she was about ready for a divorce!

Quite enjoyed the fiction, on the whole. CASSIOPEIA B was a nice bit of wishful thinking - wouldn't we all like to escape the pollution and start again? Perhaps a bit too much exposition, not enough story.

I'm afraid I totally missed the point of A CHANGE OF HEART, so can't comment on it.

THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE was well-written, if a bit gory for my taste. I'm afraid, however, that I can't believe that all this business of something coming from space and first fish, then kids, being chewed up, could simply happen without the arrival of the press and several dozen government, army and science types, or that it wouldn't be reported by the locals. It was also hard to swallow the idea that, having seen this thing dissolve in the lake, nobody would think to connect it with the deaths of all the fish. Also, is it really necessary for the lake to take on the shape of a mouth? Would such a life-form need a mouth as we know it? Maybe it just digests things directly? It's not a bad idea for a bit of black humour and might just work out well, re-written and tightened a bit, as a horror tale. Good luck, P.J. Roberts!

My favourite, in this issue, was IS ANYBODY THERE? It's a nice, gentle tale; besides, I like cats, so there!

DISCONNECTED was cute.

Has Joy Buchanan thought of asking a few folk with better speaking voices to tape books for her daughter? I'll do one if she'll let me know what the young lady likes. I don't mind; we have a talking books program at the school where I work and believe me, after the first four or five, you no longer feel embarrassed by the sound of your own voice. We also put in a bit of music to jazz the tape up and the kids love it. Or there are the professional talking books, which are not as dear as they were; if you poke around, you can find them on special, too. They are usually read by well-known actors and often don't cost any more than, say, a trade paperback.

Oh, yes, Ron, there certainly are print SF fans who name their children after their favourite characters; I know of one, at least - and why not, as long as the name isn't something weird the poor kid will have to keep explaining to people? (18. 7. 91)

ALAN STEWART, PO Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vic 3005.

Firstly I am writing to you as the current Australian FFANZ Administrator with regard to the enclosed copy of the ballot for the 1991/2 FFANZ race to bring a New Zealand fan across to Syncon '92. I

would appreciate it if you would distribute copies of the ballot with the next mailing of THE MENTOR.

On a personal note, just a few comments about the last two issues of THE MENTOR. Congratulations on the color reproductions for your covers. The rocks on #70 were particularly effective. I enjoyed your convention reminiscences as they helped put a few faces to names, and explain some of the "mythos" associated with Australian fandom. For someone who has only been involved in active fandom since 1985, I appreciate any history being passed on.

In reply to Mike Glicksohn, the two major expenses for Australian conventions are the Function Rooms and the overseas GoH airfare. For a four day Convention, say the Natcon over Easter, with probably 2-3 program strands, and 200-300 members, the hire of rooms (Hucksters, Art Show, video and film, Main Program, second program, Fan Lounge) will come to about \$8-10,000 at the moment, depending on the quality of the hotel being used. Add in \$2-4,000 for one, or two, overseas air fares and the initial cost is \$10-14,000 for these two items alone. For an estimated attendance of 250 say, this sets the minimum membership rate at \$40-56. The attendee would also have to pay for hotel accommodation which can range from \$50-180 per night for a double, again depending on the hotel. With a minimum cost of attending at about \$240 (3 nights, a couple) Australian cons are much more expensive than a US one of the same number of members, mainly due to the accommodation charges. The Con committee usually wants to keep the membership cost down as much as possible, so don't spend up big in provisions for the fan Lounge. They'd rather use the money for film hire, or a make-up demonstration, say, not food which you can get down the street.

Thanks to Steve Sneyd for his comments on ISOTOPIA. The title was originally designed as a play on the word utopia, plus I liked using the isotope reference given the content of the poem. I hadn't realised the equal state (of destruction) explanation was also present. By coincidence, both Steve and myself had poems in the recently published anthology TIME FRAMES from Rune Press.

David Tansey appears to have his facts a bit mixed up when he refers to the "recent winning of the Huttcon short story competition by its Secretary" (page 43, THE MENTOR 70). The Australian SF Media Award for best fan Writer, awarded at Huttcon, was indeed won by Edwina Harvey, who happened to be the Secretary of Huttcon. The nomination and voting for this award was conducted by an

independent Subcommittee, and nomination was open to anyone in fandom, and voting was by any member of the convention. The Short Story competition was won by Rory Evins of Tasmania whose only connection with Huttcon was mailing in his story.

THE MENTOR 71 looks neat with the laser printer. The two column format definitely make the R&R Dept. more readable, but I'm not sure of it's effect on the fiction, except to save paper with not as much white space overall. (20. 7. 91)

[The two column format is definitely better, I think, If there is only one column, then there are too many words in one line for the eye to take in at one sweep. I think three columns is overdoing it, though, as there is too much white space and the words tend to be spaced too far apart for justification, and if left unjustified, then the white space looks even worse. - Ron]

SUE THOMASON, 190 Coach Rd., Sleights, via Whitby, North Yorks YO22 5EN, UK.

Another superb colour cover on THE MENTOR 70; this one reminded me very much of a para-Tarot set of cards by De Es called THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE. This is a set of 40 concept cards based around "stone" as an idea/element - does Mark McLeod know them? The landscape in the cover painting seems clean and sparse to me, rather than bleak and barren (perhaps because of the smoothness of the ground, the softness and delicacy of the cloud shapes in the sky, the complex shape-echoes between the rounded stones, or the restrained cool colours of the ground and stone). The stones seem almost alive to me; there's a feeling of rightness to the scene, animal or lush plant life would seem out of place in that setting. I get feelings of great calm and strength from the landscape; this is a place I'd like to visit and be quiet in.

I was both amused and impressed by David Tansey's story HUMAN ERROR; a very neat piece of writing which I thoroughly enjoyed reading. I don't want to analyse its effect; I'd rather just enjoy it - this story and the cover were definitely the highlights of the magazine for me.

BETTY WILDER, ADELAIDE, S. A.

Having been reading and enjoying science fiction for a number of years now, it surprises me that I have never heard of THE MENTOR. You produce a very professional looking magazine, and over the years I would imagine you would have seen a lot of the more illustrious magazines fall by the wayside.

I loved Buck Coulson's column, but I must admit to being left a little bemused by his closing remarks. Can you elaborate? Or am I one of those "neofans" who has just fallen

into one of those traps? I read Mae Strelkov's article with interest, even though much of it did go over my head. A lot of research appears to go into her work.

Of the two issues I have read (#70 and #71) I preferred the contents of issue #70, though thought the appearance of #71 was far superior. The covers of both were quite lovely. Mark McLeod paints a striking picture. Has he ever had anything published - without meaning to sound condescending - professionally? The standard of his work tends to suggest he should have.

[In his short biography in TM 69 Mark mentions he has had paintings published as cover art in OMEGA, as well as art in other magazines such as SIMPLY LIVING. In fact he is currently selling many of his paintings - I have colour photos of these, if anyone is interested. The prices range from \$50 to \$400. - He has moved to New Zealand recently and I have lost track of him - Hopefully I can re-contact him and get some more artwork for THE MENTOR - Ron.]

I thought the fiction in #70 was very good, especially HUMAN ERROR and BOIL THE WATER. I guess I missed the point completely of THE LAST HOPE. It was too wordy for me. The author seemed to be concentrating on dazzling us with style rather than content. I did read another Grai Hughes story recently in AUREALIS called 21st CENTURY DREAMTIME and enjoyed it very much. About the only story I enjoyed in #71 was Lyn Elvey's DISCONNECTED. Quite amusing. The rest was rather bland. Was P. J. Roberts' story's title a misprint? Should it have read something like THE CRYSTAL FROM OUT OF SPACE (or "Outer Space", depending on your breeding I suppose).

[Grai Hughes' 21st CENTURY DREAMTIME was published in TM 62 in January, 1989. The title was P.J. Roberts' own. - Ron.]

Ron Clarke's RUMINATIONS I was only of minor interest. Being a convention goer might have helped. History was never my strong point in school though.

Sitting through a movie with Peter Brodie must be a real hoot. Very observant but - yawn - pass the popcorn. Sorry Peter. Don't mean to be nasty. I see you have already got one croweater on your back in the R&R Dept, so I will steer clear of that fray. Don't wish to make enemies on my first outing into these pages.

I do like poetry, though rarely have I seen it used as a decent medium for science fiction. LOST YOUTH was a good piece, but I would be hesitant in calling it SF.

I found the letter column to be the most entertaining of all. Some amusing and interesting comments being bandied around here. But is Peter Booth for real? I'm not sure if he is joking or not. Though I would really like to know what his sex life has to do with anything.

Lastly, what in earth is an Apazine? (18. 7. 91)

{There are organisations of fans called Amateur Press Associations. You join one, send in a certain number of copies of your own "magazine" - of at least one page length along with an annual fee, and the "Editor" - actually Compiler - staples it with one copy of each of the other contributors to the Association and mails it back out to each contributor. So you get back your one page, plus the other contributor's pages. This mailing is called an APazine. Then the contributors, for the next mailing, comment on all the other pages in the mailing except for their own. There may be up to 30 contributions in each mailing. APAs tend to be fairly parochial, even ones distributed Nationally. - Ron.]

MARIE-LOUISE STEPHENS, PO Box 138, Monbulk, Vic 3793

You know, I find it difficult to criticize someone else's story; if I don't like it at all, I say so - sometimes I might not agree because of moral or religious concepts - every criticism is so subjective - a friend likes what possibly a stranger does not. I like to recommend: point out what I think should be altered or point out the good bits which please. What luck that we are all so different and our interests vary so much - that really makes life interesting.

I am fascinated by Mae Strelkov's research as I love languages and also look for links, especially in those, where Latin is a basis. I read and re-read that and the other article. A CHANGE OF HEART - very moving...

When I looked at Blair Hunt's story I thought at first that it looked a bit disconnected because of the many short paragraphs, but then I found they slotted well into each other. It was a rather gentle story with a satisfactory end to it.

THE CRYSTAL... was well told, but my goodness it is frightening. I had to read it straight through and I was glad I wasn't going to bed immediately afterwards...

"A new planet" they say - I am rapt - everything gone and destroyed, they say, now we can start again... I include a few lines which came to me as a result of it. (6. 8. 91)

RACHEL McGRATH-KERR, 5/10 Mulgoa Rd., Penrith, NSW 2750.

I've been gradually working my way through my list of things to do. It's about the only way I can get myself organized, and even minor things like supermarket shopping have to go on the list or my half of the fridge looks bare. Tonight's trip was a bit more eventful than usual. I was accosted by a middle-aged drunk who wanted to know what I was doing tomorrow, then what I was doing tonight, etc. etc. How fortunate that I saw another checkout, nearly empty.

Come to think of it, alcohol is probably some people's way of coping with the terrors of shopping, particularly when seeing the prices. (It obviously doesn't improve taste - that bloke was older than my father).

Away from the trivia. Thanks for TM 71. I really liked IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE? I have an idea that many of us like slightly-used themes in a new background. There's nothing like familiarity, and the satisfying feel of a well-rounded story. Most enjoyable, and I like the cat touch. I must pay more attention to my cat, Tegan.

Speaking of animals, does anyone else call their pets after science fiction characters and writers? My father thought I was mad calling my cat after a Dr Who character. He preferred Doris Day but the name Tegan Jovanka has stuck. I've heard of others called Nyssa and K-9. Somehow, to many this practice of naming pets after characters is just as bad as calling kids after characters. I have taught a few kids called Krystal (or its variants), presumably courtesy DYNASTY, going by their ages. That's surely no worse.

I liked THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE. Creepy notion, and it made me eye the Nepean River cautiously for a while (one person said she thought twice about baths!). The last large paragraph was an example of something I teach my English students to avoid, and try hard to avoid myself - finishing a story too quickly. It really jarred, even though it got the essential information across to the reader. I hope that was a summary of a forthcoming sequel, or the next section of a novella. I'd like to know more about how Earth adapted to a new menace.

A PAIR OF ARROWS interested me, but mainly because of my personal interest in linguistics, continued by tertiary study. Having learnt a number of languages (*still* adding to my knowledge of those languages over the years, since you can't really claim to "know" a language *completely* when it's learnt as a second language), I can appreciate the threads which are drawn from one culture to others. (8. 8. 91)

LYNDA WEYMAN, 8 George St, Kingswood, NSW.

I mostly found the other locs my main interest in THE MENTOR. As I've been a solitary SF fan for so long, I am interested to know what other SF fans are like. From there, I'm drawn to the stories they have commented on, therefore going backwards. So far I've gone back as far as TM 69; now I may be stuck. Maybe I'd better try going forward.

As for TM 71, I didn't enjoy everything in it. I did like Joy

Buchanan's SIX MONTHS TO READ A BOOK, though. She made me realise what a lot I take for granted.

I like the style of writing in CASSIOPEIA B - right to the point, very much like diary entries.

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER fascinated me. What does Buck Coulson do for a crust? Does he always do weird things?

I would have liked an Introduction to ALDERSON IN THE DOCK.

[John Alderson has been writing locs and contributing to TM for many years and long term readers of this zine know his foibles. This article was basically an explanation of some of John's basic writings which readers of THE MENTOR's earlier issues will appreciate - Ron]

A PAIR OF ARROWS was too deep for me, but maybe Mae Strelkov could do an article on fanzine jargon - I'm lost.

THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE was enjoyable, right up to the last paragraph - what happened? (To the author, I mean).

I think the author of IS ANYBODY THERE? use of cats and dreams as contact mediums could make the reader wonder what other everyday objects and occurrences may not be as they seem. I also liked the way the author skipped from dream to reality. If the purpose was to confuse the reader as to which was which, I think he succeeded.

I found DISCONNECTED was enjoyable, concise and to the point. I also thought it would be a great introduction to SF for the previously uninitiated: no scientific jargon to confuse and no scary space monsters for the weak hearted.

I considered that the ideas in Margaret Pearce's stories BOIL THE WATER and CREW WAITING were interesting, but they could have more depth. We seem to skim along the surface of the story. I also thought a lot of the sentences overlong. Her style was similar to Anne McCaffrey's DRAGONSDAWN.

Skipping back to TM 70, I'd like to comment on THE LAST HOPE by Grai Hughes. I found it hard to read at first, but after a couple of paragraphs, I tried reading it like a Shakespearian play, or poem, and I found it much easier, and actually an emotional experience. I also did this before I got to the part that mentions the old bard himself. Really.

R LAURRAINE TUTIHASI, 5876 Bowcroft St., #4, Los Angeles, CA 90016, USA.

I like the cover of THE MENTOR 70

My favourite story in the issue was THE LAST HOPE by Grai Hughes. The other stories, I'm afraid, all bore some similarity to professional stories I had read elsewhere.

I enjoyed your RUMINATIONS. It gave a window into Australian convention fandom.

I'm grateful to David Tansey for explaining the ending of his story, UNDER PRESSURE. However, his observation makes me wonder whether all us non-Aussie fans are stupid. Did all the Aussies understand the ending?

Buck Coulson sounds as though he thinks home repairs are difficult things to do. In my case, since I am small, anything that takes strength or height I have to have help with. However, other problems are not that difficult to deal with. One thing that helps is a good reference book. Time-Life puts out a good book about home repairs. They also have a series of books that go into more detail about each home repair topic. Since I bought my condo, I have repaired the faucet, the toilet, and the tub faucet and spout in the main bathroom. All I needed were a few tools, most of which I already owned, and some new parts. I paid less than thirty dollars for all this. Even when I lived in an apartment, I fixed a toilet. I had a good landlord, and he would have fixed the leak quickly, but I found it easy to do. I know other apartment dwellers who wait months or even years for their landlords to repair things. No thanks, I prefer having more control over my life. (6.8.91)

The cover for THE MENTOR #71 is very nice. I'm sorry to hear this will be the last of your colour covers, at least for the time being.

I enjoyed this instalment of Buck Coulson's THE YANKEE PRIVATEER. My other favourite piece was Lyn Elvey's short but humorous DISCONNECTED.

On the SF FAN QUIZ, I got a score of 38.

I have a few comments. I like the new look of the fanzine. You did a nice job. Since I don't have a modem, I haven't had any problems with viruses. I feel I have heard enough about them that should I get a modem in future, I will know what to do. I hope you are able to keep them away.

I hope you will be writing up a report of your experiences in the Soviet Union, or whatever they call it these days, when you go to Volgacon. There is no way I could afford such a trip. As it is, I'm not sure I'd want to go even if I could. I like to travel in comfort, and the stories I've heard make that unlikely in the Soviet Union. I, also, could not afford to get to Chicago, though I wanted to see a friend there. Like you, I didn't want to make a nuisance of myself to my friend. I don't plan to go to San Fransisco.

In reference to Tom Jackson's letter, the Japanese are probably

correct in thinking that no one needs more than two credit cards. Though I have more, I doubt I use more than two of them regularly. I keep all my store charge cards at home, so I don't really use them. I have American Express mostly for the feeling of security it gives me; I use it mostly to guarantee hotel rooms. I have a Visa card that adds mileage to a frequent flyer programme every time I use it. I have a gold Visa card, because it doesn't cost me anything to have it. I also have a Mastercard for the same reason and also because it gives me lower rates for long distance calls I make away from home than using my phone card. The only "catch" is that I have to use it as a regular charge card at least once a year. I also have a Discover card. It doesn't cost anything, and I can charge my Sears purchases on it and get a few pennies back.

In answer to Buck Coulson, the British titles for the movies he mentioned are as follows. CURSE OF THE DEMON was called NIGHT OF THE DEMON. ENEMY FROM SPACE was QUATERMASS. THE CREEPING UNKNOWN was QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT. I could not find an alternate title for X, THE UNKNOWN, so that may have been the original title. My information comes from Halliwell's FILMGOES' S COMPANION. (13.9.91)

MIKE GLICKSOHN, (Address as above)

Another stunning cover on TM 71. Too bad it's the last I can look forward to enjoying. And if it'll put your mind at ease I couldn't tell that the printers had managed to get it crooked. It looked just fine and extremely effective to these non-artistic eyes.

Once again I forced myself not to read the fiction, thereby possibly depriving myself of a transcendental experience. On the other hand, I couldn't help but noticing that the majority of the comments in the lettercolumn that dealt with fiction from previous issues were either negative or at best lukewarm. There were a few outright positive reactions but they were definitely in the minority. I think this tends to justify my decision, even if that decision is perhaps a tad unfair to the writers who contribute fiction hoping for some feedback and/or active constructive criticism. Happily there seem to be many TM readers happy to provide that feedback so I will sleep tonight with a clear conscience.

I'm sorry you'll have to miss CHICON for financial reasons but you aren't alone. I'm not going for the same reason: I no longer feel that the airfare plus hotel bill plus meals/drinks etc is worth it for what one gets from such a three-ring circus as I expect CHICON to be. I'd

rather take that money and spread it over four or five smaller, quieter cons where I can sit and talk to my friends. (It helps to have attended nineteen worldcons in the past, of course, because there's no doubt that the worldcon experience is very different from that of a regional and something that every fan ought to know a few times in their fannish careers. And when I get a greater degree of financial independence I expect I'll start attending them once again.)

I'd read Buck's column in another fanzine (probably ANVIL since that's the other place I know he has a regular column) and have already responded to it there. I don't remember recognizing that Buck had sent the same material to two different fanzines before which indicates that (a) I'm even denser than many people claim I am, or (b) Buck doesn't usually do this sort of thing. So which is it, Buck? Were you caught in a deadline squeeze or have I been loocking the same material twice and never noticing? If the latter, am I at least consistent?

Methinks John Alderson's definition of "educated" is a tad too stringent but me also thinks John is up to his usual controversy-stirring tricks and I have no intention of being roped in by him again. So there.

I actually read Elvey's DISCONNECTED. It was amusing. Almost Brownian in its compactness and that's a compliment indeed.

Mae's article is far too sercon for me but I did note her comment that no invented word could have no previous antecedents and still pass into the language. The obvious exceptions to such a statement are "googol" and "googolplex" which are accepted scientific terms that cannot have any such antecedents. Perhaps Mae is unfamiliar with them but I'd not have thought so as most fans know of them, whether they remember what they mean or how they appeared or not.

I have no children and always knew I never would have any but I'd imagine that it's the wish of every literate couple to pass on their love of the printed word to their children, to share that special magic. It must be extremely trying to have a child with dyslexia and my heart goes out to Ms Buchanan. I assume, though, that her daughter's willingness to take the time and spend the effort that reading requires is consolation since so many youngsters would simply have given up when faced with such overwhelming difficulties.

To suggest a possible answer to Tom Jackson's query on behalf of the Japanese: until fairly recently a lot of places like gas stations and department stores insisted on their own personal credit cards and wouldn't

take the big general cards such as Visa and MasterCard so I can see that it would be easy to accumulate a wallet full of the things. The most I ever had was about six and now that most places take the big cards I use just one. But I still carry a few spares just in case I'm passing through Backwaterville at three in the morning and find a gas station that only takes a Shell credit card.

Not enough editorial comment in the lettercolumn this time. Too many factual questions that should have been quickly answered to save a dozen different loccers sending in (probably wildly varying!) responses.

America most certainly has more than its share of dull fans (and so does Canada, and England, and Australia and...) but I seriously doubt that a seriously dull fan would make the effort or have the imagination to want to try and track down Buck for a chat one afternoon. Even if he or she didn't know of Buck's disposition, guard dog or seemingly inexhaustible collection of death dealing hand guns!

I was also amused to see Buck reacting to John Alderson much as I did almost twenty years ago when I first encountered John's often irritating paper persona. Once I had the real pleasure of meeting John in person and sharing a few drinks with him, I knew enough not to let him annoy me and not to take his often unusual claims at all seriously. It's a shame that Buck will never know what John is actually like but I don't expect him to take my word for it so I expect the two of them will continue to fling barbs at each other as long as each has the energy/interest to do so.

I have a lot of issues of SF COMMENTARY in my fanzine collection but I'm sure someone closer than me can help Shane Dix out. Besides, I'm too lazy to go find them knowing that in all likelihood nine other people have done it already weeks ago.

Rachel Kerr opens a potential pandora's box with her casual question as to what a "fan" is. A glib answer would be "The term you get a hundred different definitions of when you ask it of a hundred fans" but a reasonable answer, for me, would be "someone with a keen interest in science fiction and/fantasy who goes beyond merely reading the material and does something else to express that interest." In this, Ron, I disagree with your suggestion that fans have lost their sense of wonder and no longer read SF. It may take a little more to stimulate the SoW than it once did and the reading of SF may be less central to one's fanac than it once was but once those two things atrophy I don't believe you can still claim to

be a fan. Hell, I finished Niven and Pournelle's *FALLEN ANGELS* before I even started *TM 71!* (Of course, I was looking for my own name and waiting for my own name but that's all beside the point...)

On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the good Ms Kerr has confused mimeographs and spirit duplicators, which are very different kettle of fish. I don't think Gestetner makes spirit duplicators but I do know that mimeos don't stain things purple or produce copies that people like to smell. (14.8.91)

JONATHAN COWIE, (and for John Alderson's benefit *only*)
BSc, MSc GIBiol, 5 Charlieville Rd, North Heath, Kent,
DA8 1HJ, UK.

Alderson's *IN THE DOCK* was an odd contribution and I could not see what had prompted him to take that swipe at "education" - I assume it has something to do with recent Australian fanac or national news...? However I found the definition of "being educated" a bit iffy (technical term that). I certainly would *not* include Plato, Homer, *Bible* and *Koran* as required reading in order to be educated! The Judaeo-Christian cultural ethic has a lot to answer for including: slavery, environmental degradation, and promotion of suffering as being somehow all-beneficial to the soul. The Islamic traditions are no better: die a warrior for salvation. We are fast approaching the twenty-first century - of all the population I'd have thought SF fans would have been clued-up on that one - and its time to shake off the cultural dead weight. As a Scot Alderson advises that I "must have read... *THE BRUS*." Really? Well as a Scot I can inform him that I haven't and that I have no burning desire to do so.

I wouldn't like to be so bold as to define the criteria that make a person educated but, like Alderson, as a scientist and speaking of being educated in science, you need to know the laws of thermodynamics and motion at the very least. Even though an 'umble scientist, I can cite a dozen plays of Shakespeare but how many artists can cite what either, one of the laws of thermodynamics is about (i.e. I do not expect actual quotes), or alternatively two of Newton's laws of motion. Then there are Kepler's laws of planetary motion - pretty nifty stuff out there in the cosmos if you need to calculate the odd parking orbit.

Of course we live in a world where everyone takes science for granted. Would the man-in-the-street who today *has used* a piece of electronic equipment please explain how a semiconductor works! Don't hold your breath folks... Would the man-in-the-

street please explain the difference between a chemical element and compound...? etc.

It all boils down to C.P. Snow's twin culture paradox.

Education? There's not a lot of it about. (19.8.91)

[Over the past twenty years or so John Alderson has published his own fanzine, CHAO, and has had articles and letters published in a variety of Australian fanzines. And for some reason readers find themselves arguing with him about his published views... - Ron.]

SYDNEY J. BOUNDS, 27 Borough Rd., Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 6BD, UK.

Nice production for TM 71 and I thought the Fox Illustrations suited the magazine best. Why no verse this time?

[I didn't have any suitable - Ron.]

Roberts' THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE was the best story. DISCONNECTED amused me. Blair Hunt I put in third place.

Buck Coulson's article was fascinating and funny. Mae left me far behind: I'm still struggling with the English language.

Joy's article was the star non-fiction piece; an article of this kind makes me feel how lucky I am.

As usual, lots of interesting letters from all around the world.

Reviews: I've read few of these, and some I've never heard of - but then, now I'm retired, I find little time for reading. Life goes faster these days.

I haven't been to a con for years. Partly due to age and shortage of money, partly due to a reluctance to travel. Though I shall be a guest at a vintage pulp and pb Book Fair in London next month. Should be interesting, and I hope to meet people I've only corresponded with.

After the last two summers, hot and dry, this year we're back to a normal English summer, with a bit of everything, so perhaps the ozone business was a false alarm after all. (20.8.91)

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK - Address as above.

Received THE MENTOR #71 with what has now become the standard spectacular color cover.

...John J Alderson. By his standards, I am probably *not* educated. I have read thousands of books, but many of them were science fiction, and that includes a huge number of space-operas. And while I have read Plato, Homer, the Bible, and the Qoran, I cannot say I enjoyed any of those 4. Too turgid. Most of my reading nowadays are science fact magazines and books. In fact, my next fanzine-in-progress has 4 book reviews of science fact books.

As for the Science Fiction Fan Quiz, I enjoyed most of it, but found

a few parts that were a puzzle to me. For example, question 6, answer d) "How to get into the Fifth Dimension by using Action buses." Is this some sort of Australian in-joke, or a reference to some SF story I have forgotten about? I suppose a USA fan would have written in "The Lost Angeles Rapid Transit District". Nola Frame-Grey can give you more details on this bus system that never does anything right.

Joy Buchanan's article points out that we do need a wider selection of books-on-tape. My own experience with dyslexics is minimal, and mostly those who come into A.A., and thank goodness we have the two main books on cassette tape! Many of those who were dyslexic found themselves unable to hold jobs, drifted into crime, or used alcohol and drugs to escape the problems of their dyslexia. Fortunately, they can *speak* as good as anyone else at meetings, so we have helped many to get sober and stay sober.

The fiction was good, but I cannot really comment much about it.

R Lauraine Tutihasi's letter reminds me of one of the disadvantages of working for the Post Office; that Christmas season. I decided to use the rest of my vacation time this year for a two week trip to the Grand Canyon this November. This will be a way for me to get rested and refreshed *before* the crisis situations hit. At the Post Office during December, every day is a crisis day. (26.8.91)

MICHAEL HAILSTONE, PO Box 15, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vic 3005.

I thought I should comment on THE MENTOR #69, which shows how badly behind I am with my reading. THE MATALAN RAVE isn't happening at the moment; while the next issue is nearly all typed up, I've hardly touched it for months and have no idea when I'll actually get around to getting it redy for press. I must own up to a serious loss of interest and enthusiasm, so I guess I'd better write a few letters to editors before finding I'm getting no more fanzines. I notice I've received a couple more issues of TM since #69, but I don't know when I'll get round to reading them.

Great cover - in color! Can't say I'm very impressed by the typeface. That's the trouble with all this new computer technology. See the last MATALAN RAVE for a blatant example of the inferiority of computerized printing. I typed up a few pages on my friend's computer, whilst this typer was at the menders. I think I'll quite happily stick to the old technology.

Ah, I'd love to dwell in the Blue Mountains - have wanted to do so every since I was a kid. Why don't I?

ask you. Maybe I will one day, but not I'm here in Melbourne, it's no longer economically feasible to pack up and move yet again - in other words, I'm too poor. But I don't think too highly of some of the members of this Blue Mountains sf group. I think the idea of assassinating doctors (everywhere or only in the Third World?) "so all the people (get) sick and (die)" really sick. This revulsion springs not from any great love of doctors but from the notion that *all* the people need doctors to keep them (us?) alive, from getting sick. What kind of attitude is that? I think the less we have to do with doctors, the better.

Can't say I was greatly impressed by Margaret Pearce's story. Its strong point is that it sets up a mystery and keeps the reader gessing and therefore reading, but I get irritated by such passages as: "The second satellite around Sirius had gravity, atmosphere..." Well of course it had gravity. Any decent sized planet must have that. Atmosphere and population are of course optional, but gravity is an inherent property of mass. How could a planet not have gravity? (Some scientific illiterates think that the Moon has no gravity.) And then I find absurd the idea of the inhabitants of an alien planet being genetically compatible with humans. But then I guess it would be uncharitable to go on in this vein. After all, it is only fan fiction, or is that remark an insult?

Marie-Louise Stephens SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE let me down, in that it utterly lacks a climax. When the heroine got her own robot as an attack agenst her husband's Astrid, I felt the tale building up to a confrontation, for something to happen. But insted nothing happens other than the end of the story.

But what really moved me to write to you now was your BY FOOT AND BUS THROUGH THE HINDUKUSH. Here at last is a real travel-tale from my own era! I've had grave misgivings about publishing tales of travels I did twenty or more years ago, especially as I find other travellers tales in fanzines rather unlike my own: they're usually no more than a few years in the past and quick tours, and the main reason for the trip anyway is some overseas con. But your tale brings back memories of what I did at the same time, and I feel an irresistible urge to compare notes with you here.

Travelling overland on an old double-decker bus sounds like a lot of fun. You may remember such a bus, called the "Magic Bus", that used to do trips from Sydney (or maybe Brisbane?) through Melbourne and Adelaide to Perth for just \$45. That

was how I planned to travel over to Western Australia to see the total eclipse of the Sun in June 1974 (see my article TOTALLED, which you published a few issues back). It's great shame that I couldn't go in the end. It would have been an interesting experience, just the trip alone. But how on earth do you manage to remember so much detail after twenty years? I mean things like prices and distances. I have a very poor memory of how much things used to cost before inflation all but wiped out our currency, and I have only the vaguest idea of distances in Europe. By Ockham's Razor I must conclude that you kept a diary, or maybe wrote the story out long ago, but in which case why did you wait so long to publish it?

[Half the trip account was written and published in my ANZAPA mailing in 1970; the other half was written for that issue of TM. I collect and keep tickets, receipts, etc from my trips and can later refer back to them. - Ron.]

Anyway, before I go on (with my European trip account), I must plead with you, beg of you, not to play the dirty trick played on me by Nick Shears and George Bondar, that is, of vanishing into thin air, of answering me with a bolt of defening silence. Thank God you don't dwell in England, which may as well be Mars or the outer reaches of the Milky Way, for all the good it does sending travel tales thither. I did though get the same response from Glen Crawford of Gosford after sending him a letter, but at least that was only a slight tale of juvenile memories of past cats...

[Michael then goes on with his trip report. Because this issue of TM has my Volgacon report it in, I am saving Michael's report for a future issue. It is an interesting trip report, giving first hand experience of Europe at the same time I was travelling there. If you don't see it there, I'll return it to you. - Ron]

RICHARD BRANDT, 4740 N. Mesa #111, El Paso, Tx 79912, USA.

You certainly went for color in a big way with the cover for issue #69; the reproduction is outstanding, considering the delicacy of color and the gradations of tint. The artwork itself is quite remarkable, sort of a Maxfield Parrish meets Hannes Bok. Jozef Szekeres' centrefold also displays an excellent use of the medium; the only discordant element is in the interface between the Medusa figure's face and that of her mount: the serpents' head is rendered in sharp, clear lines contrasting with the soft expressionistic outline of the woman's; and rendering the human tongue always seems to leave some artists at a loss.

Peggy Ranson's illustration on page 35 shows more of a Beardsley influence than I usually associate

with her style; likewise her piece on page 56. Peggy impresses me the more I see her artwork; her Hugo nomination this year was a pleasant surprise (even though I had voted for her!)

Early on in Margaret Pearce's CREW WAITING, I was assailed with two related thoughts: (1) that's a might unusual cloud of radiation, which can dissolve the "molecules" of anything metal, (2) that poor crew, what will they do without any of the trace elements necessary for continued existence, not to mention hemoglobin? Margaret's rationale for these seeming improbabilities, once they were related, failed to persuade me. The revelation of the cloud's true nature means that, among other things, the crew's experimentation must have been extremely unsophisticated, and that the gravitational pull the planet exerts on its subjects must be virtually nil, if what amounts to dandruff flaking off the domes winds up in orbit around their sun. It's a pity, because some of her biological inventions are rather interesting.

The report of your bus trip from Sydney to Gosport is indeed sense-of-wondrous - such an epic travail! Although the most remarkable part to me might be the description of John Brosnan's flat. It seemed to me that your descriptions were more detailed in the latter part of the account, so that I enjoyed them the more. (Maybe because arriving in Britain brought you back into touch with reality, i. e., fandom.)

I think the artist Mae Strelkov is trying to recall (whose style seemed to her to be similar to Jozef's) was Stephen Fabian. The name that kept cropping into her head might have been Brad Foster, who's a more recent arrival; unless she was in fact thinking of Tom Foster, who hasn't been in fanzines for a while, but just did a comic book with Ken Fletcher. (I just saw Dan Steffan's name in an Associated Press clipping; seems he's one of the contributors to the first issue of Grateful Dead Comics.)

Mark McLeod's folio shows him equally adept at black-and-white work, although most of the pieces look like preliminary sketches when compared to the last three, where the impression of detail and verisimilitude is surprising. (The last is certainly the oddest still life I've seen in some time.) His explanation for the background might explain why some of his work has something of a fey quality. His cover for THE MENTOR 70 again has that striking sense of photographic realism.. your magazine starts to look more like NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC every day.. while his cover for issue 71 demonstrates that the more abstract his subject matter,

the more impressive his results are likely to be.

Sticking with issue 70, though, David Tansey's HUMAN ERROR is an amusing read, well-constructed without telegraphing its point too early; the ending is a bit discordant, since we're not used to random shootings at cons (although one writer swears he autographed a book for an admiring reader a week before she showed up halfway across the country and opened fire on a schoolroom). RUMINATIONS offers the fascination of leafing through old convention programme books... although not much more than that; more details would have been nice, although at that distance whose memory can call up too many more? The Jenssen quote and the early reactions to 2001 were highlights, but the whole piece is a valuable summary of a time and place in fan history. Margaret Pearce has another piece of alternate biology in BOIL THE WATER, nothing exactly new in its overall theme, but intriguing in its specifics. The sentence early on in which the word "process" is used twice in close succession ranks among the issue's greater stylistic infelicities, though.

Peter Brodie's list of innovations from FORBIDDEN PLANET makes it clear how much Gene Roddenberry borrowed from that film when he developed STAR TREK. (One Brodie doesn't list is the "law" preventing the robot from harming humans!) It also demonstrates how genuinely sophisticated the film's script was, compared to the typical sf movie of the time and allowing for the Fifties Hollywood frame of mind.

The comments in recent issues on "professionalism" regarding the Ditmars is roughly similar to the controversy that raged (mostly in America) over the Fanzine Hugo category at the time that once-humble fanzines began paying staffs, accepting advertising, and, more to the point, building huge circulations and dwarfing the smaller traditional amateur publications in the voting tallies. We speak primarily of LOCUS, which started life as a fannish newszine and evolved over the years into a slick trade publication for the SF field. The WSFS Business Meeting finally adopted more stringent rules for what could be eligible as "Fanzines" - but, so Charlie Brown could still get "his" Hugo every year, created a separate category, "Semiprozine", for those publications which are too professional to be ranked with amateurs, but don't have large enough a circulation to contend with the prozines. Of course, LOCUS has won the Semiprozine award every year since it was instituted, to the extent that this year's Worldcon gave

a special award to Andy Porter to recognize his efforts in publishing SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE, a perennial also-ran. (This wasn't quite as embarrassing as Denver's decision in 1981 to give Ed Ferman a special award for editing F&SF, since he had never won the Best Professional Editor award - then he finally won his first at the same convention.) Rumor has it Charlie has intentionally restricted LOCUS's distribution so it won't lose its "semi pro" eligibility.

Glen Chapman may be right about the availability of obscure sci-fi films in Australia, but in the States, the explosion in video distribution means even rarities like PROJECT MOONBASE are on the market - I've even seen it on cable television now. Glen's probably right about the traditional situation for fantasy films. GHOST, a romantic supernatural thriller, was last year's top-grossing film, but is more the exception than the rule; I don't think THE WITCHES and EDWARD SCISSORHANDS made quite such an impact, but I doubt they were outright money-losers either. It remains to be seen whether the trend will reverse itself. I'd expect a lot of movie ripping-off the same concept in an attempt to cash in on GHOST's success; if their quality is as mediocre as expected, producers would no doubt judge their failure justifies the opinion of fantasy as poor box-office, and the cycle would continue.

That's some duplicator you have there. Dick and Leah Smith arranged for a Gestetner sales rep to demonstrate a similar model at their Ditto in Chicago, and we were all much boggled.

Grai Hughes' THE LAST HOPE is certainly ambitious (not to say pretentious). It carried a Jack Vance flavor of decadence and extravagant language, with only occasional lapses in clarity. It impresses, more than any other of its qualities, with the fact that it has a genuine philosophical point to make.

The production values for THE MENTOR 71 are a pleasant surprise - a very professional-looking product, much in keeping with your covers and artwork. Did you get the same number of words into this somewhat-slenderer issue? Sorry to hear there won't be any more color covers (I guess that means you won't be paying contributors, as Buck suggests), but perhaps another opportunity for such will come your way someday.

(I don't pay contributors because I can't afford to. Even \$5 or \$10 - would soon add up to more than I could afford - then I would also have to pay the artists... The only reason I said I would not be publishing any colour covers is the price - I have several artists offering some of their best work in colour - so maybe... - Ron.)

Maria-Louise Stephens' CASSIOPEIA B is intriguing enough, but I wonder about its message; is the heroine really being recruited to breed and die?

I enjoyed Buck's column on officiating at weddings. When I was contemplating marriage at one time, my intended and I discussed having the ceremony performed by a friend who was a Universal Life Church minister - she had been ordained as part of a newspaper series she did on strange things you can get through the mail - but I argued that no real friend would agree to do such a thing to you.

A CHANGE OF HEART by Shane Dix - now this is what I call a good SF story. To me it gets at the heart of what SF is about - a technological advance and what uses people will make of it.

P. J. Roberts THE CRYSTAL OUT OF SPACE - it's fairly clear from early on what is happening, but Roberts keeps the mechanism of exactly how it's happening a mystery long enough to keep the pages turning. The solution is not nearly as convincing as I'd like, although Roberts certainly takes a cosmic approach to the subject. One note on style: Roberts tries a couple of times to cram more adjective phrases into a sentence than is good for it...

Cute quiz from Rachel and Claire - although modesty (and decency) prevent me from disclosing my score - disturbing signs of fannishness cropping up in your zine, there, guys. (-.9.91)

JOHN J. ALDERSON, Canakkale, Turkey.

I haven't received any MENTORS for months, but I don't blame you. My agent hasn't even sent the gas-bill.

A few days back I got out of Iran and stayed at Dogabeyagst. I went out to see "Noah's Ark". It is a fantastic thing. Some decades ago, during an earthquake, which left furrows four metres high, it floated to the surface in one huge, homogeneous and unbroken body. It's composition is different from anything surrounding it. Parts have high and definite walls (viewed from the inside), and what one takes to be the forefront confirms to the dimensions given for the ark in Genesis, providing the Great Cubit (about half a metre instead of eighteen inches) was the one used. It is huge.

I keep an open mind until competent archaeologists have had a dig. But I do have to side with the man who said, "I know a boat when I see it." It just leaves that impression. (7.10.91).



THE QUEEN OF SPRINGTIME by Robert Silverberg. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1989. 519pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This is the sequel to AT WINTER'S END, and continues the tale of the Chronicler Hresh in the city he had helped found. The insect-like hjjks, one of the few left-over races of being from the Great World of aeons past, were pushing into the civilized parts of the world. This was not more evident that when they sent an emissary, in the form of one of the People, to try to persuade them to sign a treaty that would cut off most of the world to the inquisitive monkey-descended people.

This series looks as though it will evolve into something that will keep Silverberg in the reading public's eye. It is a good read, but doesn't seem to have that spark that would make it a classic. Well thought out and crafted, though.

THE JONAH KIT by Ian Watson. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (c) 1975. 221pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

About the only sign that this book was written in 1975 was the mention of hippies, otherwise it has held its age very well.

That the theories of scientists does impinge on the "real" world is shown in this novel, when a radio-telescope reaches the end of the universe and, upon the publishing of a well-documented theory, it is shown that this universe is but a shadow of the real one, which disappeared up a black hole very shortly after being created. *That* universe is the one that God created and planned and He is there. And not here.

Naturally the peoples of the earth weren't really happy about this, and many proceeded to riot. Another experiment was being conducted at the same time by the Russian - they were imprinting the brains of a child and a whale with the mathematical patterns of an adult and it was only later in the novel that these two different

trains of events came together. A unique novel.

WRITERS OF THE FUTURE IV, edited by Algis Budrys. New Era pb, dist in Aust by N.E. Pubs. (C) 1988. 425pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

The L. RON HUBBARD Presents anthologies is continuing, with this, the fourth volume, currently on release. There are sixteen short stories illustrated by sixteen different artists.

The stories are: RIVER OF STONE by Michael Green; THE MIRROR by Nancy Farmer; THE ZOMBIE CORPS: NINE-LIVES CHARLIE by Rayson Lorrey; HIGH FAST FISH by John Moore; A WINTER'S NIGHT by P.H. MacEwan; THE TROUBLESOME KORDAE ALLIANCE AND HOW IT WAS SETTLED by Flonet Biltgen; GROWLERS by Larry England; WHAT DO I SEE IN YOU? by Mary Turzillo; THE GAS MAN by Richard Undiales; THE FRUIT PICKER by Jo Beverley; BLACK SUN AND DARK COMPANION by R. Garcia y Robertson; 6770: THE CAUSE by Mark Haw; MOTHER'S DAY by Astrid Julian; BUFFALO DREAMS by June Mailander; HEROIC MEASURES by Paul Edwards and OLD TIMES THERE by Dannis Minor.

There are also some short articles by Algis Budrys, Orson Scott Card, Tim Powers, Ramsey Campbell and Frank Kelly Freas. The stories are by new authors and for a new anthology are worth the effort reading.

THE GATES OF THORBARDIN by Dan Parkinson. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 310pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Volume II of Heroes II. The backcover blurb says: "...Dan Parkinson...continues the history of the dwarves of Krynn in the tradition of Nancy Varian Berberick's best-selling DRAGONLANCE novel, *Stormblade*. It is too bad that sales blah stands in the way of an author's novel.

This book tells of the adventures of Chane Feldstone as he seeks the helm of the son of King Duncan (of Macbeth fame?) which has some prophecies attached. The novel is thus a Quest novel and the jaded

fantasy reader may think that he or she has all the basic ingredients thought out. He or she is probably right. Still, this adventure, though straight forward, is straightforward reading for the younger fans amongst us. Including my 13 year old son.

NIGHTFALL by Isaac Asimov & Robert Silverberg. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1990. 352pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This novel is the expansion of Asimov's classic short story, NIGHTFALL. Some novels that are expanded from short stories lose something - that sense of imminence.

I don't know if there are any sf readers around who haven't read the short story - of the night of the planet that has six suns and which, every 2049 years, five of the suns are below the horizon and the sixth sun is eclipsed. Madness and terror stalk the land and the morning reveals a devastated landscape.

Both authors have done a good job with this one - the writing is tight and smooth and I couldn't put the book down up till the point when Darkness actually fell. After that it was kind of an anti-climax, but there ^{was} new material which enhanced the plot, rather than it being padding. Well worth purchasing.

TOOTH AND CLAW by James Silke. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1989. 316pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

TOOTH AND CLAW is Book 3 in Frank Frazetta's Death Dealer series. The two previous novels being PRISONER OF THE HORNED HELMET and LORDS OF DESTRUCTION.

The plot is not quite that of a Quest - it is more a Swords and Blood adventure, with a small band of individuals who are travelling together in an attempt to find the Queen of Cats. They fight their way through many battles with creatures both human, degenerates and animals. The action is quick and fierce and just the thing to get one's blood boiling, I'm sure.

The writing and the plot actually reminds me of the pulp magazines of the 1940s - it's that kind of adventure. The novel ends on a note of hope - the "hero" now has some kind of goal in his life.

HIDE AND SEEK by Paul Preuss. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1991. 274pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Paul Preuss's third book using Arthur C. Clarke's Venus Prime as a base. The first two novels were BREAKING STRAIN and MAELSTROM, which were reviewed in a previous issue of this magazine. HIDE AND SEEK continues the adventures of Sparta, the augmented human female who's life

ends up a little more complicated than most.

When a mysterious plaque is found on Mars with inscriptions that no-one can decipher it created some excitement, though not so much excitement as when it was stolen. Two people were murdered also and when Sparta was brought in to investigate she found that the people behind the theft were not loathe to do her in also. At one stage she found herself stranded in the Martian desert on board a downed Mars aircraft that was in slightly worse shape than herself.

Nice solid nuts and bolts sf.

USE OF WEAPONS by Ian M. Banks. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1990..368pp. Trade pb, A\$17.95, h/c \$32.95. On sale now.

I haven't read Banks' other novels - CONSIDER PHLEBAS or THE PLAYER OF GAMES, but if they are as good as USE OF WEAPONS I certainly will be on the look-out for them.

This novel is about the Culture; galactic organisation that is bent on bringing the benefits of its civilisation to others. It is doing what it considers best for other cultures. It is a primarily human Culture, although there are aliens involved. The protagonist of the novel is a military man, who the Culture uses to further its gains. He works for it and knows it. He realises that they are using him - sometimes, on the planet he is sent to, he is on their side, sometimes he is working for those against whom the Culture is leading - the Culture works in strange ways. The military writings are believable (at least to this reader), and the whole novel is interesting - it is written on several levels. * Recommended *.

THE BLOOD OF ROSES by Tanith Lee. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1990. 678pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Not an sf novel this time, but one of horror and vampires.

Tanith Lee is good at her craft and she is well known in her field. In THE BLOOD OF ROSES she mixes a tale of early middle ages Christendom with the age of tales of evil from beyond the grave. The young woman who is hounded by the priests and nobles, and the magic that breaks out (the magic that was alive in the Middle Ages for most people then living).

At 678 pages this is a good long read for those lovers of horror. This is not so much blood and gore horror as is found in the latest movies. There is blood and gore, but it is worked into the scheme of things and looks not out of place. A good read for those long train or 'plane journeys.

FAERY LANDS FORLORN by Dave Duncan. Del Rey pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1991. 335pp. On sale now.

Part 2 of A Man And His Word. Part 1 was MAGIC CASEMENT, which I haven't read as yet.

This is a quest fantasy, with the maiden a lost (or actually kidnapped) Princess, and the hero a stable-boy named Rap. When she had been kidnapped he had leaped through the magic window after her, but unfortunately the mechanics of magic transport had landed him a great distance away from his goal. She didn't know a loyal subject was after her. There is much sea voyaging and running around with dwarves and goblins, as any fantasy story of these old days will have.

The print is small, so you are getting a lot of reading for your money. This is the first time I've seen a major publisher in Australia distributing Del Rey - hopefully we'll see some of their sf soon. This one is for fantasy readers.

THE SORCERESS AND THE SIGNET by Patricia A. McKillip. Pan h/c,, dist in Aust by Pan books. (C) 1990. 219pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

This is a well produced volume - the cover illustration is finely executed and the paper and printing first class.

Patricia McKillip wrote The Riddle Masters of Hed trilogy. THE SORCERESS AND THE SIGNET is well told and the writing is clear and concise, which has a lot more going for it than some of the latest fantasy I've read. The adventures take place beyond the tinker's door, in a place that was as magical as the road beyond the stars and was another world that Corleu had to explore and eventually come back from.

As I said above, there is fantasy and there is fantasy. The authoress has taken her time with this book and it shows in the careful way in which the writing flows. This helps in the suspension of disbelief which is a prerequisite for a good fantasy.

MYTH-ING PERSONS by Robert Asprin. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (c) 1984. 172pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Robert Asprin was writing humorous fantasy and having it published well before Terry Pratchett came bursting on the scene. Asprin's series were the "Myth..." series - MYTHCONCEPTIONS are ANOTHER FINE MYTH are two that I've read. First published by the Donning Co in the USA, this is one of the series that made that Company sparkle for a short time.

In this latest release in Australian, Skeeve's mate Aahz is in jail for murder and his time is fast

running out. It is a real problem for Skeeve, since his magic has gone up his sleeve, so to speak, and his finding of two werewolves and a hatch of vampires doesn't really help things. Though only a short book at 171 small pages, this is just the right size to slip into one's pocket for that quick dip while in the waiting room of a doctor or dentist.

TAROT TALES, edited by Rachel Pollack and Caitlin Matthews. (C) 1989. 303pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

The two editors of this volume are versed somewhat in the use of the Tarot cards. They asked a group of fiction writers to write stories that Tarot cards had to be involved in the creation of the tale.

The stories are varied and diverse. They are: THE LOVERS by Gwyneth Jones; REMBRANDTS FO THINGS PAST by Sheila Finch; THE HORSE OF IRON ETC by M John Harrison; THE GODDESS OF THE LAND by Caitlin Matthews; THE SHIP OF NIGHT by Cherry Gilchrist; THE PERSISTENCE OF FALSE MEMORY by Robert Irwin; AS IT FLOWS TO THE SEA... by Storm Constantine; HANGING THE FOOL by Michael Moorcock; THE EMIGRATION by Josephine Saxon; CAVE PIRATES OF THE HOLLOW EARTH by Peter Wilson; THE TENTH MUSE by John Matthews; THE WIND BOX by Scott Bradford; SNAKE DREAMS by Garry Kilworth; FALSE PROPHECY by Jacqueline Lichtenberg; THE DEVIL'S PICTUREBOOK by R J Stewart and KNOWER OF BIRDS by Rachel Pollack. All in all quite a different collection - some fantasy and some sf.

AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT by Arthur C. Clarke & BEYOND THE FALL OF NIGHT by Gregory Benford. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 239pp. A\$38.95. On sale now.

This is a strange volume, in that AGAINST FALL OF NIGHT is a reprint of Arthur C. Clarke's classic, whose first thoughts about it were from 1936, and Greg Benford's sequel, BEYOND THE FALL OF NIGHT. I don't have to say anything about the Clarke novel except to say that it hasn't lost anything in the nearly fifty years since it was first published. It still brings on that Sense of Wonder. The Benford is well written and uses some of the characters from the Clarke piece, but it doesn't have that flowing style that Clarke has. I've read parts of it elsewhere and think that it does have some grand visions, and it is as good a sequel to AGAINST... for another author than Clarke to have written as could be found.

Definitely a book for your "keep" section of your library/collection.

MIND OF MY MIND by Octavia Butler. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1977. 221pp. A\$12. On sale now.

MIND OF MY MIND is the sequel to WILD SEED, which was reviewed in TM 70, to which I gave a *Recommended*.

This commences when the first novel finishes. One of Doro's offspring, Mary, is a telepath who has the additional power of linking her mind to other telepaths and controlling them. All Doro's offspring are notoriously hard to live with and the telepaths are also. Mary finds that those linked in her "Pattern" find it easier to live together and also their powers are enhanced and more easily directed. She begins to guide other latent espers through their "Transition" to their full potential. Soon she has fifteen hundred espers and 500 of their children. Doro becomes alarmed and keeps an eye on her growing powers. Bulter has created a two novel series that gives a view of an esper society that could be true to life. Get this.

PAGASUS IN FLIGHT by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1991. 317pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Anne McCaffrey is turning out novels with the best of them. PEGASUS IN FLIGHT is the latest in a new series that began with the Rowan.

PEGASUS... is set earlier than the latter novel, taking place on Earth when those with Talents (espers) are just discovering the abilities of some to move large masses with the help of electricity from generators. The plot is well told and the author has created some memorable characters, though the heroine is one with that white streak in her hair which brands her as someone special.

There are various sub-plots going - one is the search for the kidnappers of children for nefarious purposes; another is the building of a space-station to ensure a lift-off point for starships and yet another is the quelling of rioting citizens and some illegal children. A lot of the sub-plots are actually tied together and, as with her other novels, things are tied up nicely at the end.

THE TOWER OF FEAR by Glen Cook. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1991. 375pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

A story about the city of Qushmarrah, which from olden times had always had problems with outside forces attacking them. The city had always managed to fight them off, but when the old evil wizard had been surprised in his fortress and had, in the midst of being attacked by one as strong as himself, been frozen by his witch mate, the outside forces managed to break in and took over the city.

Cook creates good fantasy with that aura of authenticity and the actions of the characters are believable, in most of what they do - the reader doesn't have to suspend disbelief as much as some other fantasy writers require. Aaron is a retired soldier who now has a wife and a child, but he never though he would be helping his old enemies - if only to stop child kidnappers in their activities.

The action is fast and the plot is well thought out - absorbing fantasy fiction.

I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC! by Ray Bradbury. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1948-1977. 331pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

A re-issue of a classic collection of Ray Bradbury's short stories. The stories are: THE KILIMANJARO DEVICE; THE TERRIBLE CONFLAGRATION UP AT THE PLACE; TOMORROW'S CHILD; THE WOMEN; THE INSPIRED CHICKEN MOTEL; DOWNWIND FROM GETTYSBURG; YES, WE'LL GATHER AT THE RIVER; THE COLD WIND AND THE WARM; NIGHT CALL, COLLECT; THE HAUNTING OF THE NEW; I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC!; THE TOMBING DAY; ANY FRIEND OF NICHOLAS NICKLEBY'S A FRIEND OF MINE; HEAVY-SET; THE MAN IN THE RORSCHACH SHIRT; HENRY THE NINTH; THE LOST CITY OF MARS and CHRISTUS APOLLO.

The stories are a mixture of fantasy and SF, as are most of Bradbury's stories - and even the SF stories have that ghost of fantasy in them. Bradbury was writing and setting when he was twenty years old to WEIRD TALES - and this collection has a good selection of his stories.

Bradbury had the reputation in the fifties of being the poet of SF - he hasn't written anything lately that has caught the SF reading public's attention. If you want to see what he was like you must obtain books like this one.

THE REVENGE OF THE ROSE by Michael Moorcock. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1991. 233pp. A\$32.5. On sale now.

This volume joins eight other novels about Elric, the albino that has fought his way across world and countless pages into the reader's memory.

Elric is still journeying - this time he is questing for the soul of his father, which is lost in the worlds of the multiverse. He encounters the mysterious woman Rose, who like the other women he meets in his journeys is unlike most mortals. Rose is a survivor and is the last of her kind. She too is searching and they both briefly join forces to try to win through to their different goals. Elric must struggle against the various evil machinations of evil that lurk along his path, and the

sword Stormbringer has its thirst slaked many times in the journey.

If you haven't read any Elric tales, and you like fantasy, then you will find Moorcock is a master of the craft.

BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD by Brian Aldiss. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1969. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Pieces of this novel were published in the English SF magazine NEW WORLDS when Michael Moorcock was the editor - which dates it to the New Wave era.

The whole novel is written in stream-of-consciousness and needs careful interpretation if one is to follow any of it at all. If you lived through them, or are a student of them, or would like to obtain an overview of the 1960's, then you will find a reading of this novel worth your while. If you are not, but like Aldiss, then you will find BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD to be a condensation of all his experimental works. Possibly more Ballard-like than Ballard.

I can't say I like it much - there is no plot as such and the reader may find that, after wading through the gunshot prose and the jerky poetry, that the whole thing is a bit overblown.

MAPS IN A MIRROR by Orson Scott Card. Legend trade pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1990. 675pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Needless to say, it took me the better part of a week to read through this volume. This book has included in it forty-six stories by Card, and it noted on the cover - and justifiably so - as "A Definitive Collection Of Short Fiction".

I won't list the stories whereunto, if I do it's take about half a page of this issue. The stories are mainly sf and fantasy, which "dark" fantasy taking its place herein. The majority of the stories are first class, and the early ones still show what Card would be able to do years later. The volume includes the short fiction he expanded into novels: ENDER'S GAME; MIKAL'S SONGBIRD and PRENTICE ALVIN AND THE NO-GOOD PLOW. There are also Introductions to each section and at the end of each section there is are notes on how he wrote the stories.

Recommended - well worth getting for your collection.

THE WORTHING SAGA by Orson Scott Card. Legend trade pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1978-89. 396pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

THE WORTHING SAGA is a re-write of that older novel. It takes up 230 pages of the present volume and helps tie it together.

The other stories included are: SKIPPING STONES; SECOND CHANCE; LIFELOOP; BREAKING THE GAME; KILLING

CHILDREN; WHAT WILL WE DO TOMORROW?; WORTHING FARM; WORTHING INN and THE TINKER. Reading this volume and MAPS IN A MIRROR, the reader can see that the author brings a slightly different background flavour to his work. It is not until the reader reads the author's comments do they realise that Card is a Latter Day Saint. Though it does lend his works a different tint, there is no overwhelming sense that Card is beating the reader over the head with his "message". Indeed, I think that his religious background has given his works something that most sf authors lack - that feeling for religion or the religious atmosphere that some of the best sf authors, Arthur C. Clarke especially, can give their best works.

GETTING STARTED WITH MICROSOFT WORD 5.5 by Janet Rampa. Microsoft Press, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991, 399pp. A\$40.

Why am I reviewing this book when I use Word For Windows? Simple - using a mouse takes time; with the quick keys listed and explained in this volume I don't have to leave the keyboard - and the commands are the same.

The book itself is well presented and the contents clearly defined and explained. There are simple illustrations of the menus and the text itself is clear and uncluttered. Rampa's style is clear and easy to follow. If any of TM's readers are contemplating getting a good word processor and haven't the memory for using Windows, then Word 5.5 is a good choice. It is used, of course, on IBM's or clones of such.

As mentioned above, the text is uncluttered - some Getting Started books try to pack too much in and use a small font size to do so. After reading several chapters of this the reader is left with straining eyes and a stuffy head. No so with this book. If you want an easy guide to Word 5.5, or like me, want quick keys for Word For Windows, then this book is a good buy.

DRUID OF SHANNARA by Terry Brooks. Orbit trade pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991, 423pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

The sequel to SCIONS OF SHANNARA, reviewed in TM 68. The three Scions have been given three quests to fulfil. The first, that of Par, is told of in the first novel. This second quest is undertaken by Walker Boh, who's task is to find the city of Paranor and put the together the Order of Druids.

Brooks has a good grasp of story-telling technique and his style is smooth. The plot is not too complicated and the word scenes are easy to follow. At 423 pages the fantasy reader has the chance of a

good long read and will find that this volume makes up a good weekend's reading. If you like the first volume, this second one is worth chasing up.

The cover illustration is very well executed - unfortunately the artist is not credited.

NEVER DEAL WITH A DRAGON by Robert Charrette. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 377pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This volume is volume 1 of Secrets of Power and is a *Shadowrun* title. The Copyright is owned by a company, the FASA corp, which is apparently something like TSR.

The novel has magic and ancient beings incorporated in it, though it takes place in 2050. The ancient beings are elves, orks, mages and dragons, who came out of the woodwork to fight against the machines and other creations of men. It is *really* a mixture - one of the female characters checks "astrally" on one of the male characters medical condition. The majority of the action takes place in the USA and the characters use much 1980 slang, or such closely derived from it.

It is a strange mixture and I'm not sure it will work for the devoted fantasy or D&D fan. Should be interesting to see.

VIPERHAND by Douglas Niles. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 311pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Now, this *is* a TSR book. It is Volume 2 of the Maztica Trilogy.

The story carries on the plot of Volume 1 - in this continuation, Erix and her lover, Halloran are fleeing Maztica. The country is going under and they only just escape with their lives. They are pursued by legionnaires and several times are captured but manage to escape.

Niles writes with a sure hand for this type of fantasy and using short paragraphs throughout, ensures that the young reader is able to follow the action easily. It is obvious that these series are aimed at that young reader.

HEIR TO THE EMPIRE by Timothy Zahn. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1991. 361pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

Well, here it is, Volume 1 of a three volume series, set after the events of the three Star Wars movies. Just for that it will be a big success.

The time is five years after the second Death Star and the Alliance is on the long road back to rule. The Empire now only holds a quarter of the territory it originally held under the Emperor. Han and Leia are married and Luke is settling into the role of Jedi knight. In another corner of the

Galaxy, Thrawn, one of the Empire's old commanders is consolidating his territory and scheming of ways to win back portions of Alliance space.

Zahn has caught the atmosphere of the movies well - I can almost see the fourth movie following this plot. He writes smoothly and the reader will no doubt find that the other two volumes are also worth reading.

RANDOM FACTOR by Joel Henry Sherman. Del Rey pb., dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1991. 329pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

When I first saw the cover of this novel, I thought that is was a typical space opera, with nothing much to recommend it. I was wrong. I will say, though, that the blurb on the cover is completely wrong, also.

Casey Rourke was a human that both good and bad luck follow each other. Usually it was bad luck that came first. When he burst into the bedroom of an Ambassador after hearing screams he found, instead of a murder being committed, the Ambassador was under the tender administrations of the local branch of the girly guild. He was given the choice of being thrown in jail or taking on the job of Factor at an orbiting station above a world that exported a brand of musk that was worth much to the aliens harvesting it. Unfortunately that area was about to become a battlefield between the Human Alliance and the Oolaanian Unity, and neither he nor the alien Col on the world below were prepared. *Very good* space opera.

THE DESTINY OF THE SWORD by Dave Duncan. Legend pb., dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1988. 338pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The second volume in The Seventh Sword series; the first being reviewed previously.

THE DESTINY OF THE SWORD is, of course, part of a fantasy series and like much of these it is easy to read and does not tax the imagination. Wallie Smith was resurrected in the body of Shonsu, a swordsman of some skill. The Goddess that re-created him gave him the goal of destroying the evil sorcerers and the God they worshipped. To give the reader some idea of the book, here are the titles of the chapters: A Tryst Has Been Called; How The Swordsman Wept; How The Swordsmen Met His Match; How The Best Sword Won; How The Swordsman Took Command; How The Swordsman Returned The Sword and The Last Miracle.

Actually it isn't as bad as it sounds - it would make a good read for a young reader just getting into fantasy. By a young reader I means one in their pre-teens or early teens, and who hasn't read much fantasy. If they have read comics, or role playing games they may find this to their liking.

TALTOS AND THE PATHS OF THE DEAD by Steven Brust. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1988. 181pp. A\$9.91. On sale September.

The sequel to TALTOS THE ASSASSIN.

Quite a short tale, though some of it is obviously written tongue-in-cheek, as is obvious from the following from page 123: "She tried to strike with her dagger for his stomach, but he slipped around the blow and, pushing her off balance with his sword, struck her soundly in the chest with his dagger. She bled. Morrolan stepped back and saluted."

Taltos decided to tread the Paths of the Dead and bring back a vial containing the essence of a goddess. Whether he succeeds is up to the reader to find out.

Brust has a free of easy reading style which makes reading a real pleasure. The plot is simple and the younger fantasy fans will find the novel no hardship. An comfortable read for those eight and up.

THE FOLK ON THE FRINGE by Orson Scott Card. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1990. 301pp incl. Postscript. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The making of this series of novelettes that makes up a novel was told in MAPS IN A MIRROR. The stories included are WEST; SALVAGE; THE FRINGE; PAGEANT WAGON and AMERICA. There is also an Author's Note and an afterword by Michael Collins. What the Author's Note reminds me of are those that Piers Anthony appends to his novels. They say much the same things.

To get back to the stories - they tell of a world devastated by a nuclear exchange. America is a smashed land. The stories tell of how the remaining Mormans, still believing that America is the Promised Land, try to make their way to Salt Lake City to help rebuild. The various stories tell of this. The last story, America, describes how in the end, it is the Mormans who are the last outpost of Europeans in North America and they make a treaty with the "real" Americans - the Indians. Their being their fifty or so thousand years gives them prior claim. A "one-off" book at least for this reader.

EXILE by R. A. Salvatore. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 306pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

EXILE is Book 2 of The Dark Elf Trilogy, the first book being HOMELAND.

Drizzt Do'Urden had a magic companion in the way of a cat - when fighting came along his panther shape proved a godsend. The two were exiled from their home and had been forced to go into the Underdark in search of sanctuary. The Underdark was the

dwelling place of the Dark Elves who were an ancient and fearful race that didn't like trespassers.

There is quite a bit of writing in these 306 pages as the typeface is small. There are all the ingredients of a fantasy novel - gnomes, elves, grubbers, illithids, clackers and other strange animals and creations of the Dark.

Salvatore has written other Forgotten Reams (TSR) books and for those fans, here is another.

A TIME OF EXILE by Katharine Kerr. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1991. 341pp. A\$32.95. On sale September.

Katharine Kerr has mined deeply the Deverry and its peoples. A TIME OF EXILE is the latest novel to branch out from the central trunk. It is Book One of the Westlands Cycle - it explores the history of the Elcyion Lacar, the elves who live west of Deverry.

TIME... follows the adventures of Rhodry as he, after hiding his tracks, sets out with a newly re-discovered Jill and Aderyn to find the boundaries of his fate with the elves. The characters have vaguely Welsh sounding names as in her other novels and the writing is again flowing and easy to read. Unlike much other fantasy, there is quite a lot of speech and exchanging information by that method, as against the author speaking as God and imparting knowledge by that method. There is even a photograph of Ms Kerr on the endpiece of the dust-jacket. Smoothly told fantasy.

THE COLOUR OF EVIL ed by David Hartwell. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. 491pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

A horror anthology that has all the ingredients of a must for the library. The stories included are; THE REACH by Stephen King; EVENING PRIMROSE by John Collier; THE ASH-TREE by M. R. James; THE NEW MOTHER by Lucy Clifford; THERE'S A LONG, LONG TRAIL A-WINDING by Russell Kirk; THE CALL OF CTHULHU by H. P. Lovecraft; THE SUMMER PEOPLE by Shirley Jackson; THE WHIMPER OF WHIPPED DOGS by Harlan Ellison; YOUNG GOODMAN BROW by Nathaniel Hawthorne; MR JUSTICE HARBOTTLE by J. Sheridan Le Fanu; THE CROWD by Ray Bradbury; THE AUTOPSY by Michael Shea; JOHN CHARRINGTON'S WEDDING by E. Nesbit; STICKS by Earl Edward Wagner; LARGER THAN ONESELF by Robert Aickman; BELSEN EXPRESS by Fritz Leiber; YOURS TRULY, JACK THE RIPPER by Robert Bloch; IF DAMON COMES by Charles L. Grant and VANDY, VANDY by Manly Wade Wellman.

As you can see, quite a collection. Just the book to give to someone who is showing the glimmerings

of liking horror or fantasy in order to hook them.

THE FALL OF HYPERION by Dan Simmons. Headline trade p/b, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1990. 468pp. A\$19.95 (h/c A\$34.95). On sale now.

This book is another sequel, but this time it is a sequel to a Hugo Award winner, HYPERION. I haven't read the original novel, but I presume it is at least as good as this novel is.

On Hyperion the Time Tombs are opening and the small band of pilgrims are being decimated by the Shrike as it carried off or kills them one by one. The AIs in the Core are planning to get rid of the human race and the Hegemony of Man is being attacked by the Ousters - genetically altered humans. The second personality of John Keats (a construct of the Core) has the ear of the CEO of the Hegemony, Meina Gladstone. There are convolutions and sub-plots galore and Simmons ties the whole thing together at the end nicely. I found THE FALL OF HYPERION to be one of the better SF novels released this year. It's got everything. *Recommended*

BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO... ON THE PLANET OF TASTELESS PLEASURE. VGSF hc, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1991. 213pp. A\$36.00. On sale September.

The continuing saga of Bill, the terror of the space marines. This episode, set on the planet of Tasteless Pleasure, is co-authored by David Bischoff.

This time Bill meets up with a spoofy sort by the name of Irma, and the adventures they both share as just this side of marvellous. There are all sorts of satires throughout the novel - mentions are made of Star Wars, Star Trek and there is even a character by the name of Dr. Delazny, who has all sorts of crazy ideas and emotions - especially when he is turned on by a certain machine...

I couldn't say that the writing is first class - this is, after all, a funny story in a long series of funny stories, so read it when you want to relax and let yourself unwind. But you must be able to let your Sense of Wonder loose.

THE SHADOW OF HEAVEN by Bob Shaw. VGSF h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1969, 1991. 174pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

As can be seen from the Copyright notice, this a revised edition. The scene is the future some ten or twenty years ahead. There has been a biological war and much of the food growing regions are dust-bowls. Set on the East Coast of the USA, the plot involves a newspaperman, Victor Sterling, whose half brother disappears. His trail takes Vic to the floating island of Heaven where

some of the food for the millions left in the USA is grown - the remainder of the food is harvested from the sea.

Victor finds that, along with an automated robot crew, there are some 200 "hobos" living on Heaven who are eking out their existence stealing small amounts of food from the growing rows of crops. His brother has taken over the small community, but has larger plans for the larger community five miles under their feet. There are some discrepancies that haven't been excised - all the citizens smoking, for one - but overall an entertaining volume.

DREAM MAKER by W.A. Harbinson. Orbit pb, Dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 405pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The trouble with the hole in the ozone layer, which the author tells was first noticed in 1979, was not so much the fault of the emissions of cars and factories and other human detritus, but something other. NASA scientist Tony Rydell and new girl Clare Holton had banded together when they noticed that around this time airline pilots began having hallucinations when around Antarctica. The two put these two and two together and got the idea that it was an outside influence affecting the ozone layer.

Things at the time got rapidly worse for the world, particularly the USA and the two worked out that it was something in the hole which was making it larger - some type of virus. It is not until the end of the book that the concept of an alternate world, floating in the ether, is brought forward as a place from which the basically innocent virus comes from.

DIVERGENCE by Charles Sheffield. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1991, 281pp. A\$35.00. On sale now.

I haven't read Book One of the Heritage Universe, of which this is Book Two, but I would like to after reading this novel.

The universe DIVERGENCE is set in is full of alien races. About six million years before the action, a race that the following races called the Builders constructed artifacts across the spiral arm of this galaxy and probably all over the entire galaxy, then departed. Most of their constructs still worked. At Summertide on the world of Quake, a strange sphere shot out of the disrupted planet, swallowed a starship and disappeared in the direction of the planet Gargantua. Darya Lang, Hans Rebka, Louis Nenda, Atvar H'sial, J'merlia, and Kallik, together with E.C. Tally, would meet two ancient Builder computers and face a galactic menace thought destroyed over eleven thousand years before.

Excellent space opera. I like good adventurous space opera and this novel is a good example of it.

ARMAGEDDON THE MUSICAL by Robert Rankin. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1990. 331pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

A strange one, this. The basic idea behind the plot has been done before - life on earth is as it is because the aliens are directing events here to a predetermined script - and are filming it (or video-taping it) for the homeworld/s. The main difference with this novel is that it is a comedy - and a good one.

The hero of the novel is one Rex Mundi, who tries to get a job at one of the three organisations running what's left of the world after the nuclear exchange. His sister is one of the top shots and he manages to get the job, though running afoul of his sister's live-in lover, Ms Vrillium. Things quickly get more complicated with the arrival of Elvis Presley, which event throws the aliens into a tizzy. A strange woman, called Christeen, keeps turning up to help Rex out of tight spots, including getting him out of a torture chamber.

It isn't as complicated as it sounds - I thoroughly enjoyed it. Get it to cheer you up.

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE by Stephen Donaldson. Harper Collins h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1991. 410pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

The Gap Into Vision is Stephen Donaldson's new SF series, of which FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE is book two. Book one was reviewed several issues back.

The story continues with Morn Highland in the clutches of a pirate who has kidnapped her to do with her what he will. It seems she escaped the clutches of one pirate to be in the den of another. Nick Succorso also has designs on her body and Morn is forced to use the zone implant that Angus used to control her to make her body respond to Nick's advances in a way that makes Nick believe that she was utterly turned on by him. After weeks of this he began to believe that she had some feelings for him - actually the real feelings were the opposite he thought they were. When he found out she was pregnant she made him believe it was by him, and not by Angus, her other kidnapper.

After many adventures, the plot deepens even more. At least Donaldson is trying to build up his characters, which many authors don't do. I liked it.

DRACULA UNBOUND by Brian Aldiss. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1991. 199pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

This could be a companion volume to FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND, as it is set in the same literary background. DRACULA UNBOUND is more sf this time,

though, with time travel and creatures inimical to Man.

When two coffins are found in the Utah desert by a scientific expedition, all is not well - they were found in rocks sixty-two million years old - and in them were the skeletons of humans. Joe Boderland is head of the company financing the expedition and he is called. He finds a silver bullet in the rib cage of one of the skeletons and later, when he attempts to climb into a speeding manifestation of a train, he finds himself back in the time of Bram Stoker who is writing DRACULA.

When flying vampires attack them, they both go back in time in the train in an attempt to rescue Joe's wife and deal with the invaders from the far past, and future. Aldiss uses a strange style this time around - I can't say I like it much.

WAR OF THE SKY LORDS by John Brosnan. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1989. 252pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

I liked THE SKY LORDS when I first read it, but I didn't know there was a sequel. There is, this is it, and there is a third volume (see the review below).

The second book continues the flight of Jan Dorvin, the Minervan, as she leads her five air-ships into battle. All is well until she finds she is pregnant - and the father must have been Milo, the augmented man from four hundred years in the past. She bears her son, but shortly it is obvious he is different - he seems to be growing extraordinarily quickly. Then Milo's genetic heritage comes to the fore and his personality takes over the boy's body. From then things go downhill for Jan. When she is attacked by another five ships, helped by a human flying an aircraft built by the New Science of the Eloï, it spells her doom and a lot of other people also. Good sf adventure.

REAPER MAN by Terry Pratchett. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. 253pp. A\$32.50. On sale now.

Another Discworld novel, again illustrated - to good effect - by Josh Kirby.

The city of Ankh-Morpork is up to its gutters in trouble again. The inhabitants of said city are going about their business when they find that Death is taking a holiday; or at least they think he is. Actually, he has been fired and is working on a farm reaping wheat - admittedly one stalk at a time, but he is enjoying himself, as well as Bill Door (his new name) can. Back in the city there is an influx of small trinkets - models of houses, buildings, etc that when one shakes them, a snow-like substance falls over the scene. It

is only later that another manifestation of these objects starts to run around.

No, things aren't all that good in the city. Another excellent humorous novel from the word-processor of Terry Pratchett.

THE CITY, NOT LONG AFTER by Pat Murphy. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1989. 320pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This novel is set in post Holocaust San Francisco. It is a San Francisco whose history traces back to the Sixties - it is deserted except for artists, who live in a small section of the city in a anarchistic style.

The plot is simple - a power hungry military general is determined to unite the remnants of the US into another powerblock - under him and is pushing to invade San Francisco. It is also about a love story between Danny-boy and the newly named woman Jax, whose mother had escaped the city and gone to live a solitary life in the country.

Murphy has written a ghostly kind of novel and has managed to pull it off well, I think. An interesting work.

THE FACE OF THE WATERS by Robert Silverberg. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1991. 348pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

I must admit that I haven't thought that some of Silverberg's latest offerings have struck me as being really top class.

THE FACE OF THE WATERS is a novel that explores several things on its way to its conclusion - the nature of religion and the push for power, and what it means to be human. It is set on the water world of Hydros - there is no land, only gigantic artificial floating islands, built by the native Gillies. Earth had been destroyed years before and the only way down to the surface of Hydros was one way - by drop capsule.

The island where the early action takes place has some 78 humans on it. When they are thrown off because of an argument with the Gilles, they set out to try to find another island which will take them in.

The background and sociology is first rate - this will be a Hugo contender. *Recommended*.

GYPSIES by Robert Charles Wilson. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1989. 311pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Gypsies is billed as an "alternate world" novel - it isn't really; it is more a novel of parallel worlds. An alternate world novel is a novel which is entirely set in an alternate world. This one is not.

The plot is basically that of three adults who, as children, made a gateway through into another world. What they saw there made them determined not to go back, but the Grey Man - someone who they saw there, kept on showing up all through their lives, following their movements as their foster parents moved from place to place.

There is a pause until the elder sister has a son, Michael, and then some of the inhabitants of North America in the other world determine that it is Time to kidnap the three and bring them across again to help in a war that was going bad. So they sent the Grey Man out again... The background of the other worlds are sketched in fairly well - though they could have been given more depth in order to build up more empathy with the reader. It isn't the best of the breed, but it takes a lot to be as good as MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE and BRING THE JUBILEE?

Quite a good read, and it started getting more exciting near the end.

THE FALL OF THE SKY LORDS by John Brosnan. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1991. 284pp. A\$36. On sale now.

The third in the Sky Lords trilogy, this novel ties up neatly all the loose ends of the other two. All through the three runs the thread of Milo, the immortal from before the time of the Gene Wars who left clippings of himself in various places to ensure his continuance if he was done away with. (His body could only take so much before he carked it.

In this volume we move to the north coast of Queensland where Cairns would be today and a settlement is slowly growing. Unfortunately for it, both the spacers and some remaining people in the skyships find them and all sorts of rows ensue.

This is good sf adventure, though John still hasn't quite got the knack of integrating his background scientific data into the main story without it jarring somewhat.

STALIN'S TEARDROPS by Ian Watson. Gollancz h/c dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (c) 1985-19990. 270pp. A\$35. On sale now.

This is a collection of Ian Watson's short stories, taken from sources all over the sf magazine world - F&SF, INTERZONE, ISAAC ASIMOV'S, THE GATE and other sources, including some anthologies.

The stories included are: STALIN'S TEARDROPS; GAUDI'S DRAGON; IN THE UPPER CRETACEOUS WITH THE SUMMERFIRE BRIGADE; THE BEGGARS IN OUR BACK YARD; FROM THE ANNALS OF THE ONOMASTIC SOCIETY; TALES FROM WESTON WILLOW; IN HER SHOES; THE HUMAN CHICKEN; THE CASE OF THE GLASS SLIPPER; THE PHARAOH AND THE

MADemoiselle and THE EYE OF THE AYATOLLAH. I reached, read and finished THE BEGGARS IN OUR BACK YARD before I gave the book up. This is one of the few times I haven't finished an sf book I've started - though in this case it's Speculative Fiction.

RENAISSANCE by Raymond F. Jones. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1951. 383pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

When I first read this in 1964 under the title of MAN OF TWO WORLDS I gave it five stars. I wondered before I re-read it nearly thirty years later how it would stand up.

RENAISSANCE is set in a world sealed off - on one side is the impenetrable veils of a wall of force, on the other sides the Fire Lands and Dark Land. Ketan was born, as were the others, through the Temple of Birth, but he had a more enquiring mind than the other Seekers. Eventually when he won through to Earth the rebellion that had been fomenting for centuries burst into flame and both worlds felt the destruction of war.

On the second reading I found that the novel had some slow places, but considering it was written over forty years ago, it has held its force remarkably well. A good read.

ROBOT VISIONS by Isaac Asimov. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1940-1989 383pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

The companion volume to ROBOT DREAMS, this volume has 36 stories and essays on robots by the venerable doctor. The earliest story is ROBBIE, the 1940s story, and the latest story dates from 1989.

The contents are: An introduction; TOO BAD!; ROBBIE; REASON; LIAR!; RUNAROUND; EVIDENCE; LITTLE LOST ROBOT; THE EVITABLE CONFLICT; FEMINE INTUITION; THE BICENTENNIAL MAN; SOMEDAY; THINK!; SEGREGATIONIST; MIRROR IMAGE; LENNY; GALLEY SLAVE; CHRISTMAS WITHOUT RODNEY; ROBOTS I HAVE KNOWN; THE NEW TEACHERS; WHATEVER YOU WISH; THE FRIENDS WE MAKE; OUR INTELLIGENT TOOLS; THE LAWS OF ROBOTICS; FUTURE FANTASTIC; THE MACHINE AND THE ROBOT; THE NEW PROFESSION; THE ROBOT AS ENEMY?; INTELLIGENCES TOGETHER; MY ROBOTS; THE LAWS OF HUMANICS; CYBERNETIC ORGANISM; THE SENSE OF HUMOR and ROBOTS IN COMMUNICATION.

A collection of some of the best stories written about robots.

REUNION by John Gribbin & Marcus Chown. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1991. 285pp. A\$36. On sale now.

The events detailed in DOUBLE PLANET had taken place a thousand years before, and now events on the Moon had taken a turn for the worse,

with no air-renewing comets coming in to replenish the air escaping through the low gravity.

Tulela's family was famous because her grandfather was one of the six who had, over the centuries, journeyed into the Forbidden Zone, where the comets had hit. With the failure of the comets, the church-dominated City had become more repressive and after the church soldiers had burnt their farm and taken her parents, Tulela had determined to rescue them. It took a side trip into the Forbidden Zone to bring to her just how large was the problem with the comets. The same situation affected Earth, whose climate was changing for the worst for the humans still there.

An excellent SF book for teenagers and above. *Recommended* SF adventure.

GALEN BEKNIGHTED by Michael Williams. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 317pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Volume 3 of H. E. R. O. E. S. II. Author Michael Williams is the person who penned the songs in the six Dragonlance novels, and in this novel he continues the story of the Seasel, Galen Pathwarden, as he seeks his lost brother.

The Namer was one of the villains in the novel, he who destroyed books and poetry and all such but, since they were already residing in the stones of the silver crown, he didn't think it mattered all that much. Galen would traverse many caverns and fight many battles in his search, and even when he found his brother, his task was still not completed. There were trolls and evil men still to face.

A TSR paperback for those of fantasy bent.

POHLSTARS by Frederik Pohl. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1984. 203pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The stories in this collection were published between 1974 to 1983, even though the copyright date is 1984.

Pohl has been writing sf from the fifties and his style is very polished. The stories included illustrate this. They are: THE SWEET, SAD QUEEN OF GRAZING ISLES; THE HIGH TEST; SPENDING A DAY AT THE LOTTERY FAIR; SECOND COMING; ENJOY, ENJOY; GROWING UP IN EDGE CITY; WE PURCHASED PEOPLE; REM THE REMEMBERER; THE MOTHER TRIP; A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ABLE CHARLIE and THE WAY IT WAS.

There is an Introduction to the anthology and each individual story has a short introduction by Pohl. Many of the stories here I haven't read before and some of them are in

the universe of other writers - eg EE Smith. Solid reading.

WAR OF THE MAELSTROM by Jack Chalker. NEL, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1988. 360pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Book 3 of the Changewinds saga, Chalker in his introduction says that this and the other previous two books should be read as one novel and that the reader should, if this is the first he/she has bought, get the others before starting to read.

The Storm Princess and the wizard Klittichorn are wondering why she has trouble keep control of the Changewinds. After a short conversation the wizard realises that it must be because of the fact that one of the women brought from another world must be pregnant and the two were drawing the magical energy to themselves.

WAR OF THE MAELSTROM is quite a thick book, with small print; so if you do get this, ensure that you either have, or get the others, as the author does not provide much in the way of introduction.

EVENT HORIZON by Jack McKinney. Del Rey pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1991. 310pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

Jack McKinney is the author of the ROBOTTECH novels, though that shouldn't be held against him.

EVENT HORIZON is a novel with quite a bit of humour - and the rest of it is good SF adventure. The Black Hole Travel Agency was an outfit that wasn't well known for really looking after it's clients. In the case in question a crowd of HuZZah was in the charge of a human guide. Somehow they ended up on a world that wasn't their destination - a shipment destined for that world had somehow gotten the same transshipment number as their tour.

That wasn't the only thing wrong: the Earth was in pretty bad shape and was desperately trying to get itself out of its declining civilisation. The novel is in quite small print, so you are getting your money's worth in reading time.

THE DAYS OF PERKY PAT by Philip K. Dick. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1987. 494pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Volume 4 of the collected stories of PK Dick, the stories in this volume were actually published between 1955 and 1964.

Anyone collecting these volumes or who has never read Dick will want this anthology. The stories are included are: AUTOFAC; SERVICE CALL; CAPTIVE MARKET; THE MOLD OF YANCY; THE MINORITY REPORT; RECALL MECHANISM; THE UNRECONSTRUCTED M; EXPLORERS WE; WAR GAME; IF THERE WERE NO BENNY CEMOLI; NOVELTY ACT; WATERSPIDER; WHAT THE DEAD MEN SAY; ORPHEUS WITH CLAY FEET;

THE DAYS OF PERKY PAT; STAND-BY; WHAT'LL WE DO WITH RAGLAND PARK? and OH, TO BE A BLOBEL!. There are also notes on most stories by the author and an Introduction by James Tiptree, Jr.

As usual, a "must get" collection for anyone seriously interested in SF.

ACROSS THE THALASSA MEY by Dennis McCarty. Del Rey pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1991. 247pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This is a fantasy novel with all the accoutrements: knights, horses and adventure. Maybe I should quote from the blurb on the back cover?

"Once again, the Oracle summoned King Palamon of Carea to the island where the Temple stood. And this time, she appeared to him in person as he performed his sacrifices. She gave her prophecy - a warning that a great evil was about to fall upon the lands around the Thlassa Mey. So serious was this that the altar cracked, and she fainted as she finished".

Actually, it is a quest novel that most players of role playing games will know by heart. And most readers of quest fantasy will be able to follow the simple plot without any trouble at all.

A book for passing the time when waiting for a bus or train, or for giving to someone who is into the activities mentioned above.

TRIAD OF DARKNESS by Martin Middleton. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1991. 335pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Martin Middleton is an Australian, living in Queensland. The first volume in this series, CIRCLE OF LIGHT, was reviewed in TM 69.

The quest continues as Teal fights his way through unexplored lands on his way to conquer the Darkness that threatens civilisation. Middleton has a good grasp of language and has a crisp style, as this quote of the first paragraph in Chapter 1 shows:

"As usual, Ransyn threw himself into the thick of the fighting. Steering his mount with his knees, he forced his way into the heart of the Navealozan attackers. His heavy sabre cut through raised shields, to dig deep into arms and heads without a pause. Ransyn's mount bit and kicked as the press of attackers closed in tighter about it. One Navealozan darted in beneath Ransyn's raised sabre only to find that the flashing yellow teeth of the battle-trained mount snapped his hand off at the wrist."

Anybody who wants to know what happened to those with the rings of Light will just have to read on...

THE EYE OF THE HERON & THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST by Ursula Le Guin. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1972-1978. 301pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This book is a collection - can you call a book containing only two novelettes a collection? - of two of Le Guin works from the 1970 - the decade after the Age of Aquarius. In it she deals with violence and the threat and use of war on alien planets, though, of course, she is actually writing of humans on Earth in the 1970s. The main points of the novelettes haven't changed, either. Both subject stories are still in the forefront of reasons for peaceful co-existence and will doubtless be still for centuries to come.

I hadn't read THE EYE OF THE HERON before this edition; though I had read THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST. The latter is as powerful a story as it was first published. The former is as hard hitting as any of her earlier works. In the author's Introduction she gives some valuable background information for those readers wanting to know more of the time when the stories were written. I have found her later stories (written in the last five years) to be much more convoluted and less powerful than her early ones. If you haven't read these stories - buy this book.

ETERNAL LIGHT by Paul J. McAuley. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1991. 384pp. On sale now.

ETERNAL LIGHT is an ambitious novel. It is a sequel to FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS, which was about the war between the Enemy and mankind. Several of the characters in the first novel turn up in the second.

This book could have been written by E.E. Smith if he were writing in the 1990s instead of the 1930s and 1940s. The action of the story ranges from Earth, alien stars near Earth, to the Galactic core, to the standing wave around the central black hole, to the event horizon of a virtual reality that is on the way to another universe.

I found the author's style to be a little bit rough in places, but it is one of the better novels I have read this year. *Recommended*.

QUOZL by Alan Dean Foster. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1989. 344pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Alan Dean Foster has been writing humorous sf for some years now. He has written a series about the Flinx and other novels that have a core of humour.

QUOZL is a First Contact sort of story, with aliens contacting certain Earth persons to find out the impact on our society. The aliens themselves are pretty close to humans in the way

they behave and their social relationships, and most of the time the humans can follow the reasons for what the aliens do. Foster has written a fairly tight novel, and I found that the reading was easy and didn't take much brain power to follow.

Good for that easy afternoon.

PRIME DIRECTIVE by Judith & Garfield Reeves-Stevens. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1990. 404 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This novel is set in the final year of the original Star Trek's Five Year Mission.

PRIME DIRECTIVE is a mission back into the past for McCoy and Spock - back to Talin where the *Enterprise* had been destroyed and the world and its people wiped out. They went back to find out what happened when James T. Kirk, in his last hour on the *Enterprise*, earned himself a name alongside those of Quisling and Ron Tracy - a name that would ring through the Federation's history as someone who had violated the Prime Directive and brought a world to destruction and the Federation a blot that would take ages to erase. Of the original 12 starships of that Five Year Plan, the *Enterprise* was the one to bring disgrace to Starfleet. Great reading for Trek fans.

GROUNDING by Chris Claremont. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1991. 352pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

It's surprising how many of the aircraft and spacecraft on the covers of paperbacks and novels these days have Stealth fighter\bomber characteristics. This novel has one such.

FIRST FLIGHT was the first novel in the series about Nicole Shea, this is the second. Claremont builds on Shea's character, and the way he does it is to get her suspended from astronaut Flight Status and put into a ground job. Naturally hot shot pilot Shea doesn't like this but tries to settle down. Until she finds out that she is the target of some unwholesome types who want to do away with her. And then she finds out that the alien Halyan't'a also have ideas about her.

Not bad for an SF-near future adventure novel.

IMAJICA by Clive Barker. Harper Collins h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1991. 854pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

This is one big fantasy book. Clive Barker is famous for previous fantasies - WEAVEWORLD and THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW. A photograph enclosed in the book I received shows him to be thin and sordonic, sort of like Lovecraft without the lantern jaw.

IMAJICA is a fantasy of dimensions - five, to be precise - Earth is one, cut off from the other four. There are people that find out that Earth is cut off and who attempt to bring about a joining. There are others who are doing their damnest to ensure that Earth stays separate.

The journeys through all five dimensions are detailed. Barker uses long paragraphs throughout the novel; this tends to slow down the reader as they read through, and makes them think more on what he has written. If you liked Barker's other long novels you will find this to your taste.

PBS PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED.

GRASS by Sheri S. Tepper. This came out in h/c several months ago and I gave a good mention for it. Set on a planet with alien life forms that ultimately encroached on the human colonists, this is a novel that I found both well written and absorbing.

THE EMPIRE OF FEAR by Brian Stableford. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan books. AS12.95. On sale now. This pb is a bargain. The Trade pb that came out several months ago was priced at \$19.99. The novel is set in a counter Earth where Europe was invaded by vampires in the middle ages. I found the whole thing fascinating - one of the best treatments of the vampire legend as sf.

THE KNIGHT AND KNAVE OF SWORDS by Fritz Leiber. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. AS10.95. On sale now. The hardcover was reviewed in TM 68. If you are a Grey Mouser fan then you'll have to get this book if you didn't buy the h/c. It is book 7 in the series and both the Mouser and Fafhrd are getting on into middle age. Still, rousing adventure with Leiber's own unique style. Good reading.

QUEEN OF ANGELS by Greg Bear. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. AS19.95. On sale now. I reviewed the h/c of this in TM 69, where I gave it a *Recommended*. It is set in the 21st Century, has four plots and has the depth of background detail that Bear shows in his latest works. If you like good hard sf extrapolation then you will find this novel good reading, as I did.

PRINCE IVAN by Peter Morwood. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. The trade pb of this novel was reviewed in TM 69. This printing has different cover artwork. Set in old Russia, it is the tale of the son of a local Tsar looking for his kidnapped wife, who has been taken by the evil wizard Koshchey the Undying. Lots of magic and wizardry abound.

EALDWOOD by C.J. Cherryh. VGSF pb, dist by Aust by Houghton Mifflin. AS13.50. On sale now. Quite a hefty volume at

432pp. It includes the two novels THE DREAMSTONE and THE TREE OF SWORDS AND JEWELS. These two novels are about the Ealdwood - that piece of ancient forest that was still holding its own against the encroaching humans. Excellent fantasy.

MOON DANCE by S.P. Somtow. Gollancz Horror h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. AS34.95. As I keep on saying, I don't usually review horror, but this one is by Somtow. This is a werewolf story set in the American West and a good read for all horror buffs.

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE by Andrew Neiderman. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. AS10.95. A modern horror tale with a legal firm is run by the Devil. For some reason they don't lose the cases they take and in their computer is a file named Futures. An interesting, if of a low intensity, novel.

SLICE by Rex Miller. Pan horror pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. AS10.95. The tale of a grotesque homicidal maniac who goes through life carving up various people when the "redness" in his head gets too much for him. Lots of blood, sex and steaming intestines. For the connoisseur.

DRAGONSPELL by Katharine Kerr. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. 495pp. AS11.95. On sale now. The h/c was reviewed in TM 68. Rhodry has been kidnapped and Jill and the wizard Salamander are off to rescue him. In the background is the conflict between good and evil in the form of the wizard Nenyn and his ancient opponent.

BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO...ON THE PLANET OF BOTTLED BRAINS by Harry Harrison. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. AS10.50. On sale Sept. The hardcover was reviewed in TM 69. The third Bill novel, when he is sent to spy on a cloud covered planet and finds that those nasty Computers are out to control things again... and the Chingers aren't far behind. Good for a loose laugh.

CHUNG KUO: THE BROKEN WHEEL by David Wingrove. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 611pp. AS12.95. On sale now. The second volume. Follows the Seven Chinese rulers of the world as Change takes root in their world. I *Highly Recommended* the hardcovers - get these, definitely. Some of the best SF for 1991.

THE ROWAN by Anne McCaffrey. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 320pp. AS10.95. On sale now. THE ROWAN is another series Anne McCaffrey is commencing, based on a previous short story. The plot is based on various people have psi powers and using them for transporting goods into orbit and to extra-solar planets. One of the disadvantages is that they cannot transport themselves, though they can teleport, with the help of generators, cargo. Adventurous sf.

DARKNESS by John Saul. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld. A\$29.95. On sale now. Set in the Florida swamps, the tale is of a family that moved back to the town they moved out of years before. They found city life a little too much, but when they moved back to the swamp, they found things they didn't know existed. Well written horror of the type that has readers gibbering in the dark of the night.

ALL THE WEYRS OF PERN by Anne McCaffrey
THE ARCHITECTURE OF DESIRE by M Gentle

PAN:
THE MEDUSA ENCOUNTER by Paul Preuss
BARROW by John Deakins

NEW ERA:
FEAR by L. Ron Hubbard.

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OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

TRANSWORLD:

RATS & GARGOYLES by Mary Gentle
SEA FIRE by Margaret Weis & Tracy

Hickman

ELVEN STAR by Margaret Weis & Tracy

Hickman

HOFFMAN'S GUIDE TO SF & HORROR FILMS

PENGUIN:

MAN-KZIN WARS II Deaning, Pournelle & Stirling

THE SWORD OF SHANNARA by Terry Brooks

SOUL RIDER by Jack Chalker

SECRET HARMONIES by Paul McAuley

ORPHAN OF CREATION by Roger Allen

SONG OF THE DANCING GODS by Jack Chalker

GRUMBLES FROM THE GRAVE by Robert Heinlein.

KNIGHT OF SHADOWS by Roger Zelazny

RANDOM CENTURY:

CRYSTAL EXPRESS by Bruce Stirling

HODDER & STOUGHTON:

THE WHITE MOUNTAIN by David Wingrove

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN/JACARANDA WILEY

WITCHES ABROAD by Terry Pratchett

NARABEDLA LTD by Fred Pohl

SLEEPING IN THE BLOOD by R. Richardson

EXPATRIA I by K Brooke

CLAY'S ARK by Octavia Butler

THE DIFFERENCE ENGINE by William Gibson

MORE PUBLISHING INFO:

Something that didn't fit into the Editorial space for this issue is the following.

While I was talking to one of the Directors of "Eridan" publishing house of Minsk, he mentioned that there would be a Conference of some 30 Russian SF Publishers in Minsk in May, 1992. He said that if Australian writers and publishers are interested in the Russian market for "Fantastica" (SF and fantasy) they might like to come along and join in. He stressed that this would be a professionally run event, and that it is only for publishers, writers and agents.

This will be a great opportunity for Australian writers and publishers to visit the USSR and see a city that has a lot going for it. It will also give an opportunity to conduct business in surroundings that are conducive to talk, as it is planned to be held in a hotel situated in pine forest, with walks, saunas, etc.

If you are at all interested, please contact me and I will forward your name to the organisers and let you know additional details as they become available.

- Ron Clarke.
27.10.91

DECEMBER RELEASES:

TRANSWORLD: