

THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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I'd like to thank Anne Stewart for helping me run off several of the past issues of this magazine.

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The Editorial Slant

It's that time of the year that the National Convention is held and the Ditmars are given. Unless something untoward happens, I'll be attending the National Convention in Sydney (SYNCON 92) over Easter in May. The other event held at the same time is the awarding of the Ditmars - the National Awards given by those fans awake enough to vote.

I haven't been to a National SF Convention in yonks - it really isn't conducive to publishing a long-running fanzine. However, I have followed the Ditmar Controversy, hoping that the fans running the awards would get it all together. Well, this time there aren't any Victorian doors or cats listed, so one can be thankful for some mercies. However there are several points I have to make. (I wrote to the Awards Committee a month ago with the same questions; to date I have not received a reply).

There are two professionally presented maga-zines on sale in bookshops - AUREALIS and EIDOLON. AUREALIS has a good distributor; EIDOLON goes to professional sf bookshops in NSW, I don't know about in Victoria or Western Australia, where it originates. Several fans have commented that it really isn't a "professional" magazine - it is a "small press" magazine. I don't think there is really much difference in this case. EIDOLON was nominated for Best Fanzine. And won. I wonder if the Editors think this a Good Thing?

The second point is that THYME is mentioned twice in the voting form - once for the old and new editor. If you are using the preferential system of voting, and you vote 1 and 2 for it, then this effectively makes *two* votes for that fanzine.

I'm typing this last paragraph after SYNCON - I had been thinking of going, then one of the Committee rang up and asked me to go on a panel on fanzines - that decided me to go. Even though the panelists outnumbered the audience, I still enjoyed myself at the panel and at the con, greeting old friends and making new acquaintances.

Contributions may be on an Prodos Apple II or IBM ascii file (DD or HD) or typed, single or double spaced, preferably a good photocopy (and if you want it returned, please *type* your name and address)! Contributions are not paid; however they receive a free copy of the issue their contribution is in, and any future issue containing comments on their contribution.

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Fugitive

by Blair Hunt

IN AN ALLEY; IN A CITY; ON A FAR DISTANT PLANET.

The haggard looking young man pressed his body into the shadows and watched the guard move away along the perimeter.

The metallic spires of space ships rose above the high wall. A white pencil of rocket fire from a ascending craft flickered against the black of the night sky.

As the guard rounded a corner and passed from sight the man broke from the shadows and scaled the wall with practiced ease. He dropped lightly onto a pile of packing cases on the other side.

As he listened to the approaching guards he asked himself whether he deserved this trouble. He decided that he probably did.

The guards examined the pile of crates. One loosed a few random shots from his hand blaster and was rewarded with the sight of a stray cat bolting from among the boxes and running away along the wall. The men ran off in laughing pursuit.

Peering out at the busy Space Port the man found what he was looking for. The small black sports flyer sat squat and powerful. Its expensive paint work gleaming in the harsh glare of the perimeter lights.

He knew that he would be better off with a less conspicuous machine, but as his eyes slid over the small ship he realized, as lovers have for centuries, that common sense has no place in a heart that is filled with lust. He wanted it and he was going to have it.

A quick glance along the wall. A dash across the open space, to slide, breathless, under the short black wing.

He lay in the shadow of the small craft waiting for sounds of pursuit. There were none. He reached up to the side of the ship and felt the hair-line crack of the door opening. His hand slid upwards to the lock.

The door oozed open with a refined little sigh, as if to imply that all this activity was beneath its notice.

In a moment he was inside. Seconds later the sleek little craft shot into the night sky.

Cold metal pressed against the base of his skull. A voice murmured in his ear; 'Who are you and what are you doing with my ship?'

He slowly turned his head. He could see, by the dim cabin light, that she was mad, mad enough to shoot him. She pressed the trigger just as he kicked on full rudder and sent her flying across the cabin, to strike her head on the opposite wall.

* * *

She was lying on the floor of a dusty office. When she tried to move she discovered that her hands were tied behind her back. Scrambling to her feet she began to examine the room.

A book lay open on the desk. It was marked "Log of the A/500". The code name of an Asteroid mine. One of the hundreds that were fitted with small atomic drives and flown into low planetary orbit to be stripped of their minerals.

She turned away from the desk. He was standing in the doorway holding a knife. He moved towards her. She turned, seeking some escape in the small room: it was impossible. She sensed the knife close to her back, pressing. The ropes holding her hands fell away. She pressed her head against the cool metal of the cabin wall and tried to calm herself. His voice came from the doorway; 'Give me any trouble and you'll force me to tie you up again.' When she turned he was gone.

* * *

He was busy, there were a hundred things to do and he suspected that, if they figured out where he was, they weren't going to give him much time. Now there was the girl to worry about.

He hadn't had much contact with women and felt towards them as he did towards the Alterian Snow Leopard: They were beautiful; they were fascinating; they were too dangerous to have in the house. His experience with this one only served to confirm his opinion.

* * *

She began to explore. Her ship sat on a landing pad. Through the small window of the air lock she could see the planet framed against the blackness.

The living quarters led to the life support units that provided the food and air. A tunnel led to the power room with its small atomic generator buried near the centre of the hundred metre ball of rock. She discovered, from a framed wall map, that the atomic drive was on the far side of the Asteroid. The drive that had brought it into orbit and, now that it had given up its wealth, would soon drive it out into the far reaches of space to make room for another.

On the third day she pulled on a protective suit and headed out of the air lock towards her ship.

She had only taken a few steps when she felt the tightness in her chest. She looked down at the air gauge. In her eagerness to escape she had selected a suit with empty tanks. It was, she thought as the darkness closed in, a very silly reason to die.

* * *

It seemed that being dead felt exactly like lying on a comfortable bed with the rich aroma of coffee making your nose itch. Death, she decided was not as black as it was painted. She opened her eyes. The coffee stood on a shelf next to her bunk. She was still wearing the protective suit, only the helmet had been removed. She sat on the side of the bunk sipping the drink, a slight smile pulled at the corner of her mouth.

* * *

He was sitting on a bench in the lounge reading from a sheaf of papers when she entered. She sat a short distance away on the bench; 'Thanks for the coffee, and for saving my life, of course.'

He slid away along the seat; 'That's all right. Your ship was locked so there's no point in trying that again.'

'If I promise not to try to escape, will you tell me what its all about?'

He handed her the sheaf of papers and watched the dawning horror on her face as she read them.

At last she dropped them on the bench beside her and looked up; 'Do you know what that is?'

'Not really. I know its big trouble.'

Her hand shook as she picked up the papers again; 'I'm a Corporate Lawyer and I do know. This is a

contract for the supply of weapons grade atomic material. After a hundred years of peace, some fool is going to start a

war. We have to let the President know. Where did you get this?'

'I stole it from the Presidential Palace.'

'I don't believe you. What were you doing in the palace?'

'I was robbing the place.'

'Nobody can get in there.'

He looked pleased with himself; 'I'm very good.'

'Good people don't steal.'

'I said I was good. I didn't say I was nice!'

'What happened?'

'That's all I found in the safe. I was looking the rest of the place over when all hell broke loose.'

'And now we know why. We're going to have to warn people about this,' she said.

'How are we going to do that?'

'We'll use the radio here to broadcast a message.'

'I've got a better idea,' he said.

* * *

The small metal pod moved slowly among the Asteroids, its radio repeating over and over the story of treachery in high places. It was just possible to make out the blur of the approaching missile as it homed in on the signal. A moment later an explosion ripped the little canister to fragments.

'With any luck they'll think they've killed us,' he said as they watched from the landing bay.

'Now what?'

'This place is due to be fired away into space in a few hours, the schedule's in the office. It looks as though I'm going to do some travelling.'

'What about me?'

'You're going home in your ship. There's nothing to connect you to any of this,' he said.

'And if I won't leave?'

'You can't stay here!'

She regarded him with an unblinking stare; 'Oh yes I can!'

He slid further away along the bench and ran his hand through his hair in a nervous gesture.

She slid nearer, she looked amused by his discomfort; 'Tell me: What are you thinking about right at this moment?'

He turned to look into her cool blue eyes and muttered; 'Alterian Snow Leopards.'

- END -



THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #13

by Buck Coulson

The word for a World Science Fiction Convention these days is "huge". I've not seen any official figures for the attendance at Chicon V, but the number 5000 has been circulating. It also seems much more disorganised than it really is, although I've seen some con reports that said this one *was* disorganised. If it was, it didn't affect me personally.

Our preparations began on Aug.25, when Juanita and I put price stickers on the shipments of filk tapes we'd acquired for the con, and packed them for the trip. Huckster tables at the con cost \$150 for the first table, \$200 for the second and \$250 for the third, so we had decided it was no use taking the used paperbacks that we sell at regional cons; we'd never make back the table fee. Steve Francis, who was in charge of the dealer's room, had told us earlier that the escalating prices were an attempt to accommodate as many different dealers as possible, and since we were late in getting our request in, we'd never had had a table without them. We were on the waiting list for several months, but finally enough dealers had second thoughts about getting three tables to get us into the con. Without that table, we couldn't have afforded to go. We expected it to at least pay our expenses.

Around 11pm on Aug.26, Bruce, Emily and Miranda Coulson, Lee Swartzmiller, Kathy Hamilton, and "JR" (no further identification offered) pulled in, in two vans. One of the reasons for the second van was that they brought a bed with them; Lee was getting tired of sleeping on our couch during visits. Setting up the bed was no problem; setting up Bruce's old baby crib for Miranda offered a few difficulties but we made it. JR had never been here before, so we gave her the tour, talked for a couple of hours, and went to bed.

Next morning our guests left for Chicago; they planned to do some sightseeing before the convention. They left one van behind, in our garage. Juanita and I did some packing, and I finished my professional review column and got it in the mail, since end of the month is the deadline.

On Aug.28, we took the dog Severian to be boarded - in Marion, a 15-mile drive - and then went to Hartford City to fill the gas tank, get some cash from the bank, pick up a few groceries, and notify the librarians

about the van. We have an arrangement with two of the Hartford City librarians to come out and feed the cats when we're going to be gone longer than a weekend. In return, they get to spend all the time they want in reading our books. (We have more history, a lot more science fiction and some different books in other categories than the local library does. One of the librarians told another librarian patron that "they had more books than we do", but that's an exaggeration.) We also loaded the car except for the last-minute items; the cooler, medicine chest, Juanita's guitars, etc.

On Aug. 29 we left home at 8.00am, and had no trouble until we ran into a huge traffic jam coming into Chicago from the south. Finding the hotel wasn't a problem; finding the parking area was, partly because the correct area had signs out, "Reserved Parking Only", with no indication that the reservation was for hotel guests. Interestingly enough, the hotel valet parking turned out to be cheaper than advertised, and certainly the cheapest we found; apparently they didn't charge for Sundays or holidays, which gave us two free days. At one point, Juanita went up to ask someone on the concom about parking, came back down a closed stairway and discovered that there were no door handles on the inside of the doors. Fortunately, I was standing on the other side of the door and opened it when she started pounding on it. I hadn't heard her calling; the doors were pretty well soundproofed.

After finally getting parked and into our room, we set up our huckster table, getting done not long before the room closed. We roomed with Bruce, Emily, and Miranda, and I must say Miranda was the quietest 2-month-old baby I've encountered; no waking up in the middle of the night. We tried to get our program books and couldn't, getting pink slips instead. The books were delayed at the printer's; when Bruce was arranging with us to come over on the 26th, he said "That's if I don't have to drive to Cleveland to pick up the program books." Fortunately, he didn't have to do that. The next day when I got our program books, I'd lost one of the pink slips, but they gave me a couple of book anyway.

During the days we spent our time at the huckster's table, so the only parts of the program I saw were the parts I was on. At night, I partied and Juanita filked.

There is no good way to handle filking at a worldcon. The filkers want to hear each other, but if they're all in one big room, there are so many of them that nobody gets to sing much, and they all want to sing; that's what they're in filking for. Chicon had 6 small filk rooms, which meant you couldn't hear everyone, but everyone had enough chances to sing, and the rock-oriented filkers who didn't want to mingle with the rest get a room of their own. (Though Nate Bucklin came into one of the general filk rooms; like Juanita, he enjoys most kinds of music, though professionally he's in a rock group.)

Juanita had two filk panels, one on references for stf writers, one on natural science, and was supposed to do a reading, but this didn't happen. She and I had a joint autograph session; for that, we had to get Lee Swartzmiller to take over our huckster table. We try to avoid any joint activities during huckstering hours at conventions. Of course, while she was being on a panel, I was huckstering. I did see her sing during the masquerade. The masquerade was Saturday night; late that afternoon a committee person contacted her, explained that there was to be a preliminary "kiddy masquerade" for small children. There were no prizes; each entrant was to get a certificate, but there would be an intermission while the judges made out the certificates, trying to get everyone's name right by asking excited children and harried parents. Juanita was to be the entertainment during the intermission. There was no rehearsal; no time for one. No time for practice. She picked out her songs, assuming that the stage lights would be turned up during intermission so she could read her music. No. The stage was totally dark except for three spotlights aimed at her from the back of the hall, directly in her face. She not only couldn't see the music, she couldn't see the committee person or possibly the "gofer" who would give her the signal to stop; that individual had to come out on to stage, tell her the judges were ready, and then help her off because the spotlights had totally blinded her. (This, by the way, was not the fault of the concom, but fo the union electricians, who appeared to be as obstructive as possible throughout the con.) Despite handicaps, it went off rather well. I was in the audience for this, but the air-conditioning in the auditorium was turned up as high as it would go, and I was freezing to death, so I didn't stay for the adult masquerade, though I watched the last of it and the awards on closed-circuit tv when I was in the private party in Martha Beck's room. I was later told that during the intermission entertainment for the adult masquerade, there were calls from the audience to "Bring back the singer!"

Fortunately, I had no panels Thursday while we were setting up, or Monday when we were packing, though Juanita did. Friday afternoon I was on the Don Wollheim Memorial Panel, with Elsie Wollheim, Forry Ackerman, Jo Clayton, Dave Kyle and Fred Pohl. The highlight of the panel, for me, was hearing Kyle and Pohl sing a filk song that had been written by Wollheim, with music by Pohl. Filking history goes back another decade. Saturday noon was the "What's A Pulp?" panel, where I was with Jack Williamson, Sam Moskowitz, Robert Weinberg and Darrel Schweitzer. Why I was tapped as moderator, I have no

idea. Darrell is younger than I am but an editor of the only pulp-sized magazine still produced, WEIRD TALES, and the others are not only older and more distinguished but had much more direct contact with the pulps than I've had. I got through it okay, though. Afterwards I mentioned to Bob Tucker who'd been with me on the panel and he laughed and said, "You didn't talk much, did you?" No, indeed.

Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning I was on fanzine panels, which were lightly attended but went off well enough. Sunday afternoon I had the autograph session and two panels, so Juanita did most of the huckstering.

"Those Men From UNCLE" was the inspiration of Melissa Clemmer, who wanted Gene DeWeese and I to tell our funny stories about writing two UNCLE paperbacks. She'd asked me well in advance - the only panel in which I was consulted in advance on - and I said it was okay with me but she should contact Gene, who doesn't go to conventions and dislikes being up in front of an audience. It turned out that nobody had contacted Gene; the first he knew about the panel was when he arrived at the con and got his notification. He was mostly worried that we couldn't fill up an hour; we didn't have *that* many funny stories. Anyway, nobody would be interested. Having been to an UNCLE convention as guest earlier in the year, I could reassure him on the latter problem. We filled the hour, I had trouble getting the room cleared for the next panel when we were done, and ended up standing out in the hall talking to UNCLE fans for another 15 minutes after the panel was over. The president of an UNCLE fan club videotaped the panel and promised me a copy - I haven't received it yet, but it may still show up some day. The attendance was the heaviest of any panel I was on; the media fans really are taking over, people. I'd brought along the foreign editions of the books Gene and I wrote - French, Japanese, Norwegian and Swedish, plus an Israeli edition of one of Dave's McDaniels' books, and everyone wanted to see those.

My final panel on Sunday was on "Filk As Poetry", and I don't remember a thing about it; the convention was becoming a blur by then.

The high spot in the convention for me was our get-together with Beverly Boles. Bev went to the Midwestcon in 1953 with Gene Deweese and I, and was refused admittance to the hotel because she was black. I tend to get angry slowly; we were most of the way back home before I built up to a peak that time. I've never been that angry since. Later that year she and a friend did go to the Philadelphia Worldcon with Gene, Juanita, Bob Briney and I. She got busy and dropped out of fandom, but we've kept in touch, with Christmas cards if nothing else, and she lives in Chicago, so I called her when we arrived and Sunday night she and her son and her son's girlfriend came to the hotel and we all went up to DeWeese's room and talked for several hours.

Otherwise, I went to a lot of parties and talked to a lot of fans, and got hugged a lot. I approve of the current US practice of fans hugging when they meet. I never initiate it; when I was growing up I only got hugged by

elderly aunts, and never thought of initiating contact. These days I get a lot more hugs, and from much better looking women. I don't recall meeting any Australians, though I did see a couple of Russian fans in one party. Didn't get a chance to talk to them, since they were busy talking to other people. Baen Books threw a party for Lois McMaster Bujold's Hugo, and when I got there it was impossible to walk through the room; one had to watch one's chance to move a step or two when opportunity offered. I finally did get to the back room where Lois was seated on a bed, looking dazed, and congratulated her. I'd bet she doesn't remember my ever being there, though. Lillian Stewart Carl was offering moral and possibly physical support for her. Much earlier in the convention, I'd given my review of Lois's ANALOG to her and was bitching a bit about ANALOG not sending me free issues for review when someone behind me said "Hi, Buck", and I turned around and it was Stanley Schmidt. I decided it was time to shut up../

I had my first experience of liquor "going to my legs" at the Baen party. Toni Weiskopf was bartending and instead of pouring me a drink, she handed me the bottle. I poured what I thought was a reasonable amount, but the rest of the night I had trouble walking, and I spent a lot of

time leaning up against walls while I talked to people. I suppose part of the trouble was that I'd gone to the Louisville "wake" after they lost their Worldcon bid, and has some "Louisville Lemonade", which may have been a bit more heavily spiked than usual. From there, I went directly to the Baen party. No problems with speech or memory, but just muscle coordination.

Finding people at a Worldcon is not near to impossible; finding anyone specific is possible only if you arrange things in advance. Having a huckster's table does simplify things, at least for meeting people who come to the huckster's room. I was behind the table when Eluki bes Sharhar came by, handed me a copy of her book, and said she'd liked my review of her novelette. (She is, by the way, a tall blonde, looking nothing like you'd expect someone with that name to look. She also writes romances as Rosemary Edgehill, but she said that was the pseudonym.) I did miss some people I wanted to see, but on the whole I did pretty well. Dick Lynch came to the huckster table to get the old photos he wanted for the hardcover edition of Harry Warner's A WEALTH OF FABLE, and a good many other people stopped by. Enough that we made a profit on the convention, anyway.

The Jewelled Mirror

by Maria-Louise Stephens

The streets were quiet, only the dust rises in puffs when her sandals kick a stone. The air is still.

Shutters, pushed across windows by a careless hand, creak. There is a harsh noise when one of them swings against the hard mud walls. A sudden breeze touches her forehead, moist from the effort of walking.

It is noon. Everyone is resting in the shade or inside the shuttered houses. The scraping of her sandals make a strange sound in the stillness.

The boatman has promised to be at the stone steps, where women wash their clothes early in the morning. Now, in the heat, the steps are empty.

He will be waiting to take her to the summer palace. This is her last visit.

Trees are shading the steps. Dry leaves rustle.

The oar strokes the water to bring the boat within easy reach.

They leave the shadow of the trees. In front of them lies the shining expanse of the Lake, hurting her eyes by the shower of jewels thrown around the boat when the oars disturb the flatness of the water.

The boatman sits with his back to the bow, sometimes looking around to guide the boat into the right direction. Her green skirt covers the narrow plank of the seat and her blouse is the colour of sunlight. Her right hand holds tight to the gunwale to steady herself.

Out of the haze of the noonday heat the palace appears, resting on the water, just born, just risen. White walls encircle it, white pillars hold the rounded roofs, narrow towers reflect in the dark waters. Small trees and green bushes crowd the wide, white steps, rising in front of them.

When the boat stops, the boatman holds out his hand to help her. The boat is secured to a shining ball, around which the loop in the chain slips easily.

Wide archways lead into passages with white marble floors, showing fine veins of different colouring in the stone.

Marble steps lead into a sunken hall, which can be filled with water. It is empty now. She stands still and the echo of her footsteps dies away.

She climbs up into a room where all the walls are panelled in silver and precious stones. Light enters through narrow, high windows and is scattered from wall to wall. It is reflected from many shining facets, piercing her eyes with tiny arrow-like shafts.

She is drawn towards a shimmering surface, gleaming in silver. It is surrounded by precious stones in red, green and blue, forming flowers and fans like peacock-tails.

She sees herself in the mirror, a girl dressed in a red sari, the last fold of cloth covering her hair. She sees the blood-red mark on her forehead, the splashes of colour about her black eyebrows and her kohl encircled eyes. The light picks out the silver border of her sari and the bangles on her arms.

Her right hand moves to touch the surface, she sees painted nails - and the inside of her hand is henna red.

She leans forward. The mirror becomes cloudy, dark. Touching the mirror, her fingers meet no resistance and her hands grope through the glittering frame, which surrounds a narrow archway, dimly seen.

* * *

The darkness is like a tunnel, which beckons at the other end into the brightness of torches and music. Jewels on the arms of the dancers flash, while they turn and twist, move sinuously like snakes. They follow the rhythm of the drums which men beat with increasing fervour.

The dancers weave their intricate patterns just below the four steps which lead up to the area where the wedding guests are sitting eating the sweet-meats, dipping their sticky fingers into bowls full of water. Lotus blooms swim in them, slightly wilting.

* * *

All eyes turned toward her, as she carefully found her way between the cushions to the low seat beside the prince that was empty. His eyes regarded her gravely. The questions in them she couldn't answer. Why had she left the feast? She looked down to where her feet showed

below the silver border of her red sari, to her red painted toe nails, the silver anklets.

She felt his displeasure touch her like a wave. She thought of her mother. How pleased she and her father had been, when the prince had made his intention clear to them, that he wanted to marry their younger daughter. Conventions demanded that her older sister should marry first. But the prince was powerful and could please himself. He had seen her walking in her father's garden, making friends with the monkeys, clambering above her in the trees. There had been an old male monkey, bold and disturbed by her human strangeness, who had followed her from tree to tree and finally come down to take the sweet she offered. Once when she had nothing to give, he had put his grey, cold hand into hers. She could still feel that coldness, it had disturbed her and made her shiver. It had happened on the day she had heard about the prince's proposal and her father's proud announcement. When she had turned to her mother to demand why no-one asked the women if they wanted to marry the men chosen for them, her mother gave her a small, understanding smile and told her that submission to the will of the husband became sweeter as time went by.

When she finally turned to the prince, as he offered her a silver bowl with sweet-meats, she put her hands together, fingertips touching her forehead in a graceful gesture, as if pleading for forgiveness. She looked up. The wave of anger seemed to diminish and she saw his smiling eyes. She accepted the bowl.

The white marble of the hall glimmered and shone in the light of the torches. As if aware of her tiredness the prince clapped his hands four times. His friends stood up, the dancers stopped, the drums were silent. He led his bride out of the hall, followed by the women who were going to serve her, up the distant steps to the private apartments.

When they pulled the heavy curtains back from the door to the sleeping quarters and let them fall behind them, the music started again, but so soft as if in a dream.

* * *

Days came and went. The freedom she had had in her father's court had gone. She was never alone. Servants or women surrounded her every hour of the day. The prince had chosen the summer palace for the first months of his marriage. The white palace was reflected in the still waters of the lake, which surrounded it. There was nowhere to go. Small gardens were hemmed in by marble walls, just high enough to prevent her falling into the water, but they were still a barrier. She knew she could leave here only if the prince chose to take her on the royal barque, which was moored at the other end of the Lake.

As a girl she had accompanied her father often on a hunt for panther into the jungle which was an hour's ride from her home. She had sat happily in the howdah on the back of the old elephant her father used when a member of his family rode with him. The young animals were ridden by her brothers and the courtiers.

There were no monkeys here to share her time and her cakes. Just a few birds but they were shy, as there were always too many people around her. She was never alone to befriend them.

One evening she had evaded her ayah, who shared the room with her. She deliberately made noises but the old woman had been deep asleep. She had stepped over the back of the servant who slept outside her door on his mat and slipped quietly from shadow to shadow as the torches were left burning. The moon was full and yellow, making a pathway on the smooth waters. The ayah had found her in the garden and scolded her and took her back, past the sleeping servant, She had promised not to do this again, or the prince would be told.

Early autumn brought the festival of Divali. The servants had outlined the balconies with candles. Prayers were offered for prosperity. The statue of her favourite goddess, Lakshmi, was given a new coat of paint and she took flowers from the garden to lay on the small altar in the corner of her room. She prayed for good fortune and beauty. The four arms of the goddess held flowers and gifts. She prayed that the prince would not tire of her, that the baby would be a boy. She had cried and had to apply colour to her cheeks. The prince didn't notice.

Day followed day in wearying succession. The visits of her mother gave the days some colour and meaning. But even her family could not fight the deep depression that held her. Sometimes she felt like running to somewhere, but everywhere were the prince's men. She begged her mother to take her home, until the baby was born, but the prince would not permit it. He became weary and short-tempered with her moods - until the day of the birth. She hoped for a boy but a tiny girl was born, pretty and beautifully formed but dead.

Week followed week. She had recovered but still denied the prince entry to her apartments. She had become so slim that her saris would wrap around two of her size. The court was sad for her. The women mourned with her and feared for her life. The prince would be patient not much longer.

The crocodiles in the Lake were hungry. She knew that wives who didn't please their Lords were thrown into the water to make way for others, younger, more beautiful and willing to please.

She couldn't sleep. Her mother, who had been asked again to visit, took her often in the early hours of the night into the garden. There they sat and talked. She so much wanted to visit the old temple where her father had taken her many times to pay respects to the Gods. She saw herself walking on the uneven ground, stony and dry, letting her right hand touch the bells hung up along the pathway. Sweet tones came from the bells, big ones and small ones, swinging, calling, to wake the God. He could not be expected to be awake all the time, so he had to be woken up to hear the faithful. Her fingers would be reverently touching the carvings of the gods and goddesses.

Her mother watched her fearfully; her daughter seemed to be slipping away from her, leaving her body here, while her mind took wings.

The next morning, her mother made a saffron paste and put a mark on her own and her daughter's forehead for luck and pressed a few grains of rice to it to show her love and to ward off evil.

That night - the moon was full. The buildings were white and shining. The shutters creaked, there was a rustle of bare feet on grass; a white sari merged with the shadows.

The water on the marble steps flowed around feet descending into the Lake. The white sari spread like a lotus flower, carried away in the night.

A scream, high and full of pain disturbed the quietness - small waves touched the steps. The moon hid behind the clouds - shadow merged with shadow and the night was black.

* * *

A scream echoes and re-echoes through the shady halls and the endless passages.

She lies on her knees in front of the mirror and rocks backwards and forwards, while her hands cover her face.

The boatman calls her.

She doesn't answer.

He touches her shoulder.

'Aap kaa bot acchaa hai?'

Slowly she answers as if she pulls herself back over a great distance.

'Alhamdo lilaah - I'm alright, thank you-'

Her eyes search the jewelled mirror. Images on it's surface become misty and blurred.

Then there is nothing but an empty room in which the walls shine.

The boatman holds out his hand and helps her to her feet.

Quickly they walk down steps and through doorways, along marble floors until they come to the white steps, which are washed by the cloudy water of the Lake.

She sits in the boat and smooths the green skirt over her knees and lets her right hand trail in the water.

There are no crocodiles.

THE END



CAPTAIN W.E. JOHNS AND THE KINGS OF SPACE: JUVENILE SCIENCE FICTION OF THE 1950's

by Andrew Darlington

"Our imaginations are limited to the things we know and understand. Anything beyond that we call fantasy" explains Professor Lucius Brane. "There, perhaps, lies our greatest danger; for it is almost certain that on this trip we shall see things, and do things, which our common sense will tell us cannot be true. So be prepared."

In the 1950s, the Solar System was an odd place.

But then, from a 90's perspective, Earth was an alien planet too.

After the drabness and restrictions of the previous decade, the future was suddenly a marketable commodity; Space became the place to be - clear across the age spectrum. And wedged in somewhere between DAN DARE's multiple picture-strip clones, and adult orientated Science Fiction, there was an eruption of hardback novel series aimed at pocket money and Secondary School libraries, which played their own part in feeding ravenous myth-hungry minds. "Their adventures are reminiscent of the old days of magazine science fiction where anything could happen, and usually did" comments AUTHENTIC SF #75 (Dec 1956), "science simply did not exist, but its lack is made up by a succession of adventures which should delight the youngsters". The uncredited writer was reviewing NOW TO THE STARS - "a juvenile written by the famous author of the BIGGLES series", one of ten space travel novels produced one-a-year by Captain W. E. Johns between 1954 (THE KINGS OF SPACE) and 1963 (THE MAN WHO VANISHED INTO SPACE).

There were other series; the mere fact of hardback appearance investing often highly tacky product with an illusory parentally approved respect-ability - licensing plot-line and scientific liberties that their trashy picture-strip counterparts couldn't get away with. Yet the fourteen KEMLO books were so successful that their creator, E.C. Elliot, launched a parallel series featuring "Tas", beginning with TAS AND THE POSTAL ROCKET which lifts off from Australia's Woomera Complex in 1955. Similarly Hugh

Walters 1957 BLAST OFF AT WOOMERA launches the escapades of his hero Chris Godfrey which were to continue into the 1970's to some positive press reactions. "Excellent plotting and straight-forward style tend to overcome the somewhat naive simplicity for older readers" opines no less an authority than Leslie Flood (in NEW WORLDS #97). M.E. Patchett had Johnny Danger and Adam Troy, while the prolific Patrick Moore churned out a dozen SF novels aimed at young readers throughout the decade.

Even the mighty Isaac Asimov made a foray into the zone, beginning with DAVID STARR, SPACE RANGER in 1952, although he felt it necessary to assume the a.k.a "Paul French" to do so. His series, running to six David Starr titles, was later republished under Asimov's own name, on which occasion he took the opportunity of inserting an escape clause introduction explaining that, although the science is now known to be hopelessly inaccurate, "Paul French" was writing within the confines of what was known, and what could be extrapolated in the 1950's. And at that time Earth was a very different planet. W.E. "Bill" Johns died in 1968, so when his books returned to print via Piccolo paperbacks in 1980, he was denied such retroactive self-defence. His stories suffered critically as a result. But the only *real* way to judge the worth of such work is within the context of the bizarre myths and the mores of the time, by comparison with its contemporaries, and subject to this literary litmus - Johns emerges quite creditably.

So be prepared...

In THE KINGS OF SPACE group Captain "Tiger" Clinton and his son Rex lose their way in the fog during a deer-stalking holiday in the remote Scottish highlands, and unexpectedly meet Professor Brane in Glensalich Castle, set in those heather-clad glens. Brane is a "little eccentric scientist-engineer" given to bursts of boyish enthusiasm, his "hair untidy, spectacles on the end of his nose", and an

eternal "bat of caramels" which he dispenses at regular intervals throughout the narratives. In the tradition of H.G. Wells' self-financing pioneer Mr Cavor, Brane has invented the Spacemaster, a saucer-shaped craft of which our protagonists visit the Moon, Venus and Mars in a series of fast-paced and inventive chapters. They discover that even the Moon harbours surprises - "my friends, the age-old question is answered" burbles Brane, "there is life on the Moon, both animal and vegetable. What a splendid day we are having!" Venus is a prehistoric jungle with dinosaurs and proto-humans, while Mars is a dying world with its canals over-run by deadly mosquitoes. In the second volume - RETURN TO MARS, Brane attempts to destroy the Red Planet's insect plague, producing horrible growth mutations and 'B'-Movie monstrosities in the process, while discovering that the Martians, far from being extinct, have migrated to the safety of the asteroid belt from where their saucers range the galaxy.

So far, so incredible... but then, in the 1950's the Solar System was an odd place.

I originally devoured these tales around the cusp of twelve, often in the refuge of the school library during Dinner Hour. They were compulsively readable. Some of the images remain with me across the years. The Spacemaster visits Phobos, to discover that the tiny Martian moon is used as a cemetery world by the people of its primary, whose corpses are there in a partially mummified state of dehydration. It's an idea of considerable power. All of the original Hodder & Stoughton editions - the first quartet priced at a modest 7s6d, include colour plates by "Stead", one of which, illustrating the "Forest of Fear", also made a deep impression. The Martians take Tiger and Rex from Mino (the asteroid Ceres) to a neighbouring worldlet of "living trees" which continue to writhe and squirm even after they've been felled for timber, "to Rex the whole thing looked unpleasantly like murder".

In many ways RETURN TO MARS is the key novel to the series. Contact with the Martians/Minoans gives the Earthmen their subsequent access to the stars. It was advertised in the magazine NEBULA with a splash-panel showing a rapidly ascending saucer, and blurb "here is the second adventure of Group Captain "Tiger" Clinton DSO RAF, his son Rex and Professor Lucius Brane; in which once again they set out in Spacemaster II to reach the Red Planet". But the reviewer for rival monthly AUTHENTIC #64 (Dec 1955) - possibly editor E.C. Tubb, is less easily impressed. Brane "remains singularly unperturbed when firmly established scientific principles are flouted in front of our eyes" he scoffs. "A book for young people who are not afraid to trifle with facts and well-founded theories - or for fantasy lovers, of course".

So - just how scientifically plausible are the novels?

Venus was conventionally portrayed in 50's fiction as a young planet, with primitive swamps and jungle beneath its obscuring clouds, which were mistakenly thought to be composed of water vapour. Patrick Moore, promoted as an astronomer and hence "credible", set his 1956 novel WORLD OF MISTS there, with Gregory Quest

providing the heroics while "Venus provides the locale of action, with its choking atmosphere and thick fogs". Asimov, alias "French", contributes LUCKY STARR AND THE OCEANS OF VENUS, in 1954, equally light-years wrong in his vision of the planet, as even its title indicates. The Moon is targeted in SEND FOR JOHNNY DANGER by M.E. Patchett - whose initials modestly disguise the identity of Australian grandmother Mary Elwyn, born in 1897! Danger, commanding the first Luna-bound spaceship finds himself and his crew stranded there "with little air and less hope..." naturally, they do not die. They find and investigate strange buildings, meet stranger creatures, and finally arrive home triumphantly. So Brane isn't alone in discovering lunar life, even in the work of "an author who is recognised as one of the foremost writers in the field" (according to AUTHENTIC #72 August 1956). While in Hugh Walters THE DOMES OF PICO hostile Moon-based aliens with evil intent project neutron streams that disrupt Earth's atomic piles. "Of course, Arthur C. Clarke has done it all before, and so much better" snipes Leslie Flood, while conceding that the novel is "far superior to the usual run of juvenile S.F.". A verdict echoed by Kenneth F. Slater writing in NEBULA #33 (August 1958), who adds "primarily a juvenile, it should not be overlooked by adult readers".

Mars had already built an incredibly rich mythology by the time Johns got there, and his depiction is far from being the most outlandish. Patrick Moore - already wild-eyed and in illfitting suit, wrote a book of critical essays called SCIENCE AND FICTION, proclaimed by NEBULA #20 (Mar 1957) as "the most important book of recent months". In it he slips space fiction like a microscope slide under a scrupulously analytical eye; concluding that the only worthwhile examples of the category are "those which are accurate as they can be made in the light of our present knowledge", allowing only, and grudgingly that "a good deal of licence must necessarily be allowed". Moore - who contributed a regular "Sky at Night" column to THE CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER, and produced his own text-book GUIDE TO MARS (Muller at 10s6d), considered his own fiction to be both educational and agitational propaganda for astronomy and space exploration. Yet in his PERIL ON MARS (1957) his human colonists discover Martian dragonflies, and groves of Gas-plants which exhale breathable oxygen. His fantasies, although less extravagant than Johns, have proved to be just as factually inaccurate.

While - even as a kid, I found Kemlo indigestible. Published by Thomas Nelson with illustrations by either sometime Dan Dare artist Bruce Cornwall or George Craig, his adventures begin in 1954 with KEMLO AND THE CRAZY PLANET, going on to add KEMLO AND THE SPACE LANES (1955) and so

on. A review of KEMLO AND THE END OF TIME in AUTHENTIC #84 (Sept 1957) explains that because he was space-born on Satellite Belt K, in a huge wheel-shaped "Spaceworld" Space Station, our hero and his companion Krellie don't "need any sort of helmet or protective device, and all of space is his playground". Adding "if you like logical science in your stories you won't like Kemlo"! They similarly demolish KEMLO AND THE GRAVITY RAYS with "This one deals with the fact that Earth-born men have been able to travel to space, but till now space-born men have not been able to travel to Earth. As usual, the science is not all it could be, but this lack is more than made up by the action and fast pace" (AUTHENTIC #69 - May 1956).

Professor Brane's exploits seem almost level-headed by comparison.

So yes - John's novels are wildly fantastic, yet only so within the accepted, if admittedly flexible, fictional conventions of the time. "Bill" Johns is a natural story teller, but it's his characterisation that lifts the tales above their competitors. Although Tiger fulfils all the requirements of the space hero, it's the inspired creation of Lucius Brane that ignites the novels. He is contagiously animated. A more likeable, but equally gigantic counterpart to Arthur Conan Doyle's monstrous Professor Challenger of THE LOST WORLD. To extend the analogy, Challenger is also accompanied on his expedition by a "hero" figure in the shape of Lord John Roxton, a sharp-shooter and big game-hunter not dissimilar to Tiger Clinton. In the alien world of 1950's Earth such a sporting slaughter of wild-life was considered admirable - a 90's perception would see them as psychotic eco-terrorists.

While the teams travels continue, so be prepared....

NOW TO THE STARS arrives in 1956, running to 190 pages with six new colour plates by Stead. AUTHENTIC's verdict is predicably scathing, but this time it is also ill-digested, "the story itself concerns the further adventures of Professor Brance (sic), Mino (sic) and his other companions on a Grand Tour of the Asteroids (loosely called stars, planets, planetoids etc)... around a solar system which, unfortunately, exists only in the imagination of the author". Although it accurately provides contemporary comment AUTHENTIC was far from being the only British S.F. magazine extant at the time; but the others either include no book reviews at all (SCIENCE FANTASY, SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES) or else chose seldom to review "juveniles" (NEW WORLDS, NEBULA). Admittedly, Johns can give the impression that a trip to Jupiter is somewhat equivalent to, and only a little more demanding than a brisk stroll to the corner shop. But outside the genre reaction was less savage; MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS finds the volume "very exciting and with sufficient deference to scientific fact to make it plausible".

Rex now has a Martian girlfriend - Morino, who joins the regular personnel on the "Travona", a flying saucer of the Minoan Interstellar Exploration Squadron for a romp as eventful as we've come to expect. Taking them to a world where, "without warning the beast short forward...

open-mouthed with its back arched, its carapace looking like a row of knives". "There is also a foreword in which the writer admits that the terms star, planet, planetoid and asteroid have been somewhat loosely used for the purpose of "easy reading". Why this should be thought necessary is hard to understand" groans an exasperated AUTHENTIC #75 (Dec 1956). With more than a little justification. In Johns' cosmology, the asteroid belt was formed by the apocalyptic disintegration of the planet Kraka, which is described with cineramic Velikovsky WORLDS IN COLLISION dramatics. Although now discredited, the "missing planet" theory was a widely held idea at the time. And it's true that many accepted classics of SF used asteroidal locations - Leigh Brackett's beautiful 1949 story THE LAKE OF GONE-FOR-EVER, for example, gives its worldlet both breathable atmosphere and indigenous life-forms. So far, so permissible.

Yet Brane's eccentric assertion that comets are spat - like sparks, from stars, and even from the "World of Fire" - Jupiter (!) is indefensible. Particularly so when one of Johns own introductions claims that "interwoven in the story is a good deal of fact", the same essay that goes on to explain (with a straight face) that due to its axial idiosyncrasy, the polar regions of Uranus "enjoys tropical sunshine"! It's possible to fall back on space-brat Kemlo for comparable levels of oddness,AND THE STAR MEN "is about weird voices, solid land inside a cloud of stardust, and the usual, extravagant adventures of the boys who live on the Satellite Belt K" (AUTHENTIC #66 - Feb 1956). But simpler to admit that for every one of Brane's philosophical asides, disquisitions and predictions about life's impermanence, human aggression, the arms race, or environmental despoilation, there's one of incomprehensible weirdness in which Captain W.E. allows gullibility free unrestrained reign. What, for example, do we make of this: "I have an idea that some of those stars and planets are not as far away as we might imagine. They could well be planetoids we see from Earth for the majority move in that directions; and we are now much nearer to them. If I am right then the brightest must be comparatively close."

TO OUTER SPACE (1957) flirts with Space Opera concepts as the Tavona strays into the middle of a destructive galactic war, while THE EDGE OF BEYOND (1958) extends their forays beyond even "the outer reaches of the Milky Way" armed only with gleeful optimism and a ready supply of caramels. The expedition takes them on to what Johns refers to as "the older planets of the Second Region, to the almost perfect civilisation of Terromagna in the Third Region", a planet which - like Mino, becomes a friendly base for further cosmic jaunts. A stellar initiative leading to THE DEATH RAYS OF ARDILLA (1959) which, in my sweaty-palmed pubes-cence I considered the most accomplished of the entire series - second only to RETURN TO MARS. Here there be a rare sense of *real* menace, as this excerpt indicates: "Ardilla is putting out a veritable barrage of rays. A stranger from beyond the Third Region told us that all ships in their section of the Universe have been warned to keep well clear of Ardilla. One of their ships, after sending out a signal that it was being tracked

by a Red stranger, failed to return to its base... This is causing Terromagna considerable anxiety. We are not exactly helpless, but we have no wish to be involved in an interplanetary war". This time, action is tightly plotted and focussed, in a way that others of the series are not.

"Someone should face up to this problem," declared the Professor.

"Now wait a minute, Professor", put in Toby. "I hope you're not getting any funny notions about going to the rescue of Terromagna."

Naturally, both funny notion and rescue work out, and the Ardilla ray-belt menace is eliminated.

"Toby" is another recruit to the team - Squadron Leader Clarence "Toby" Paul M.D., "a small, chubby little man early middle age, with a cheerful expression which, with his figure, had no doubt been responsible for his nickname. A man of tremendous energy, as small men often are...". Other regulars include Minoan Vargo Lentos - who perhaps borrows his forename from notorious 50's pseudonym Vargo Statten? There's also the alien Multova, and Judkins - Brane's 'imperturbable seldom-speaking Butler-Mechanic".

With the arrival of TO WORLDS UNKNOWN (1960), taking our heroes to the threatened planet Romunda, and QUEST FOR THE PERFECT PLANET (1961) space-hopping to a variety of worlds - Zora Ten, and on to meet Troglodytes, a world of Giants and a Kingdom of Apes, Hodder & Stoughton had economised to a single colour plate with monochrome line-drawings for the interior illustrations. But undismayed "... how Jules Verne would have loved all this" gloats Brane - perhaps not too accurately.

Like Conan Doyle, W.E. Johns came late to science fiction, bringing a refreshingly boyish zest to the genre. He was already 61 when he wrote THE KINGS OF SPACE, leaving him open to accusations of opportunism and of gate-crashing the "new thing". Yet equally Johns' continuing infatuation with aerial adventure makes Brane's voyages beyond the atmosphere a natural evolution, he'd even been an active participant in the infancy of flight himself, joining the Royal Flying Corp in 1916 - to be shot down and captured during a bombing mission over France two years later. It was only then, after serving further time in the post-war R.A.F., that Flying Officer Johns allowed his fictional counterpart, and most famous creation - BIGGLES, to take over and act out the fascination. Tiger Clinton similarly has R.A.F. precedents, as a back-room member of the Royal Aircraft Experimental Establishment.

Captain James Bigglesworth R.A.F. debuted in a 1932 short story for POPULAR FLYING - a magazine W.E. Johns himself edited. From there, adventures proliferate at an astonishing rate, with long-running serials and stories a regular feature of MODERN BOY, as well as contributions to BOYS OWN PAPER. Biggles went on to be launched initially in comic-strip format in the 50's as THE ADVENTURES OF BIGGLES, nine issues drawn by Albert **COLLECTABLE "JUVENILE" S.F. OF THE 1950'S AND 1960'S:-**

BY CAPTAIN W.E. JOHNS:

KINGS OF SPACE (Hodder & Stoughton 1954/Piccolo 1980)

Devine for Strata Publications. By 1960 Air Police Inspector Biggles, with his pals Bertie and Ginger made it to the T.V. screen (with Ginger - played by John Leyton, even hitting #1 on the pop charts!) and becoming a spin-off full-colour front & back page strip beautifully illustrated by Ron Embleton for T.V. EXPRESS. Here our hero is hot on the heels of Von Stahlein, an international crook responsible for the kidnap of a British diplomat's son on behalf of the treacherous San Filipian government. A not untypical Bigglesian scenario, but even before its final episode there were intimations of new developments. In a 1953 novel BIGGLES HITS THE TRAIL Johns' trio tackle a mysterious race of invisible men with deadly ray guns.

Early in the decade Bills Johns met Willy Ley - German-born author of THE CONQUEST OF SPACE (1949) and a tireless propagandist for space exploration. Ley, alongside other rocket enthusiasts, shifted and fired Johns' interest in the fictional potential of these newer possibilities in aeronautics, to when - in Johns' words, "interplanetary flight becomes as commonplace as air travel is today". Lucius Brane could trace his ancestry directly to that meeting, and before that to young Bill Johns adrenalin high on his own first flight. The Scots setting of Brane's Gelsalich Castle also has its rooms in reality. W.E. Johns lived for several years in Scotland, before moving to Hampton Court.

There are two final Space novels - WORLDS OF WONDER (1962), and THE MAN WHO VANISHED INTO SPACE (1963) with a price hike to 9s6d, and - for the second, no illustrations at all. The action in the last books opens with the discovery of a mysterious object floating in space which turns out to be a Highland Gamekeeper, and then travels via the Tavona as far as the Fourth Region of space and the new planet Vallon. But although Brane's voyages end with Johns' death, Biggles forays into S.F. go on to outlive them both. A picture-strip BIGGLES AND THE MENACE FROM SPACE, written by Bjorn Karlstrom, arrived in 1981.

From a 90's perspective Captain W.E. Johns universe is odd indeed. But, with certain reservations, it's still a hugely enjoyable place to be. So be prepared!

There follows a biography of some of the juvenile sf books released in Britain in the 1950. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list - I know there are some books that I have not listed; however it does cover all the books I have covered in this article and the reader should find the list of interest if he or she means to follow up his or her reading of the material listed.

There is other material available, and I am sure Ron would like to hear from anyone with any comments on this article. I would also like to see details of any other books that I have missed listing - there are other collectors who also would be interested.

RETURN TO MARS (Hodder & Stoughton 1955/Piccolo 1980)
NOW TO THE STARS (Hodder & Stoughton 1956/Piccolo 1980)
TO OUTER SPACE (Hodder & Stoughton 1957/Piccolo 1980)
THE EDGE OF BEYOND (1958)
DEATH RAYS OF ARDILLA (1959)
TO WORLDS UNKNOWN (1960)
QUEST FOR THE PERFECT PLANET (1961)
WORLDS OF WONDER (1962)
THE MAN WHO VANISHED INTO SPACE (1963)

BY C. ROCKWELL:

KEMLO AND THE CRAZY PLANET (Thomas Nelson 1955)
KEMLO AND THE SPACE LANES (Thomas Nelson 1955/Merlin Books paperback)
TAS AND THE POSTAL ROCKET (Panther 1955)
TAS AND THE SPACE MACHINE (Panther 1955/illustrations: Cornwall
KEMLO AND THE STAR MEN (Thomas Nelson 1956 - 5s)
KEMLO AND THE GRAVITY RAYS (Thomas Nelson 1956 - 6s)
KEMLO AND THE END OF TIME (Thomas Nelson 1957 - 196pp - 6s)
KEMLO AND THE SPACE MEN (1959)
KEMLO AND THE SATELLITE BUILDERS (1960)
KEMLO AND THE SPACE INVADERS (Thomas Nelson 1961 - illustrations: Craig)
KEMLO AND THE ZONES OF SILENCE
KEMLO AND THE SKY HORSE
KEMLO AND THE MARTIAN GHOSTS
KEMLO AND THE CRATERS OF THE MOON
KEMLO AND THE ZOMBIE MEN
KEMLO AND THE PURPLE DAWN

BY ROBERT A. HEINLEIN:

RED PLANET (1949)
STARMAN JONES (1953)

BY M.E. PATCHETT:

KIDNAPPERS OF SPACE (Lutterworth Press 1953)
ADAM TROY, ASTROMAN (1954)
LOST ON VENUS (1954)
SEND FOR JOHNNY DANGER (Lutterworth Press 1956 - 6s6d)
THE VENUS PROJECT

BY ISAAC ASIMOV (originally as Paul French):

DAVID STARR, SPACE RANGER (1952)
LUCKY STARR AND THE PIRATES OF THE ASTEROIDS (1953)
LUCKY STARR AND THE OCEANS OF VENUS (1954)
LUCKY STARR AND THE BIG SUN OF MERCURY (1956)
LUCKY STARR AND THE MOONS OF JUPITER (1957)
LUCKY STARR AND THE RINGS OF SATURN (1958)

BY PATRICK MOORE:

("... they are jovial, though stereotyped..." Peter Nicholls ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION)

MASTER OF THE MOON (1952)
THE FROZEN PLANET (1954)
ISLAND OF FEAR (1954)
DESTINATION LUNA (1955)
EARTH SATELLITE (Eyre & Spottiswoode - 1955 - factual history of orbital vehicles)
QUEST OF THE SPACEWAYS (1955)
WORLD OF MIST (1956)
WHEEL IN SPACE (1956)
MISSION TO MARS (1956)
DOMES OF MARS (1956)

VOICES OF MARS (1956)
PERIL ON MARS (1956)
SCIENCE AND FICTION (Harrap - 1957 - critical essays - 192pp - 10s6d)
RAIDERS OF MARS (1959)
WANDERER IN SPACE (1961)
CRATER OF FEAR (1962)
INVADERS FROM SPACE (1963)
CAVERNS OF THE MOON (1964)
CAPTIVES OF THE MOON (1965)
THE MOON RAIDERS (1978)

BY HUGH WALTERS (Walter Llewellyn Hughes):

BLAST OFF AT WOOMERA (Faber & Faber - 1957 - 15s)
THE DOMES OF PICO (Faber & Faber - 1958 - 196pp - 13s6d)
OPERATION COLUMBUS (Faber & Faber - 1960 - 16s)
MOON BASE ONE (Faber & Faber - 1961 - 15s)
EXPEDITION TO VENUS (Faber & Faber - 1962 - 15s)
DESTINATION MARS (Faber & Faber - 1963 - 15s)
TERROR BY SATELLITE (Faber & Faber - 1964 - 13s6d)
MISSION TO MERCURY (Faber & Faber - 1965 - 16s)
JOURNEY TO JUPITER (Faber & Faber 1966 - 15s)
SPACESHIP TO SATURN (Faber & Faber 1967)
THE MOHOLE MENACE (Faber & Faber - 1968)
NEARLY NEPTUNE (Faber & Faber - 1969)
FIRST CONTACT? (Faber & Faber - 1971)
PASSAGE TO PLUTO (Faber & Faber - 1973)



THE TREE

by Janet Cooper

The storm had struck the tree with a fierce pressure. The wind was blowing gale force and rain was sleeting down on the branches. Then disaster struck; lightening had struck the branch. He was free, free at last to roam, free to go.

The wind was carrying him further away, away to all those exotic places that he had heard the Children speak of while they were playing under the tree.

He heard them call for him to come back, but he kept going - the wind was singing to him, singing about the strange places that it had been to.

The storm had stopped as quickly as it had started, and the wind died down. He was alone, very alone. There it was stretched out in front of him, the open meadow. Looking around from the rise of the hill he saw nothing but the meadow. Then, on the horizon, he saw the tree. He knew if he reached it he would be safe. On the rise he noticed that the wind had picked up again, bringing with it the laughter of the Children and the braying of the dogs.

He had to reach the tree, his sanctuary and home, before the Children saw him, before they found out who or what he was. He judged that he might be able to

reach the tree before sunset. He started to move back to his tree.

The wind had become much stronger, bringing with it the laughter of the Children as they swept through the meadow. He knew that the tree must be reached before they got to him.

The tree began to grow in size the nearer he got to it, then all at once it loomed before him, its branches seemed to welcome him.

As he reached the base of the tree he knew that he was safe, he was home. The ground before him opened, the voices of his brothers and sisters called to him to hurry, it was nearly time, time to sleep and grow, to dream of the life that they would bring to the meadow in the springtime. He heard the Children as they played in the meadow, their laughter singing him to sleep.

His brothers and sisters would never know of his adventures away from the tree or how he felt alone. All they would remember would be the new life that he was bringing to their meadow.

As he slept in his snug burrow with them, the voices of the Children could always be heard, reminding them that in the new world they would be welcome, also.

SO FAR

by **Wade Robertson**

the silver space manuals
were emphatic and explicit
bright orange print leaped
from space night black pages
positively never ever even
have sex
anywhere anytime galactic
with any life forms
take your space drive pills
use the Fruvian dream simulators
avoid insidious tempting porno
from Third Oedipus and
the trash merchants of Sauron
don't tune to naked transmissions
from luxurious slinky pleasure craft
prowling the space lanes corners
whose oiled stripped beauties
will beam bare into your bunk
if force field are down
Janos read with gulping concern
that unbelieving disobedient pilots
died from horrible sex diseases
internal withering jawed worms
rotting fungus nauseous to smell
meat dripping from infected bone
the weakness of lonely men
their biggest enemy so far

THE GOLEM

by **Wayne Edwards**

you can see her steady pulse
swelling receding
in her breasts and thighs
and temples, purpling
as roadmap lines
when she heats up when she smiles, blood
smears like lipstick stains
her teeth and coiling tongue
her hands work wonders
on my sagging body
like a dream, as before
I know
into her mouth I'll pump
all save my shell
she'll crumble this husk
to flour then
in her dark pantry

she'll knead into me
wine and salt and earth
I shall live again

I take her hand

TREADING WATER

by **William P. Robertson**

I've treat water for three days
in the purple sea of Danbeer.
Beneath me flits the shadow
of a spaceship-sized shark.
Maybe my suit attracts him
like tinfoil draws a raven,
or maybe he's enchanted
by the circle game he plays.
As I fire a final signal flare,
he swirls even closer,
teeth glistening in his maw.
I only hope he ejection seat
has satisfied his hunger!

AS THE 8TH SUN SET

by **William P. Robertson.**

For fourteen hours
the beast had us cornered,
scratching, rooting
like an overcharged drone.

We quivered in a crevice,
gulping oxygen,
paralysed by
its fiery breath.

As the 8th sun set
behind the lava seas,
the beast renewed
its frenzied digging.

We checked near-empty
oxygen tanks
in the ghoulish glow
of its orange scales.

MOLOTOV

by Wade Robertson

Ik the ugly morose moody Vorke
7 foot of armored brainless muscle
challenged in a base bellow spitting
slight Vatutin of earth's 5'7"
who had won 7 onties of gold
from Ik in a hot game of darts
the innkeeper grabbed his bucket
clear bottle of blood cleaner
no blasters lasers pistols lads
projectiles bombs or ion emitters
he mumbled behind tobacco stained teeth
no star troopers wanted hear nosing
swords or knives clubs whatever
lets keep it quiet private see
Ik grabbed his red spiked mace
Vatutin snatched blood cleaner and lighter
from the dirty hands smelly shirt
Ik bellowed and smashed 3 gaping feet
from a quivering astonished concrete bar
the keeper cursing foul and scared
Vatutin threw the bottle spinning vicious
to burst on Ik who sneered hissing
again he swung like a wrecking ball
shattering the solid zircadian floor
Vatutin twisted behind and flicked
blood cleaner burst to flaming hunger
Ik roaring death with it futile
final intro to Russian history

there was no winner but the living held
a circle firmly round the glass
brother Gods worlds apart joined
beams hands of light and fire
molded ape and man to one device

the thumping tongues are silent now
their echoes sharp and hot
here distant mirrors sing at night
mnemotechnic prayers of trust and fear
warnings against civility and progress
the fall of man the slow dissolve
of knowledge and war and love

STARLIGHT

By Janet Cooper

Starlight Starbright
Star that I see this night
I wish I may
I wish they might
Send me the love I dreamt this night

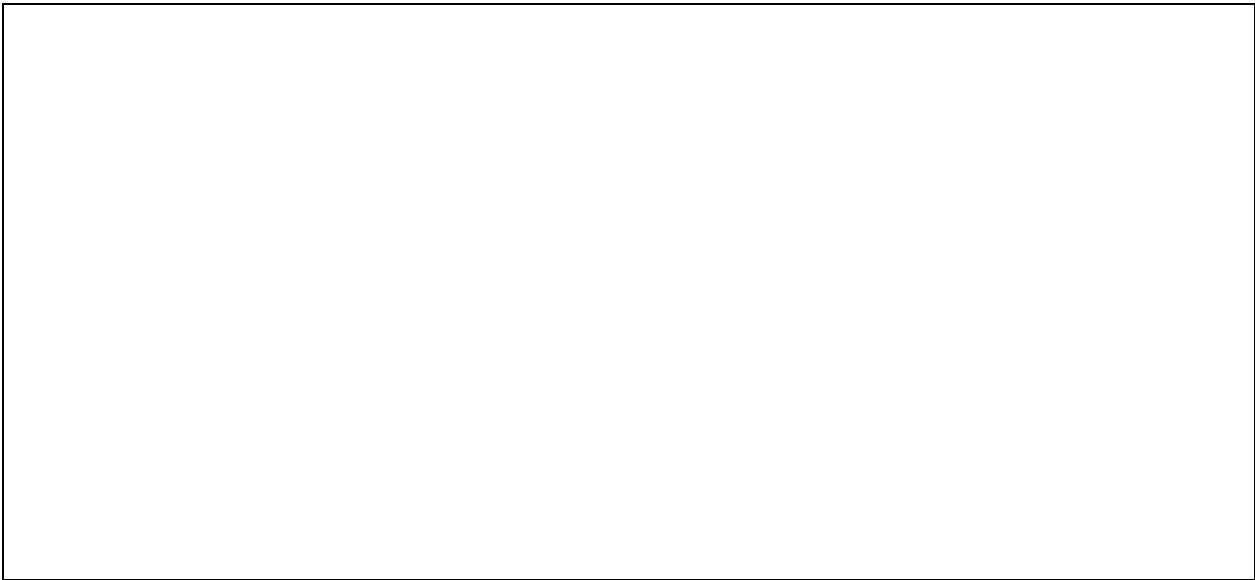
-----ooOooo-----

DISTANT MIRRORS

by Wayne Edwards.

simian tongues are calling
in a jungle cadence flap
the dark wet forest hungry
night pains haunting memories
of the war among the trees
when the boughs were full
with ape and man jawbones
and skull flew to ruin
hard against living purpled flesh

Yet the prize was well protected
the Jungle-Mirror God
gold-beaten jewel-pressed blood-stained
joint God of man and ape
had settled firmly in the peat
of torn and chewed and aging flesh



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

Great Edward cover by Peggy. I see he finally received some hands; or is it just a dream he's having? Does he dream? Pity you can't afford full-time colour covers, especially if the artwork is of such a high order. Better occasionally than never I suppose.

I hate SF poetry.

So... your C.I.S. (must be current, musn't one?) trip ground to a halt, when you, er, grounded at Sydney. I don't know if it's the way you wrote about the trip or the place itself, but the two pieces scream absolute dreariness and drab lifestyle. A lot of running about doing very little then a lot of running about doing a lot, then.... Russian SF fans must be a thrill-a-minute to yack to. I used to correspond with Boris Zavgorodny but the point of contact was very minute, which is why the whole thing flopped onto it's belly and performed a few flaccid death-throws during the last months.

One problem was the Customs Inspectors at the time. They had a fondness for ripping open parcels I might send Boris and "salvaging" the best stuff. This is why I never had the nerve to send the quality art books he was after. They'd disappear for sure. I'd be out a whack of money and he'd be disappointed. I'm not sure Boris ever understood this side of the correspondence. He sent me out a lot of nifty Russian SF movie posters and other such items, even one advertising "Kremlin Kola" or some such, but it was hard sending the other way. He had no interest in novels or story collections as he couldn't read English. I've always wondered if I shouldn't try to make contact again, especially with the way things seem to be going now?

Oh yah... talking about depressing. That portfolio. While beautifully drawn you'd have to say the mental state that produced it was a product of the State. Talk about yer tortured masses yearning to be free... This intense approach re SF is one of the differences I was talking about last letter.

While I was re-writing the FP LIST to make several of the entries more concise I came up with three more items;

115. Crew having to be turned into pure energy due to stresses undergone by living tissue during transition into and out of hyperspace travel mode.

116. Computer-guided navigation for hyperdrive travel.

117. Hand held weapons of varying power for different situations.

Don't sign off on a bumper, Brodie. Ok. I thought the stapling of the ish was rilly triffic. (17.1.92)

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

Incidentally, re mention in US one of the Rune Press Speculative Poetry Anthology TIME FRAMES - ed Petty Garey (1991) - might interest Australians to know that of the 12 poets represented, 2 are Australian - John Grey (though he lives in the USA), and Alan Stewart of Melbourne. Address for the anthology: Rune Press, c/o Minnesota SF Society, POB 8297, Lake Street Station, Minnesota MN 55408, USA. \$12 h/back (don't know if there is a p'back edn, assume so).

One belated footnote to TM 69, Jan '91 - went back to the issue, looking for something else, and found myself compelled to reread Margaret Pearce's CREW WAITING. I'd thought it an excellent tale Ist time round, but I think fact that it stood up compulsively to rereading is worth mentioning.

How I imagine present situation of Britain's Ist astronaut, Helen Sharman, who has disappeared from public view *utterly* since opening the World Student Games at Sheffield last summer! (5.1.92)

[The above was on the back of a photo postcard showing a 19th London street (I presume) with a "bag women" with her pile of rubbish on a cobbled street corner. Steve's last comment relates to this - Ron]:

Cover of THE MENTOR 73 is truly magical - SOW at its best (back cover a bit of a "dying fall" by contrast, but then it i the back!). Of other artwork, think my vote has to go to the Karapetyan portfolio, even though is more Gothic/SF than SFnal: hard to pick a favourite, since all in it share that curious "it's dated - no it isn't" have-to-look-twice quality, but maybe the two most memorable for me are the cellar-bound jester surrounded by sneering masks, and the demons (including one with an odd resemblance to Ted Heath!) massing/mothing round the candle.

Good to see SF poetry grown into a special or rather spacious special section of its own, and not just from the selfish reason you've included me. Particular favourites, each time above all for the subtly double-edged quality, "now you see it now you don't" wit/black irony, are Haines' MISSION CONTROL and Stewart's RIOTS OF DISMANTLEMENT.

Of the stories, Shane Dix's CHANCE ENCOUNTER rings emotionally true, but for me that didn't quite overcome the way the fact that the man was a character in the woman's fiction was "telegraphed" so relatively early in the story.

DEFENSE MECHANISMS again has emotional truth, and the bareness of the ending leaves the reader able to wonder whether the boy is really accepting his father's lie, or merely playing lip-service, but I felt somehow there were still too many internal loose ends - why, for example, did the indigenes pick this particular boy to reveal the secret to - had he earlier revealed exceptional sympathy/empathy, or had he been picked at random, or what?

ARISE, YOU SOFT MACHINES is a real gem, carrying conviction to a very high degree. My only tiny quibble is that the paragraph about Time ("stretched out to the distant horizon like a rubber band" etc), just *because* it is so beautifully written, acts as a blocking-point in the story: ie this reader stopped to brood over the images there, and the spell of the story itself was broken by a different spell: I almost feel that paragraph should or could have been better used as a mood-setter for the whole story, right at the start in italic or whatever, so that it would set the elegiac tone without blocking the flow once the latter is underway.

In the locs, mention of "non-manual means" of cleaning windows (John Tipper) reminds me of an odd device which used to be sold here - a matched pair of small window brushes, each with a magnet fitted: you opened the window, put one on the outside, loaded w. soap and water, then started cleaning w. the other one of the pair on the inside of the pane immediately facing the one on the outside, and as you moved the inside one round the window the one on the outside followed it along, supposedly cleaning the outside - designed for folk w. upstairs windows and no window cleaner. Don't know what happened to 'em, haven't seen any on sale for years.

Love your literal in the review of CRUSADE - The Forgotten Realms eh - talk about a Paper Empire.

Nothing much else that sets me off commenting this time, so instead can't resist retailing a little item tucked away in "Pick of the Week" on radio today - that a software program called "Whimsical Conversations" recently convinced five out of the ten judges at the Annual Turing's Test Competition in the USA, under test conditions, that they were dealing with a human being - the highest score yet achieved. Frightening? Intriguing? Anyway, one more evidence that, in Allen Ginsberg's words, "We're all living in science fiction now." (15.3.92)

JOHN FRANCIS HAINES, 5 Cross Farm, Station Road, Padgate, Warrington WA2 0QG, UK.

The envelope for THE MENTOR 72 carried an apology from Royal Mail International "for the exceptional delay in delivering this item. This was caused by difficulties in one of our handling areas." Thus the lateness of the LoC!

[That's nothing. I just received (1/92) the March 1991 issue of FILE 770. It too came Surface Mail. - Ron]

A WAY WITH WOMEN was OK, but the ending was telegraphed pretty early on and the sex change came as no surprise to me - the artwork helped to spoil the ending too.

Found the Volgacon report very interesting, but what happened to the covers "reproduced in this article" - or were they on page 19c (?) which was lovely and blank in my copy?

[I forgot about those covers entirely. Maybe later. - Ron]

Andrew Darlington's poem was one of his best I've come across in a long while.

Not really sure why you bothered with the Paranoid Android's OPEN LETTER - it added little to the excellent con report, and as a jest was a fairly weak one.

TWELVE BAR ACCESS... "Simple blues, key of B" - even my meagre musical knowledge tells me that blues are in E, and if there was a reason for changing the key, other than to be clever, it was not made clear by the story - mind you, not a lot else was either. *Why* was Dor feline? *Why* was the busker human, and a hippy? I'm afraid this one was trying too hard to be weird.

Buck Coulson's article was interesting - I'm afraid I don't have the squirrel ability of such as he to bother keeping mags for 60 years - yes, I *know* THE MENTOR 72 is going to be worth a fortune in 2050, but I'll be dead (or a very crotchety 103) and in the meantime we need the house to *live* in - it's got enough of my junk in it as it is! I tend to pass mags on to other interested parties.

PTB was great - as someone who's knowledge of science is minimal (and self-taught) I'm painfully aware of how careful I must be when using any of it in my writings - there's only a certain amount of "fooling the people" you can get away with as well.

LUCY AND THE LIGHTNING was I think my favourite story from this issue; short and sweet with a smile-making pay-off line.

I enjoyed Alan Stewart's poem; but I'm afraid the final story, MIRRORS AND SLIVERS was another that did little for me.

Good lively LoCCol, excellent reviews (I even found two or three I'd read) - good overall production. I thought you'd enclosed a three rouble note at first, but on closer examination the green thing seems to be some-thing for/from the con - I take it we have to guess its use? (20.1.92)

JULIE VAUX, 14 Zara Rd, Willoughby, NSW 2068.

Some excellent fiction this time! My compliments to Brent Lillie and Shane Dix.

The art portfolio by Andrey Karapetyan was impressive too. Do I perceive the influence of German Expressionism on the style? or does Andrey regard himself as more of a surrealist?

Brian Earl Brown refers to an article which appeared about the middle of the year in SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN which I can thoroughly recommend as an excellent overview of recent developments in language's origins. The "Ur" tongue's existence still hasn't been proved - yes or nay though. One major problem being inability on the part of many when it comes to reading or getting copies of all of the research material and data in Russian. Most of what's been available in English is translated summaries and abstracts. Are any of our Russian readers philologists or linguistics students?

Philology and historical linguistics may yet turn out to be relevant to AI research. If language changes can be reported and analysed then programmed into the computer we can get better translators for one thing.

Actually the answer to the problem of Indo-European language origins may lie in combining research into Creole and pidgin languages with philological studies. If *fusion*, ie Convergence is as much a part or process of language change as Divergence then Indo-European's split into such a diversity of languages reflects an early period of intense fusion between several languages - a sort of Punctuated Equilibrium phase of Evolution.

I am guilty of one careless generalization in my reply to Peter Booth. I threw in 753 B.C. as a date cos it's one similar to all our readers. I was thinking Res Publica rather than republican. After years of study I tend to remember Res Publica in its Latin rather than its modern meaning. Res Publica also means State or Nation or Politics as well as republic. It could be argued 753 was the founding of the Roman state or Rome as a political entity.

As for "pure legend", oral traditions can be far more trustworthy than we think. For instance archaeologists and historians thought legends of the Founding of colonies in Italy during the Mycenaean era were fantasies justifying later settlement, made up by the Greeks to counter Roman claims. Unfortunately the number of Mycenaean-style pots being discovered in Italy makes these claims a stronger possibility. 753 may not be the actual date - but it's not impossible especially when one bears in mind that traces of Romulus' walls and ditch could have easily been obscured by later building.

753 or 509 or whenever Anatolia was an area with a variety of languages, Indo-European and otherwise. Phrygian may yet turn out to be an Indo-European language. Basque is a relict language only enigmatic cos we have no surviving relatives to compare it to... rather like the panda, we can only guess at its evolution by looking at distant cousins. Tokharian is not an enigma. It was a Central Asian Indo-European language with two forms called A and B. Meroitic given its location in Nubia would most likely to have been some kind of Hamitic or Cushitic language. The languages mentioned are more difficulties than enigmas!

The problems arise when so little data remains that one can't even establish a sketch of the basic structures of a language. Linear B was once an enigma but once Ventrill and Chadwick could compare it to Greek the break-thru was made. Linear A seems an enigma cos the only thing we have to compare it to is Linear B. I suspect Linear A will turn out to be a pictographic script or one based on a non Greek language.

It is intriguing though. (27.1.92)

TERRY BROOME, 92 Ramshead Cresc, Seacroft, Leeds LS14 1PM, UK.

Interesting souvenirs from Volgacon - that Volgacon note looks amazingly authentic as money. Was it some kind of a breakfast voucher? Or what? Some great photos, too. Where they scanned and laser printed and not photocopied?

[The souvenirs were things being sold at Volgacon as souvenirs. The photos were screened bromides, then cut and pasted in the text, then offset. - Ron]

You may know, but the Paranoid Android may *not*, but Douglas Adams will shortly be publishing more HITCHHIKER themes - yes, he's writing them again. Expect a BBC series sometime, if it's not sold off with all this franchising going on here at the moment.

It takes a bit of skill to write a conrep - you succeed, but at too great a sacrifice, I think. The style of your article is very pedestrian. A little humour, and perhaps a little more ruthlessness with the red pen would have been better.

[I wrote each day's happenings just before bed that night to ensure I didn't miss anything - so naturally since I was sick or tired a lot of the time this came across. - Ron]

Page 22 - when will Steve Fox give up doing these generic illustrations which all look the same? He's got talent to do something startlingly original, and he's wasting it on these lazy sketches... I bet he does these in his sleep. One day I'd like to see what he's truly capable of.

The fanzine still *looks* excellent and I can see from the loccol that you are much appreciated by fans worldwide for what you are doing. Why not go completely small press? You wouldn't do too badly contacting a small press federation here in Britain through Steve Sneyd - ask him.

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

TM 72 arrived on the 16th Jan, with an official post office sticker attached apologising for the delay.

The star turn this issue was your Volgacon report. Fascinating, and I'm looking forward to the continuation. Nice to see the photos, too.

Liked Andy's poem and the Fox illo on page 28. Buck brought back memories of the old pulps.

I haven't read many of the books reviewed, except the oldies, like Bradbury. By coincidence, my current reading is QUEEN OF ANGELS, which you recommend.

I was interested to see what the Russians regard as the best foreign sf.

Margaret's story was the best as far as I'm concerned, if a bit old-fashioned by today's standards. LUCY AND THE LIGHTNING was a neat short-short. A varied and interesting selection of letters, as usual.

Back in September, I attended the first vintage pulp and paperback bookfair in London. About thirty dealers, including one from the USA, and a room filled with fifties pbs and American pulps, and comics. The dealers seemed to do good business, and it's likely there'll be another this year. A good day out.

I met again my old friend Ted Tubb, and Phil Harbottle (one time editor of VISION OF TOMORROW, which Aussies should remember.) And I met, for the first time, Lionel Fanthorpe, Brian Stableford and Guy N. Smith.

Jim Burns showed slides of his pb covers and talked about his painting. (20.1.92)

TERRY JEEVES, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, Nth Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, UK.

Sorry, but the cover (of THE MENTOR 72) didn't ring any bells with me. It seemed too light, scratchy and hairy for the opening spot. Interior art was good though, even if it was a bit thin on the ground. Full marks for overall reproduction and general excellence of layout.

Fan fiction is notoriously hard to rate - even when it is good, I have a sort of psychological block against reading fiction in fanzine format. For that matter, chap books and even large-size floppy A4 pro-mags such as the new AMAZING (spit to the East and hold nose) don't really get to me. However, I enjoyed A WAY WITH WOMEN even if it was a rather fantastic premise. On the other hand, MIRRORS AND SLIVERS was unadulterated codswallop in my book. TWELVE BAR ACCESS came somewhere in between. LUCY AND THE LIGHTNING had the merit of making its point and not labouring too long whilst doing so. "Poetry" of course (I avoid calling it "verse") is a pet no-no of mine unless it both rhymes and has a story to tell. This unrhymed and frenetically phrased stuff just leaves me cold.

Excellent trip to Russia report and it gave a few more intriguing insights into that enigmatic country. I wonder what state it will be in, five years or so from now. Nice photos added to the account. OPEN LETTER added a few more aspects to the description.

Verran's PTB was not only entertaining, but served a useful purpose in demonstrating to would-be hard-core SF writers just how to use tech-speak without knowing

buttons about the subject. He makes it sound good even when the "science" is really fantasy. Letters and reviews also entertaining and I got a kick out of Buck Coulson's YANKEE PRIVATEER not only for its subject matter, but because it so closely paralleled my own JUST CLIP THE COUPON from ERG 113 of a year ago. A copy of which follows.

Oh well, time has flown and I have stack of chores to do - including going downstairs for a warm as the radiator up here isn't up to keeping this room warm with an outside temperature below zero. (22.1.92)

JUST CLIP THE COUPON

Looking back through the piles of old magazines which serve as loft insulation and insurance hazard in my home, I can never understand why America is not a country crammed to the gills, ear-flaps or duodenum with highly qualified experts in every possible field of human endeavour.

Why? Well, take the May 1937 issue of MECHANICS AND HANDICRAFT. Enjoy the fascinating details of floating, Mid-Ocean airports: read how you can take two clapped-out refrigerators, a packet of grass seed and create an 18 hole golf course in your basement. Maybe you would like to add solar power to your lawnmower or convert your cesspit into an aquarium. Having exhausted such engrossing subjects, take a look at all those opening pages of advertisements which are normally only perused by the criminally insane or people who have eaten too many "Big Macs". What do you find? Wonderful offers of self-improvement - not only by plastic surgery, waist-slimming corsets or height-increasing "life" shoes, but by using a variety of knowledge and skills easily acquired by simply sending for the advertiser's free booklet.

In the heady days of the thirties, many generous philanthropists were willing to place the entire resources of their mighty establishments at the reader's disposal on receipt of a simple, no-obligation coupon. I'll have you know that these big-hearted souls were not just any Tom, Dick or what's-his-name. Nor sirree, they were actually *Presidents* of their companies. President Petersen of the "Electric Institute" offered you electricity and the chance to earn an extra five dollars a week in your spare time. Even better, President Smith of the "National Radio Institute" (Box 6A, Illinois) would hand you radio on a plate and *fifteen* extra bucks a week. Mark you, it can't have been a very big Institute to fit inside Box 6A. "Engineer Dobe" wasn't a President, but could give you Draughtmanship - extra income unspecified, but clearly, he wasn't an airy-fairy academic, but a real practical man - to prove it, his picture showed him in overalls and an engineer's cap.

All these generous men were not alone. Others also offered Draughting, Radio, Taxidermy, Welding, Cartooning, Electricity, Saw-sharpening, Money-making (counterfeiting must have been legal in those days), and many other highly desirable skills. Moreover, not one of these people asked for money, you just had to send a measly coupon for their book, catalogue, information sheet or list of available courses.

Usually on the back pages of magazines, Charles Atlas would offer to give you a new body, though it wasn't clear if he included any trade-in allowance on the old one. Elsewhere, a chap called Kolne would help you to release the unused bits of your brain, thus increasing your mental powers. The Rosicrucians would do a similar deal, but in addition, would reveal all the sorts of hidden mysteries by letting you work your way higher and higher in a series of concentric "inner circles". Here again, they only

asked you to send in a coupon - plus a token \$100 for each circle you entered.

Various correspondence courses offered more tempting ways to self-improvement than you could shake a stick at. Law, Art, Engineering, Astronomy, Appliance repair, Buggy-whip-upholstery and how to become a G-man, mailman or railroad engineer, were all on offer.

With all these wonderful opportunities around in the thirties, what puzzles me is why America is not now crammed to the seams with experts in every possible field, each earning at least fifteen dollars a week extra.

Maybe that's one of the inner circle mysteries the Rosicrucians could have told me about.

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

Peggy Ranson's cover was excellent. Well, I'm assuming it was. For some reason the picture marked easily, and so by the time the denizens of postie-land had man-handled my copy, then folded it over to fit in my letterbox, there was bugger all left to look at apart from some rather surreal looking creases. Okay, I exaggerate. Though I was a bit miffed that the artwork was spoiled. As for Andrey Karapetyan's portfolio: just a wee bit light-hearted; could have been a tad more macabre.

Sean Williams writes an amusing article. He also writes good fiction, and hopefully we'll get a chance to see some of it in the near future. This is called brown-nosing, by the way. Getting in good while the bugger's still a nobody.

David Tansey's DEFENCE MECHANISM was okay, the most striking feature of it being the cavern section. That image will stay with me for a while to come. And Brent Lillie, I finally found you. A few months back I read your story MOUSE! and thought it was excellent. Well thought out with just the right mix of mystery and humour. I really expected it to find a placing in the top three in the CSFS competition. Have you ever tried to get it published? As for ARISE, I felt the idea was decent enough, though it could have been expanded on a little.

Not much going in LoCland this issue: couple of newcomers, etymologists, historian, satanist... And I know what you mean, Chris, about the Who fans arguing with the Trekkers over which is better. Childish, really, eh? (Though Who *is* better.) And what will all the name research going on, thought I'd check out my own. Shane derives from "Alan Ladd" and means "short-actor" and "to stand on soap box to appear taller than leading lady" in old Norse and Gibberish respectively. As for my surname, God only knows where that originated from.... (27.1.92)

STEVE SNEYD, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD5 8PB, UK

Thanks for using so much of my locs (in TM 72) - one small thing: the gremlins got my sentence abt concentric castles, making it sound as if I'd been at the "70s substances" again. "Concentric" means one *line* (not *life*) of defense fully enclosing another; having a common *central* point (without the word "central", the sentence is gnomic indeed).

Glad to see Alan Stewart mentioning TIME FRAMES - which leads me to an apology for the quick note

I sent you abt the anth. - realised afterwards I'd told *you* Alan Stewart lives in Melbourne, a superfluity notable even with my habit, like a pulp character, of telling folk things they already know, since obviously you know where your own contributors live!

Mentioning poets/poetry, I enjoyed the sly twist of Alan's this time, but favourite has got to be Andrew's Darlington's VOYAGE, stunning even by his consistently high standards - combines the beautiful simplicity of paralleling an earth-bound life with Voyager's "life-journey" with language that magically interprets the TV "vision" sent back to us to achieve a deeply moving "quest" poem of classic calibre.

Re the SFers with strange church "qualifications", a footnote I recently ran across (in an old issue of the Science Fiction Poetry Association's STAR LINE) - that in Dec '78 American SF novelist/ poet Suzette Haden Elgin announced that she had established a church (meeting all legal tax-exemption requirements etc) which would enable SF people to express a faith that was not bound to Earth origin/ uniqueness concepts. There was a hymn by her, tune AMAZING GRACE, one stanza of which perhaps sums up the concept:

"I am a child of galaxies,/of galaxies all unknown,/ a child of one whose majesties/ require nor sword nor throne./On other worlds and other seas/lit by another star,/and hearing other harmonies,/my myriad kindred are."

Never heard any more about it, so it's clearly not a proselytising church, but perhaps of interest to know that SF does have, as well as such bogus entities as the Church of Om and Scientology, an ostensibly genuine church of its own!

The Volgacon report very interesting - sounds like most of it a task rather than a pleasure for you, but well worth it to establish links.

A few lively skirmishes in the loccol again, but none I feel tempted or qualified to dive into. Re the art, pps 22, 28, 34 are evocatively pulpish, (Steve Fox), each crying out for an appropriate tale - but favourite this time has to be Karapetyan's eerie time-travel/horror piece page 56 - the evil Roman emperor in particular a gem of immortal unpleasantness.

Just sneak in a comment on one story, but more to the extent it is a mood-piece/prose-poem: Grai Hughes' MIRRORS AND SLIVERS has a dream-like SOW which means that I didn't give a damn I couldn't consciously work out what the hell was going on - the mind's dream zone was busy revelling all the same. (22.1.92)

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

Editorial in THE MENTOR 72: for goodness sakes, yet, publish my full address! I find some fanzines started to drop the full address because of worries. FOSFAX had at least one prisoner in its letter column, and some did not want this prisoner to know their address. Also, some of the pros who wrote to FOSFAX did not want time-wasting fan mail.

A WAY WITH WOMEN. Strange, if I hadn't read the name "Margaret" as the author, I would have thought that this was some sort of male fantasy, with the concept of being changed from a man into a woman as a sort of "punishment". I am supposed to believe that nobody warns males about the strange bargain on the planet Thets? That a single injection of something can cause such profound changes? That medical science cannot devise a way of reversing this? And above all, that the Captain does not know the difference between a Transvestite and a Transexual?

Tell Margaret to first do her homework, learn the difference between a transvestite and a transexual, and maybe talk to a transexual or two. (We have both types in LA fandom, which is why I cannot suspend my disbelief in this silly story.)

I appreciate Alan Stewart's effort. Goodness knows that every time 20 July comes around, fans remember APOLLO II, but far fewer remember VIKING LANDER ONE. But the reason we landed on 20 July instead of 4 July had nothing directly to do with dust storms on Mars. Not directly.

What *did* happen (and I was *there* at J.P.L., my friend) was that there was a dust storm when MARINER 9 arrived at Mars. The mapping mission of this spacecraft was delayed until the storms died down, the dust settled, and reasonably clear pictures of Mars could be taken.

Now the VIKING LANDER Team used the Mariner 9 photos to select various possible sites for the two landers. However, as always, the years brought along improved technology. So along with the VIKING LANDERS were the two VIKING ORBITERS. The Orbiters functioned as ferry vessels for the Landers.

And upon arrival at Mars, the Orbiters began to photograph the proposed landing sites. That was the main mission of the Orbiter cameras, and why the cameras were the only scientific instruments they carried. They were to confirm the relative safety of the landing sites.

Well, but Orbiter One showed that the original VIKING LANDER ONE site was too rough. This was confirmed by radar scans from the big dish in Aracibo. Yes, it would have been nice to land on July 4th but...

Forget it!! If we had landed on 4 July, few would have noticed it. Just to remind you, 4 July 1976 was when the Israel commandos attacked the terrorists holding a full airplane of hostages. Remember good old "Operation Thunderbolt"?? *That* was what grabbed the headlines on 4 July. Even today, I find it hard to believe that such a long-range rescue operation was pulled off with so few casualties. But it was. And it was magnificent...

Anyway, back to VIKING LANDER ONE, still with the lander attached. We adjusted the Orbiter trajectory to move its lowest point over various new landing sites. Time was running out, but they finally found a site that looked smooth enough, and that scanned OK from the Arachbo Radar. That the landing date was 20 July was an honest coincidence.

But I should also point out that we couldn't wait much longer. There was *one* landing team, and *one* orbiter

team. We had no budget money for two separate teams. So the orbiter team needed to be free for the arrival of VIKING two in a few days. So down went the Lander One as soon as the site was confirmed. The Orbiter team synched up the Orbiter to fly over the Lander at the same time every day as its radio link. After that, they mostly left the Orbiter One alone and went to work in inserting Orbiter Two around Mars, and getting ready for the search for a landing site for LANDER TWO.

But nice try, Alan.

Fred Patten has been kiting the idea of a bunch of USA fans attending Australia's Natcon 1993. Proposed price would be at least \$2000 each. Actually, I was tempted, but the way the Post Office has its vacations slots set up means I can attend Natcon, or the 1993 Worldcon in San Francisco, but not both. Too bad. So I am trying to save up money for the 1995 Worldcon in Glasgow (if they win their bid).

Reading my loc on page 30 reminds me of the only time I met A. Bertram Chandler. But I am not quite sure of the exact date or year, due to alcoholism damage to my memory. But it was when he came to the USA to attend some big Professionally Run Science Fiction Convention that was supposed to take place in New York. It fell through, and Chandler was there on the West Coast. Among things he did was attend a LASFS meeting.

And now it just so happened that *that* LASFS meeting I was in charge of the programming that night, which was the showing of 16mm films from JPL, on our various programs. Chandler was enthralled by them. Two of his favourites were a time-lapse 5 minutes film of the giant Goldstone Radio-telescope being put together, and "X-80".

"X-80" was actually an Army film from 1958, about the launch of the satellite EXPLORER ONE in just 80 days after the go-ahead was received (at that time, JPL was attached to the Army. It was turned over to the brand-new NASA later on in 1958). Chandler thoroughly enjoyed the film, and like most of us laughed at some of the more propagandist lines. Chuckles at a satellite so small that one man could lift it, and three of the scientists lifted it above their heads... Van Karman, Van Allan and Van Braun. And the *huge rocket*. The film proudly announcing that future conquests in space would be done with rockets like the titanic *Jupiter -C*.

As I said, Chandler had a good time, and asked that the time lapse film be repeated. It was.

I should note this was in the middle 1970's. As the club changed, I found attendance at Thursday night films from JPL dropping down to so few by the start of the 1980's that I had to give up the idea. But it was fun to screen those old NASA and JPL films. This included some underground films that have never been officially recognised. That is, the blooper films. "Our Toys Make Noise". All those rocket mishaps, carefully photographed. I remember Chandler liked that one also. One rocket mishap after another. Ah, nostalgia!. (24.1.92)

[Looking back over early issues of TM, I noticed I published a piece of fiction by Bert Chandler. It was

called NO ROOM IN THE STABLE, in THE MENTOR 6, back in the 1960's. - Ron.]

DAVID TANSEY, GPO Box 2061, Canberra, ACT 2601.

As usual, I devoured THE MENTOR #73 from cover to cover as soon as it arrived. Was the figure on the cover's resemblance to Edward Scissorhands sans scissors intentional? Whatever, it was well done.

ARISE, YOU SOFT MACHINES by Brent Lillie was enjoyable despite the gee-whizz ending. Shades of Bula and Coronation Hill!

Andrew Darlington's article on ROBOT ARCHIE was well-researched. The quaint extracts from the comic brought a chuckle or two. This is the sort of article you should be concentrating on, not the origin of Aztec lettering or whatever.

Sean Williams' guide HOW TO BE AN SF WRITER had just enough levity so as not to drag, just enough gems of advice to be useful.

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER by Shane Dix left me a little nonplused, whatever that means. Shane has had a few successes lately, including NEXT OF KIN in AUREALIS #6 and first prize in the 1991 Canberra SF Society short story competition for THROUGH THE WATERS THAT BIND. However, he has changed tack in this story to romantic fantasy. I'm sure some of your readers would have liked it, so I'll say no more.

Andrey Karapetyan's portfolio of dark fantasy was more sombre than your usual illo section. Some of them (including the final one) were positively macabre.

Chris Masters' loc was the highlight of the letters section.

In case you don't know the runners up in the 1991 CSFS story competition were 2nd Barry Rosenberg's THE GENIE IN THE WOODWORK and 3rd THE BACKROOM BOYS by Robert Hood.

I have had a fourth story accepted by AUREALIS, which may be in issue #7 or 8. (1.2.92)

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

The colour cover of TM #73 is well-executed and a delight to the eye. As a reader and collector of British juvenile publications, I was delighted to see Andrew Darlington's article on ROBOT ARCHIE of LION. Although I never read LION as a lad (back in the 1950s my regular weekly comic servings from the local newsagent consisted of FILM FUN, RADIO FUN, EAGLE and KNOCKOUT) ARCHIE looked like a robot was supposed to look back in the early 50's and bore some resemblance to Gort seen in the classic THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL. Having his 'name' displayed on his chest may seem a little quaint nowadays!

You mention that Andrew has supplied other articles. I look forward to reading them and hope that he may have written about the sf elements to be found in THRILLER PICTURE LIBRARY, the pocket library which contained some really great sf tales and artwork. If there are any collectors of the above or any other British juvenile publications, I'd be very happy to hear from you. There are

several of us here in Sydney who collect this type of material but we generally feel greatly outnumbered by the US comic collectors. The British comic publications always seemed a step above the US versions as they featured heroes of a more down-to-earth variety. The artwork was generally of a more realistic and overall superior style than that to be found in the US. Oh, I did read US comics as well, but they were given away well before I parted with DAN DARE, or rather EAGLE, the best of the best, in the early 60s...

Back to TM. Andrey's art portfolio is Something Else! This artist has a wildly unique style - in my eyes, anyway.

Have to admit to being disappointed with the R&R Dept. I can't find any points on which to disagree with any of the loccers! On another subject, do any readers know what ever happened to William R. Burkett, Jr, who penned SLEEPING PLANET? I had this novel recommended to me recently and thoroughly enjoyed it. But - I've been informed that this was the only sf story this writer ever published (in ANALOG originally). Any information on this author would be greatly appreciated - other writings, biographical details, etc. (2.2.92)

[You meant, with all the discussions in TM, you can't find anything to disagree with?? - Ron]

SEAN WILLIAMS, PO Box 605, Cowandilla, SA 5033.

Determined not to be the last in R&R this time! So...

Artwork: excellent, excellent. Peggy Ranson's cover was mind-blowing (even though the Scissorhand film was facile and brings back bad memories). Jozef's artwork was good, too. It's a shame Andrey Karapetyan's works didn't reproduce terribly well, because I'd like to study it in more detail. Can't really tell what's happening and what's what in most cases. Everything is so alive in his work, trembling with terrible vitality, constantly on the verge of rippling from the page, that perhaps close analysis would be ill-advised....

Fiction: ARISE, YOU SOFT MACHINES showed real promise although the ending was a bit of a let-down. (Judgement Day - a let-down? I think I'm trying to say that it was contrived or forced, but who knows for sure?) Nice idea, nice descriptive passages; if this story was a fetus, I'd say "Firm, steady pulse, not enough arms or legs yet." Does that make sense?

As for the stories by David Tansey and Shane Dix - I'm going to tell them what I think in person. In public, all I'll do is mumble something about unquantifiable brilliance or nebulous genius and hope they'll return the favour one day. (I don't want to run the risk of spoiling two damn-fine working relationships, in other words.)

Poetry: Steve Sneyd wins hands down. Alan Stewart might have been writing lyrics for Gary Numan, and all the others win bonus points for being short. I'm definitely no poetry critic - I'll admit it!

R&R: I agree with Chris Masters. We need more horror outlets. And Peter Booth should be given an award for being simultaneously the most hated and anticipated

locer in R&R. Speaking for myself, I look forward to his diatribes in much the same way I anticipate Robin Pen in EIDOLON. Great stuff - keep it up! (Nice, sneaky use of the "C-word", by the way.)

Reviews: Although I don't have time to actually read anymore, I still like to keep up with what's happening Out There. Thanks, Ron, for doing all the hard work for me and keeping me up to date with what I'm missing. (My goal in life is to be torn to shreds in such a column. One day, perhaps...) (3.2.92)

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

The article on robots in THE MENTOR 73 was interesting. I was fascinated by the mention of DC Thomsen as a robot story creator, inasmuch as Don C. Thompson was an American science fiction fan; there are a lot of D. Thomsens and Thompsons around, I imagine. I never had any interest in comic books themselves, but I do have some reminiscences about them. The lure of the unknown, maybe...

I've always preferred verse with rhyme and meter; any idiot can string words together as blank verse. Of course, I haven't done any science-fictional verse for quite some time; what I did do was generally sung by Juanita, and has been recorded, and is now mostly forgotten. My latest efforts concerned Indiana history, for Juanita's gig with the Indiana Historical Society meeting in May. One on the Reno Brothers, who invented train robbery in Indiana in 1866, and one about Indiana author and naturalist Gene Stratton-Porter. Juanita has already modified both for easier singing.

HOW TO BE AN SF WRITER IN THREE EASY LESSONS was entirely enjoyable. In our area a fruitful source of alien names is the local newspaper, particularly the obituary columns. Just today there was a notice of the death of Elic Honeycutt, and his survival by his son Jeral. Two perfectly good alien or far-future names. Perhaps not every newspaper is as full of good names as ours, but it's worth trying.

Most of the art isn't my type, so I can't say much. Great cover, though. Your color copying is becoming expert. I've seen worse covers on INTERZONE.

I haven't heard of a remake of FORBIDDEN PLANET, but I'm not entirely au courant with current cinema news.

Sorry, Chris Masters; I received my ordination certificate in 1969 and I didn't send in the application even then. There's no address on the certificate itself, and even if there was it would be out of date by now. I did meet a fellow Universal Life minister at a convention last year, and he said the church is still going and there is a newsletter for members, but I wasn't interested and didn't get an address. I do know that you have to send money now; the originator was overwhelmed by applications and had to start charging for them or go broke. Mine was #15,775 even back then; my recent informant said they'd quit numbering them years ago.

I did perform another marriage on Dec.21, 1991. This time in a Friends Meeting House, which was interesting since I'd never been in one before. Daughter of

a member of the long-defunct Indiana Science Fiction Association. What was originally supposed to be a simple wedding in the bride's home kept getting ever more formal; must have been 60 to 80 people there. I was the only male not wearing a suit. No rehearsal, of course, but it went off rather well. The boy and girl who had to light the candles couldn't get them all lit, and the musician - playing a tape recorder - kept the bride waiting for several minutes until someone went over and told him to start playing, but otherwise it wasn't too bad.

As for the Ur tongue; if all our DNA goes back to one woman, as per a recent thesis, then obviously language has to go back to one tongue. Of course, the proto-language was probably a series of grunts and odd noises, but you can't have everything.

I ran off a 90-minute tape of Australian folk music from my lp's awhile back, and the tape player in the car refuses to play it. Never encountered a mechanical critic before... (25.1.92)

GLEN CHAPMAN, 29 Janice St, Seven Hills, NSW 2147.

As usual thanks for TM 73. I don't know about anybody else but the colour cover of my issue began to disintegrate at an alarming rate. Virtually any bend in the page led to a long white crack appearing over the colour. Lastly on the cover, with 4.5 billion faces to choose from in the world was it necessary to use Edward Scissorhand.

ARISE, YOU SOFT MACHINES, by Brent Lillie was interesting, I don't know if Aborigines are able to exert some sort of psychic over writers but just about every story I have ever read involving Australia's outback seems to come out with the same haunting feel, I wonder if American readers find the same thing with stories set around their Indian tribes?

The second part of Ron's Con report was also of interest Ron's preoccupation with describing every meal was a worry, I think I had about six snacks reading the item, triggered by the constant mention of sticky pastries or one chicken dish after another, seems worth going over there just for the tucker.

[Many fanzines give food recipes - this way I became one of the crowd. Seriously, the food the people of different countries eat is an example of differences between cultures. I gave examples of what Russians eat because all one hears of food eaten there (by outsiders) is all the chicken they eat. My listing was partly to show there is other types of food there. - Ron]

DEFENSE MECHANISMS, by David Tansey read like a Reader's Digest version of a novel, he went to great lengths to create a half interesting world then threw the conflict element of the story in as an after-thought. The ending in particular was a terrible cop out.

ROBOT ARCHIE, by Andrew Darlington, was fascinating if perhaps a little too detailed for the purpose of the article, it did, however, point out a fairly forgotten part of science fiction, that being the comic. I'm sure that more than a few current readers got their start with such things as DAN DARE, etc. All in all the article was extremely well researched, I hope there will be follow-ups.

I was a bit disappointed with Sean Williams' article on writing science fiction, most of the observations about character and plotting would have gotten you printed in the forties and fifties, but today I think most editors would shudder at the out and out shallowness of the characters. One plot line not mentioned in his appraisal was the time travel story, a very rich field to milk if you are prepared to do the research.

Lastly on that subject I found the humour used fun, commenting on writing implements he forgot that we in Australia could also take advantage of a very large desert and a sharp stick. On the point of using the stock and the beach, don't forget to use MSDOS, to back up your copy of the beach as the tide comes in.

The one story that I really thought stank was Shane Dix's A CHANCE ENCOUNTER, as soon as the girl bowled up to do some typing I raced to the back of the story and confirmed my suspicions, as a fantasy I thought it sucked, but Shane's character's interactions showed a good basis for an out-and-out romance story. Please Shane don't reach for the razor blades, some of that stuff pays quite well.

I am probably reading too much into Andrei Karapetyan's folio but I couldn't help but see communist oppression and a definite big brother feel coming through the illos.

Lastly the R&R DEPT seemed surprisingly sedate this issue, is this a result of Christmas cheer, or just boredom.

John Tipper mentioned seeing FORBIDDEN PLANET on the big screen, I wonder if he saw the same gaff that I did towards the end of the film. In the scene where Morbius and co are making their last stand in the Krell laboratory, the monster begins to break through the protective door. As it actually breaks through, in the gap you can see a man with goggles and other protective clothing using a crowbar to push the heated metal through the gap. Forget it Peter you can't see it on video the resolution is not good.

Chris Masters' letter is sure to raise a bit of ill feeling, but he is dead right about SAGPOF, opinions are a point of view, and as such can't be wrong, however claiming opinions as fact is where many SAGPOF's run into trouble.

Brian Earl Brown raised a good point in his letter about human DNA, while we accept that some primates represent the closest living creatures to man, it is interesting to note that some body functions, such as breathing have much closer relations in lower life forms. I can't remember any examples off hand but it is discussed in some detail in the novel ANDROMEDA STRAIN.

Finally on an unusual topic I was amused at a couple of typos that found their way into THE MENTOR. The first was in Peter Booths letter, did he really mean to say "shit shirrer" or was that a badly jet lagged editors mistake, also in the reviews, you mentioned Robert Heinlein's GRUMBLINGS FROM THE GRAVE, I must admit I thought it was actually called GRUMBLES FROM THE GRAVE. Problems aside I agree with Ron that this book is

of great value to any budding writers (all genres) as to how you need a bit of ruthlessness when dealing with the money side of the industry. (9.2.92)

[Yeah, you're right. I'll have to watch that... - Ron]

MICHAEL D. GLICKSOHN, 508 Windermere Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M6S 3L6, Canada.

I have already thoroughly enjoyed THE MENTOR #72 even though I've skipped over the fiction, not yet read the letters and realized that of the non-reprint books listed in the review section I've read precisely two. And yet for your report on your trip to Russia (or at least the first half of it) this is a fanzine well-worth having. I envy you such a trip and am glad to be able to share in it even vicariously.

A couple of things before I go into more detail... The cover, I'm afraid, does little for me. I'm not offended by it and parts are quite well rendered but the main male figure just seems too grotesque and out of proportion and I can't figure out where the lower half of the woman - who appears to be dead but after intercourse with a man built like that perhaps that is understandable - must be. Oh well, nowadays everyone is a critic, I guess.

[Jozef sent that artwork in to illustrate the story - he didn't create it for a cover. When I picked it for the cover I didn't have any other artwork that suited itself for cover artwork - and I realised that it was sparse, but I had rather have it than no cover artwork at all. - Ron]

And while I've only read 4.2553191% of the books you review that were published in the last few years this won't stop me disagreeing with you. THE FALL OF HYPERION is hardly a sequel to the Hugo winning HYPERION. Rather it is the second half of a very large book that the publishers were too chickenshit to issue in one volume and so split into two. I know many fans who had real trouble deciding whether or not to vote *either* part a Hugo since neither was technically a complete novel. Not that these ethical considerations had any impact on the actual voting results, of course.

Anyway, let me get back to your fascinating tale of adventures on the Volga. (What trouble did you have with your "coupe" that almost prevented you from attending? You shouldn't buy those sort of cars if they aren't reliable!)

[I'm sure I can indulge in creative spelling just to see which readers are paying attention, Mike... - Ron.]

One thing that wasn't initially made clear was just how you were chosen for this trip. You eventually mention getting into correspondence with a fan who found your name in a Russian magazine but you never say why your name was there in the first place or give much indication of how the relationship developed to the point where you were invited to be an official guest of the convention. Was this just the result of a normal interchange of letters and fanzines between two fans?

[I wrote to the magazine, which I had purchased in a newsagent in Sydney, because they had an article on sf in Russia. I never did see my letter published in the magazine. Later both Igor Toloconnicou and Boris Zavgorodny started corresponding with me, and I

published a column featuring Russian news in TM. This correspondence was one of the things that brought me to their attention, as well as because I publish TM - a fairly sercon fanzine. - Ron.]

You mention at one point that you speak no Russian so I assume that many of the guests and fans at Volgacon spoke sufficient English for you to carry on a conversation with them. You don't indicate that there were periods of time when you had no-one to chat with, at least.

[Most of the time there was a translator around, and a majority of the Russian fans spoke a smattering of English. - Ron.]

As you yourself mentioned it was interesting to note the similarities between Volgacon and a typical western convention (few things running on schedule, harried committee people rushing hither and yon, problems with locked rooms and cancelled or postponed program items, etc) but there were some obvious differences as well. I would imagine just reading this report that you must have gained a good ten pounds while you were there. I can't ever remember reading a conreport where there were so many official convention breaks for food! And pretty darn good and hearty food from the sound of it. But for the most part it sounded just like a con anywhere, right down to the younger fans not handling the beer too well! (Although I'm not sure too many committees would dare hold a beauty contest as part of their convention, not with the influence of the feminist movement as strong as it is in modern fandom.)

[Actually there were comments from the audience when the American panelists talked about feminist sf. The Russians - male and female - found it hard to believe that such a thing as feminism existed. - Ron.]

All in all it sounds as if you had a wonderful experience despite not being 100% physically and I envy you what you went through. Even if I do happen to think that a con featuring a lot of hard-drinking vodka lovers and a television station devoted to hockey might have been better off with a Canadian tippler rather than an Australian teetotaler as a guest!

I look forward to the rest of the report quite eagerly (and I hope that eventually you at least try the vodka just to be polite. All in the spirit of *glasnost*, of course.)

[I did try the vodka. But I liked the cognac and the beer better. The beer was different to other (Australian) beer I've tasted. I brought a bottle back and shared it around the office. The comments were that it was probably naturally brewed, with not many chemicals. -- Ron]

The only old pulp ad I saw for "listerine" made absolutely no mention of the fact that it was a mouthwash, leading me to believe that it was initially *only* a dandruff shampoo which somehow switched focus part way through its existence and targeted a different part of the anatomy entirely. If that was the case, I've often wondered what those who'd been washing their hair with it thought when the switch was made.

Good to see so many comments on the fiction in the letters again this time. It reduces my guilt at having nothing to say about it myself.

I'm astonished that you can print a complete issue of your fanzine for such a relatively small sum. The last time I printed a XENIUM by mimeography the cost for a much smaller issue and a much lower print run was at least two and a half times what you quoted on a straight dollar rate.

I don't want to get into the whole Bridge/Hubbard/Scientology thing again (it was a major *cause celebre* about three to four years ago) but it is worth pointing out that some usually intelligent and respected authors have managed to convince themselves that (a) there is no direct connection between the Church and the writers' contest, and (b) the contest is good for the field. Many fans and pros disagree with them, of course, but I believe that they are indeed sincere, albeit misguided in my view.

Young Master Tipper (as I assume he is from his letters) demonstrates a sad lacking in the fundamentals of logic and folklore. If indeed my sole talent was for self-abuse then after utilizing that talent for the last twenty six years I'd have gone blind long, long before he ever read any of my locs to THE MENTOR.

For Gary DD's information, I go on the wagon during the month of February and any locs written during that time are created when I'm not "pleasantly soused." I wonder if he'll be able to notice the difference?

My thanks to Alan Stewart for the (grim?) data on the costs of running and attending Australian conventions. Could this be the same Alan Stewart who used to publish a fanzine in England? The name is not exactly uncommon but it would be the same chap.

Every time I open a fanzine nowadays I seem to see a long, thoughtful and well-crafted letter from Richard Brandt. It's as if he's honing his skills so as to replace Harry Warner or me. I know that Harry is immortal and will be writing locs when I'm just a forgotten name in the list of Worldcon GoHs so tell me, Richard, is there something I should know about? 3.1.92

RACHEL MCGRATH-KERR, 115 Century Court, Grove End Road, London NW8 9LD, UK.

I have temporarily stopped supervising the groundsman at Lords Cricket Ground to write to thank you for TM 73 which arrived a couple of weeks ago. I'm now in St. John's Wood in a flat on the 11th floor which has an excellent view over Lords, so I can keep an eye on the progress on the turf and the new pavilion.

The cover to TM 73 is wonderful, eye-catching and appealing. It's great to have a colour cover again. Also good to see a portfolio of work - Andrey Karapateyan's work has more to it than immediately meets the eye.

I'm an avid read of book reviews, since I don't particularly want to waste hard-earned money. The price of both hardbacks and paperbacks is enough to cause severe pain in the hip pocket nerve! At the moment I'm working as a cook/house companion, on 90 pounds p.w., so a 15 pound

hardback is an almost obscene price. Even in Oz on my teacher's salary, it seems a lot.

One thing I would like to ask the poets among us, is: is it a difficult task to write poetry on an sf theme/fantasy theme, compared with writing about the mundane? Or is there a bonus in having an (almost) unlimited poetic license? Good poetry is hard enough to write as it is, from what I can gather from talking to writers. I haven't liked specifically any one poem that I've read yet in TM, and some of them are the level of a 14-y-o's output. However, others are well-crafted, and occasionally cause me to think twice.

[You poets out there may like to comment. Apart from Steve Sneyd and Andrew Darlington we don't hear much from the poets. And bye the bye, where are the Australian poets?? - Ron]

I enjoyed HOW TO BE AN SF WRITER, which started on p.27 in my copy. I guess I'll never forget the beginning of my writing projects correct now, unless of course, the editor were very nice and sent me a photocopy of p.26 sometime... (6.2.92)

CHRIS A. MASTERS, PO Box 7545, St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004.

Let me congratulate you and even more Peggy Ranson on the cover of TM #73, which is by far the best cover I've ever seen on a fanzine, not only in Australia but anywhere. I was also much impressed with the portfolio of Andrey Karapetyan (hint, hint. Perhaps you would like to send some of your work to EOD and/or SHOGGOTH?). Much of his work is reminiscent of some of those 15th Century depictions of the underworld and the temptation of saints, especially the work of Israel van Meckenen.

The fiction didn't do much for me; neither did the poetry for that matter. Sean William's piece on Sci-Fi (ha! suffer!!!) writing was well done and quite funny in parts - it's good to see that TM can take a joke. Andrew Darlington's piece was interesting too, as was your second instalment of your trip to the Soviet Union/Russia/ or whatever they're calling themselves now.

Again your R&R Department was the highlight of the issue. It's great to see the loonies out in force again. Many thanks to Mae Strelkov for the lesson in Quechuan semantics... I'll sleep much better tonight knowing that there are similarities between the Quechuan and Chinese languages. I see that Peter Brodie is still going on about his silly list. Perhaps he might like to add that FORBIDDEN PLANET was also the first movie to use the name Forbidden Planet... Further than that there's nothing else I can add - I'm sure I've seen the film once at least, but damned if I can remember it. Just to put Brian Earl Brown straight, Friday the 13th (apart from having some fine pieces of celluloid splatter made in that name) spells good luck. I believe that the number 13 and bad luck originates from that thirteen was the number present at the Last Supper, and (unlike everyone else who writes to this column, I could be wrong here) that the supper itself was held on a Friday.

Now a short word to my mate Peter Booth. I suggest that if Grai Hughes continues to insult your fine

name, that you send him a picture of Fred Nile or even worse some country and western tapes. If that doesn't work, send his name and address to all the insurance companies you can think of with a statement saying that he doesn't have any life insurance.

Going back to my last LoC in TM #73, I'd like to put an addendum on your comment Ron: Yes, I do realise that these types exist in any large group. And yes, I have decided to do something about this. I'm going to put on my hockey mask, get my chainsaw serviced and go on a SAGPOF (Self Appointed Grand Poobahs Of Fandom) extermination tour. So let me warn you here SAGPOFs, if you hear the "Grrrrrrrrrr" of a finely tuned chainsaw in the middle of the night, run like hell! Oh yeah, Ron, I'll also write up an article and take colour photos of SAGPOFs in various stages of dismemberment for you to print in an upcoming issue.

Hmmm... writing these diatribes can be very therapeutic. (24.2.92)

LORRAINE CORMACK, PO Box 983, Woden, ACT 2606

I thought that the second part of your report was one of the best things in TM 73. The characters of the people you met weren't particularly vivid - I suppose because you didn't have much time with them. But apart from that, the report was interesting, even a little tantalising... what will come out of your visit in the future?

The cover was one of the most beautiful ones I've ever seen - it conveyed such a lovely sense of wonder. Absolutely breathtaking.

One of my friends spotted the poetry and wants to use it in a science fiction unit he's teaching. He'd photocopy it and distribute it to about 20 students to show them what can be done with poetry in science fiction. I wouldn't let him copy it without asking the authors first - under the copyright laws which apply to teachers it would apparently be legal for him to do it, but I think it'd be horribly rude. Of course the by-lines didn't include addresses for the poets. If they'd be prepared to let him use their work, could they drop me a line? I'd really appreciate it.

I must admit, however, that for the first time ever, I was a little disappointed in the rest of TM 73. For various reasons nothing particularly appealed to me. Oh, except Jozef Szekeres' back cover illo, which I also thought quite lovely.

Brent Lillie's ARISE... was possibly the best of the fiction, but for some nagging reason I didn't think it quite came off. I've reread it, trying to pin-point why, and I can't. It just didn't satisfy me.

DEFENCE MECHANISMS was just too blatant for words. I generally enjoy David Tansey's work, but I don't like being hit over the head with anything. A worthy moral and all that, but surely Tansey is capable of more subtlety? Which is nearly more effective than the blunt object at close range approach.

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER seemed unformed - a first draft, the plot not fully worked out, characters not completely fleshed out, the prose unrefined. The basic idea

was quite good, but not particularly well done. The final revelations were handled especially clumsily and any success it had had up to then fell apart on page 33. I was disappointed and cross that what could have been a very good story had been wasted.

I've forgotten Sean Williams' HOW TO BE AN SF WRITER... This I did enjoy. It was amusing and lively, with a nice connection to reality. I enjoyed it a lot.

And on that positive note, I might end. (7.3.92)

Thanks for THE MENTOR 72. I'd like to start by retracting most of what I may have said about your Volgacon report. Once I'd read the first part - not surprisingly - the second made more sense. With more context, the people you'd met seemed much more real, and because you'd done so much of the scene setting up in the first part, when I read the report as a whole, I got a much stronger feel for the atmosphere. So I apologise for any misguided criticisms that may have arisen from not reading all of it. (I can't remember all I said, but I *do* remember my complaint that the people seemed sketchily drawn.

The cover of THE MENTOR 72 was a bit of a surprise. Not so much the content (although that was unusual too, till I'd read A WAY WITH WOMEN, which I assume it arose from); it was a surprise mostly because it seemed a bit artificial and contrived to me. A bit awkward; he looks too settled, and she looks too uncomfortable. Even if that was part of the point, it doesn't feel right to be.

Reading the rest of the 'zine was a bit weird, as of course I'd already read a selection of LoCs on them.

I do agree that Margaret Pearce was too subtle in setting up John's character at the opening of A WAY... But she does seem capable of subtlety later, so maybe it was just over eagerness to make her point. I was more distracted by a logical problem - if the Company kept losing good officers to the longevity process, why didn't they just make sure everyone who landed there knew about the little "side-effect"? What would be the percentage in keeping it secret? Okay, a few cranks might head for Thetis, but wouldn't that be the women's problem?

TWELVE BAR ACCESS was very nicely written but I didn't understand it. Even the bits outside the computer were more or less incomprehensible. There's nothing wrong with a bit of mystery, even a lot of it sometimes - but there has to be *something* for me to get hold of. But as I said, the writing *was* good; I think I'd enjoy some of Congreve's more understandable work.

Jim Verran's P.T.B. was great. Concise and to the point, but covering the issue nicely.

And LUCY AND THE LIGHTNING was delightful. I like open endings (as opposed to incomprehensibility). And the whole piece was beautifully executed. I liked it a lot.

And MIRRORS AND SLIVERS was lovely, sad but a little hopeful too. It's one of the better stories I've seen from Grai recently. (18.4.92)

JOHN FRANCIS HAINES, 5 Cross Farm, Station Road, Padgate, Warrington WA2 0QD, UK.

It was a good idea to have a mini-collection of SF poetry in the mag - some good stuff there, especially Steve Sneyd's EVERYTHING YOU EVER DREAMED IN REAL TIME.

Enjoyed Andrew Darlington's article on ARCHIE - I too used to get comics like LION and ROVER in the late fifties, early sixties. There was also a strip ran in (I think) THE DANDY that featured a robot parlour-maid called *Tin Lizzie*. While this was basically slapstick comedy, it did have a slight SF feel to it.

ARISE, YOU SOFT MACHINES was a super story, and Andrey Karapetyan's PORTFOLIO was another excellent idea that lifted TM way above the average fanzine/

I always feel when first coming across a strange LoCscene as if I've stepped into another world - all the conversations going on are strange, even when a few of the conversants are known to me - sometimes the LoCs don't even seem to be confined to the mag in question and I wonder if there is some kind of cross-LoCCing going on! (14.3.92)

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

Nice cover on TM 73, justifying the use of colour; and I liked Peggy's drawing on page 66.

The highlight of this issue is the portfolio; professional work, and it will be interesting to read the artist's resume when you get it.

Brent Lillie's story ran neck and neck for first place in the fiction stakes with A CHANCE ENCOUNTER.

I enjoyed the rest of the trip, and photos.

Andrew's ARCHIE went down well, and I found HOW TO BE AN SF WRITER amusing.

The poem that appealed to me most this time was APRIL FOOL.

An interesting selection of letters, as usual, and it still amazes me you find the time to read so many books. I've read just three of those reviewed; and add my recommendation to yours for Roger MacBride's ORPHAN OF CREATION.

As always, THE MENTOR is well produced, and the contents this time are above average. You seem to get the balance right between fiction, articles, verse and illustrations. Obviously there is a lot of talent down under, and it's a pity there's not more scope in the professional field. (14.3.92)

TERRY JEEVES, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, No. Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, UK.

What a superb, full-colour cover on THE MENTOR! A great job and the inside art and that excellent portfolio really made my day. A pity you couldn't include more details by the artist - he certainly has a touch for the macabre. Your trip report fascinated me by the sheer gadding around you did - always a tricky chore in a strange-country, especially when not only the language is different but even the alphabet used on signs. Not too taken with DEFENCE MECHANISMS, but enjoyed hearing of ROBOT ARCHIE. Poetry (?) I pass on the other side.

Page 26 was blank, but I enjoyed the rest of the piece on writing SF. Light, but neatly capsuled advice.

CHANCE ENCOUNTER was well-written, but too long for its theme, it could have been punchier. Lettercol - excellent as ever, that red heading adds dignity. Whilst fully accepting your right to publish only Australian SF, it does seem rather insular in attitude - thank GHU the SF mags didn't use a similar, 'American only' policy or we'd have been denied Fearn, Russell, Clarke, Christopher and many others. Reviews also good - it's interesting to compare the comments with my own opinions. After a good start, I got bored with ALL THE WEYRS OF PERN and packed it in. Likewise for the Piers Anthony 'Adept' series and Chalker's pot boilers. All in all, an excellent issue and as I said, a great cover.

[The reason I print only Australian SF is the dearth of professional and semi-professional (small-press) outlets for SF in this country. I could easily be overwhelmed by SF from overseas, in whose countries (UK and USA) there are scores of small-press publications publishing SF. - Ron]

ERG 117 is a trifle delayed. The main hiccup being the photo processing of the pics for ART IN SF. I normally dig out the relevant magazines and to save setting up photofloods etc, wait for a nice sunny day to nip into the garden and take the photos. When processed, these are then photocopied and pasted into the computer-prepared text where I have programmed suitable spaces. When the issue is finally completed, the master sheets go off to the printer.

Well, I finally got my photos taken, waited to finish off the reel and bunged it off to Bonusprint. Summat went wrong somewhere as five weeks later (normal time 2 weeks), they hadn't returned. I wrote giving details of mailing date, the amount of cheque, its number, bank, and sorting code. I also said the film contained illustrations from old pulp magazines (they can't get many like that!). A few days later, they sent me a form to fill in (giving all the same info as in my original letter) and saying they had no record of my stuff being received. I filled in and returned the form, five days later, my photos arrived!!! and a few days after that, I got a letter from Bonusprint saying they could find no record of having received my cheque or order. Then I got my bank statement - showing my cheque had been cashed two days after I had mailed it - so where my prints had been, I know not.

Anyway, that delayed my ART IN SF paste up by several weeks, but sadly, the yellowing pulp paper of the sixty year old ASTOUNDINGS had photographed rather grey - so that photocopies printed badly. I've re-taken the photos with better results so I'm back on course for 117. (15.3.92)

[When I was reproducing covers for the Review Section I always photocopied them. Wouldn't it be better to photoreduced them directly from the pulp magazine pages? - Ron]

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

What a fantastic cover by Peggy Ranson on THE MENTOR 73. The way she handled light is particularly impressive. Her internal illos have an effective simplicity that I like. Jozef Szekeres' back cover has a Victorian echo but pleasing for all that. I'm bowled over by the portfolio. Of course I don't like the pictures and I don't think for a minute that Andrey Karapetyan expected the viewer to have such cosy emotions as liking. Disturbed, depressed even angered would be a more accurate description of my reaction. I am most impressed by the skill and power that provokes those reactions. One of those times when I regret my slim knowledge of fine arts and my poor memory for names but for which I would be able to identify the Russian (possibly German) school or group of artists that Andrey's work seems to spring from. Pinning down that illusive thought at the back of my mind would not make Andrey's work any less original just that it would scratch and relieve my own particular itch.

Thank your for sharing the rest of your trip with us, I thought the photographs reproduced quite well. I'm sad for you that your were so ill throughout the trip but even so you obviously managed to garner many very special memories.

It's only in recent years (since our daughter became a collector) that I have appreciated the importance of the place of Comics in the English speaking cultures. Andrew Darlington's Man of Metal item increased that understanding as well as being most interesting to read. Sean William's serio-comic article was entertaining and not without some very valid points.

The poetry was readable and I'm glad to have read it even though none of it provokes any strong reaction in me. ARISE YOU SOFT MACHINES nearly made it as a good story, an original treatment of a familiar theme. Decker's sense of unease nicely handled. Spoilt by a couple of details, Mr Hanover's clothes should have been left vaguely smugly indicating his position, the reader left to imagine the 2097 fashions instead of suddenly being presented with a suit and tie just for the sake of a purple passage about that tie. Then why an access membrane at the door when later in the story they haven't even the technology to construct a building that stops sand coming in through cracks in the walls. A CHANCE ENCOUNTER did not make it for me, a not particularly original treatment of an old theme, signalled almost from the beginning. The conversation is stilted and if the character Susan can't write a more vibrant and stimulating companion for herself one must assume she is not a very successful writer.

Congratulations Ron, all the different elements put together with, the as ever, interesting letter column make a very rounded and complete whole.

Talking of letters. Why on earth Peter Booth should I call you female pudenda or even, the more modern usage, a woman as a sexual object? Oh well, I suppose you know best. I suppose by typical Pom you mean an English person and not a Pomeranian dog. I have met quite a few Australians, ranging from the arrogant, bullying, loud, alcoholic groups we frequently came across in Singapore, to the charming and considerate fans who have come to

Britain. I also happen to enjoy pen friendships with some Australian members of a non fannish group who are without exception highly intelligent, erudite and with a nice sense of humour. Like the majority of fans I have met or correspond with I do not judge people by race, creed etc, so I wouldn't care to say what a typical Australian is. If I were to be so brash, I would assume that the typical was somewhere in between the extremes I have met, shading towards the end of the spectrum I find more pleasant.

The rotten post office quite spoils my lovely cover there is a white line from top to bottom where the zine was folded over and the colour came off. (17/3/92)

[I think the problem was that the Printer's laser printer didn't heat the paper enough to bind the colour on. -Ron]

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

I have a quibble on your first page. You typed coup as coupe. Quite another kettle of fish.

I, too, have noticed along with Leah Zeldes Smith, who also brought up this topic in her fanzine, that many fanzines are not publishing LoCcers' addresses. Rather than trying to keep secrets, I believe this trend is due mostly to laziness. I encourage these people to include the addresses but probably will not take other action.

I enjoyed your coverage of Volgacon. It was interesting, and I appreciated your use of photos.

You really should read Dan Simmons's HYPER-ON. It was interesting, though, to see your reaction to FALL OF HYPERION. I might have reacted similarly had I also only read the sequel. Unfortunately, reading the first book diminished the second book for me. The first book sets up the premise that is concluded in the second. Therefore, the first book reads like an unfinished story. I was angry about this when I read the second book; so although it was good, I couldn't think it as good as you did. This is unfortunate, especially because, as I have since found out, Dan Simmons did not intend this to happen. He wrote it as a single book. Perhaps it should have been released simultaneously as a two-volume set. Fortunately for Simmons, most readers did not apparently respond the way I did. (18.3.92)

WALTER WILLIS, 32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 OPO

I'm sorry for not having commented on THE MENTOR 72, but the operation I had last May is still affecting me to the extent of increasing my natural lethargy at this time of year. However St. Patrick has, as they say here, now turned up the warm side of the stone; and simultaneously Geri Sullivan paid us a visit and left me full of good intentions, so here I am commenting on THE MENTOR 73.

The most striking thing about it was the cover. I don't usually comment on artwork, tending as I do to regard all art with incredulous suspicion as at best some sort of supernatural manifestation, or at worst a particularly sneaky kind of conjuring trick. This cover belongs firmly in the first

of those categories. I can only marvel at something which is not only far beyond my capabilities but far beyond any imagination. Marvellous.

THE REST OF THE TRIP is interesting in many ways, not the least of which is how you succeed in getting and holding the readers' attention while abjuring any attempt to stimulate his sense of wonder. I suspect you are really telling it the way it seemed to you at the time. I have noticed myself that when one is living from day to day in a foreign country, one can easily come to regard everything that happens about one as normal... even being given cheese for breakfast.

I enjoyed Sean Williams on HOW TO BE AN SF WRITER IN THREE EASY LESSONS, particularly the suggestion that some editors are now thinking of requiring all unsolicited manuscripts to be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed rejection letters. It would be interesting to see some specimen letters.

But to me the most outstanding contribution was Shane Dix's A CHANCE ENCOUNTER. One has seen this sort of thing attempted before, most notably by Edgar Allan Poe, but seldom with such plausibility and sensitivity. (14.3.92)

ROGER WEDDALL, PO Box 273, Fitzroy, Vic 3065

The first thing I read was the two halves of your trip report. It was as interesting for the things you did not specifically comment on as for the things you mentioned. Your casual descriptions of the food you ate, including how it was all organised, gave me pause for thought... It sounded as though it was a normal, accepted thing for all the con attendees to be provided with food like that (rather than decide at the time, whether they wanted to eat here or there... or eat this, or that). I suppose that when you're living in a place where you are only able to purchase sugar, flour, etc. with coupons, the chances are you would not be able to just go anywhere and "get" a meal. And, following on from there, if the con/the hotel had to specially arrange to feed all those fans no wonder you would have to get permits from all different sorts of authorities in order to travel places, or do lots of things. Otherwise the resources mightn't be there for you to be fed, or travel somewhere, or whatever. And then there were touches such as the lady on each floor who would serve you tea... it was like reading about another world... which I suppose it really was.

Still, the fannish spirit was present, and there were room parties, and singing, and improbable schemes devised for publishing Russian sf in Australia... or vice versa. It would be wonderful to get to Volgacon; it sounds as though, even with your cold, you managed to have a great time. Oh, and thanks for the Volgacon currency.. a 100 "fenov" (?) note. Is this a bribe for us all to get over there where we can spend it on vodka, or Russian fanzines? Volgograd, here I come (I wish).

Andrew Darlington's article on ROBOT ARCHIE took me back to the days of my early youth; not to the experience of reading ROBOT ARCHIE, but to the pulp-quality science fiction novels I read as a wee youngster: adventures in space ships out in the asteroid belt;

stumbling across a lost, far advanced civilisation in the mountains or jungles of South America.. it all seemed such wonderful heady stuff.

[In that case, you'll enjoy Andy's contribution to this issue... and there is more to come, if I can just persuade Andy to do a column.- Ron]

Speaking of wonderful stuff, though, I thought Peggy Ranson's cover (TM #73) was excellent. I haven't looked closely at the Hugo ballot recently; is she a fan artist? She's good enough to be on the professional ballot. This cover, I should add, complements the immaculate presentation of the rest of your fanzine. (31.3.92)

[Yes, Peggy is one of the best US fan artists producing artwork at the moment. Hopefully, she'll win a Hugo fairly soon. Michael Whelan said he liked the cover of TM 73 when I showed it to him at Syncon last weekend. I do have another of Peggy's colour covers, but until I have some spare cash to pay for it, it will have to wait for an issue or two or three. I have noticed that a colour cover sells - at about 3 times the sales (at Galaxy)- Ron]

MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Juju, Argentina

Your con report in THE MENTOR 72 is the best I have ever read. You made each person at the Con come alive, though we must grant the persons concerned praise also for being their real selves and not posturing. In jaded Western Cons everybody plays his fannish part and isn't at all so real. But you made them double likeable because, seen through your eyes, they seemed so human and alive. I eagerly await the continuation.

It's great you could attend. Your record contributed to an enrichment of the legends of Fandom, in a very special way.

Now, about the usual carpers of my attempts to write and sound "sercon". I wasn't really, but one slips into the habit given the topics concerned. though lately I'm learning the knack of making the studies more "story-like". What you have was written some years ago; but as the material was profound it seemed a pity to let it all be lost, so I turned it over to you, even though stodgily presented back then by me.

Mike Glicksohn, first, re "googol". That's like a portmanteau word and could never have sprung out of a human's unconscious. (Though I do recall crying "Googily, googily", once when a big blind earthworm materialized, wrapped around my ankle when we were strolling amid weeds, rocks and roots. The family teased me mercilessly, but my unconscious *had* picked the right word, I think now.)

As for "googol", (the number 10 raised to the power 100), it's a well-chosen term: zeros rolling on and on like endless-seeming time eras. Consider the Hebrew *gilgul*, "revolving", suggesting reincarnation to Cabbalists. I'll bet that that scientist who coined the term had it in mind. Don't underestimate our scientists, Mike. Try me on another... Oh, please don't call me "sercon", Mike. Right now, I'm studying "the Backside of God" in archaic Chinese echoes. Is *that* "sercon"?

Uh, Peter Booth? Beware of petards! My "discourses" were always aimed at science-fiction writers eager to sound authentic when penning (or typing) Stone Age stories, that's all. You're not penning Stone Age tales yet yourself? You may yet be, Unk, unk?

Lynda Weyman: fanzine jargon is easy to learn but doesn't even pretend to be an authentic language. Take GAFIA: (Get away from it all"). Or LOC: ("Letter of Comment"). I don't try to show their relationships to our primitive honk-honk sounds, any more than I'd read into NASA any relationships to the Sumerian Nisaba, a favorite goddess I studied in the past. (Got her in Chinese forms also, to my delight).

I don't want to "leave you behind", Sydney Bounds. I'm really trying to sound easy-to-read in the more recent stuff I'm producing, but Ron has a package of old stuff on the Arrow and what-not he seems to like enough to keep pubbing. A pity... I've lots of newer stuff much nicer yet, available. But it is nice of Ron to bother with it at all....

To those who enjoyed the material, Betty Wilder, Maria-Louise Stephens and Rachel McGrath-Kerr, in this last TM (72), you've set me to thinking that I really ought to get out my "pan-of-gelatine and hecto-inks" and start anew hectoring chapters done in colors on the study, to send to those who might provide commentary that would fertilize the study as it continues. ("Great minds think alike": let me preen...)

Richard Brandt: Yes, it was Stephen Fabian. I came across some old work of his when tidying, and that's him.

Re the SF stories: I seldom have chances to read science-fiction lately, so can't criticize what you pub, Ron. But in this issue, I so enjoyed A WAY WITH WOMEN, I have re-read it already simply to enjoy the precise, deft way of phrasing things throughout.

Computer tales I don't follow, My sphere of action was hectography long ago when communicating "in series". You computer-buffs impress me no end.

MIRRORS AND SLIVERS frustrates me. I'd have liked lots more details, background action. The theme fascinates.

John Alderson got to see Noah's Ark? I've read bits in the past about it. If it is all "just coincidence", it reminds me of a "petrified skull" someone found in Patagonia in the supposed site of a City of the Gods, (Linlin or Trapalanda). But it turned out to be just an "unusually shaped rock".

It 's easier to find a genuine fossil root-term in our languages than to dig up these bewitching "solid proofs" suggesting that our favorite legends are true. (15.3.92)

ALEXANDER V. VASILKOVSKY, Poste Restante, GPO, 252001 Kiev-1, Ukraine.

THE MENTOR 72 confirmed my first impression of your fanzine I was able to make in Volgacon. I'm sorry for such a belated reply, but general economic instability in all the ex-USSR countries and some problems with my job prevented me from any fannish contacts for 2.5 months.

About your wonderful fanzine. Volgacon, the central feature in this issue, is still fresh in my mind. We all

had a good time there. It's a pity that my talk with you on fanzines and everything was so brief. As for your detailed description of your Volgacon trip, it resembles Boris Sidyuk's tales about conventions he visited (after his return he gives a detailed travelogue to the whole club. I very much appreciated your humour in the picture of "Hotel Tourist after Volgacon". In their Volgacon report in LOCUS Paul Park and Terry Bisson made an amused note that it was the first successful con without a bar. It's not completely true, because improvised bars were in every room (Soviet style).

The other thing which I also liked in your zine are book reviews. There are so many of them, and they give an essential information on every book reviewed however brief they are.

The quality of fiction is better than average, though I was able to read only the first story. And in the lettercol I met a lot of familiar names, though they discuss mostly things I never knew. (23.3.92)

Issue 73 is also excellent, and I have now a better opportunity to LoC it than the previous issue. I wrote my previous LoCard in a haste because of an overwhelming pile of mail, fanzines, etc. that formed during my inability to reply.

First of all, the thing that always attracts attention to your zine is the colour cover. Yours is the only zine of such kind I've seen, and I've seen a lot of them, thought not all the Hugo nominees of recent years. Interior art by Andrey Karapetyan is excellent. I've seen a lot of his art in various Soviet fanzines and recently prozines, but represented as a portfolio his works become even more impressive. It would be better if all of his works were given with their titles. Andrey does a lot of illustrations for prominent sf&f works, and it's better to take his art in connection with the literary background. But never mind, his art speaks for itself.

As for your USSR travelogue, its form, its detailed descriptions are needed for other countries to make the readers feel the atmosphere of another land, another culture, another people. Well, there are differences in a lot of aspects, but fans are fans every-where. And I hope you'll agree with me about this after your Volgacon trip. It's no wonder that your travelogue evoked a lot of LoCs. Having wide international contacts myself I can say that fandom of the ex-USSR countries is of interest for many. Some prominent fans, especially in North American fandom do want to visit conventions in Ukraine, Russia, and simply to travel to these countries, but such travel is rather expensive because of the distance.

Regarding Volgograd's Motherland statue. it really is taller than Liberty due to the sword. The figure itself is not taller. You may look into THE GUINNESS BOOK for the exact figures.

To Buck Coulson: Naming children after favourite sf&f characters is really odd when the name is unusual to the culture/nation where these children live. As for your story about your dog named after Gene Wolfe's magnificent Severian and its attitude toward Mr. Wolfe, it is really remarkable. And this approach of naming the dogs seems

to be world-wide, since my friend has named his dog Dan after Dan McCafferty. The friend obviously was a Nazareth fan.

To Chris A. Masters: SAGPOFs are the inevitable trait of every fandom - sf&f, horror, mystery, football, rock'n'roll, etc. Well, Trekkies are the ultimate case of such an approach, but luckily not all the Trekkies are as crazy. I've seen a Trekkie's fanzine that apart from ST discuss printed science fiction on a more or less intellectual level, but this fanzine is rather an exception.

I understand your search for horror fandom and prodrom, because it reminds me a lot of my own search for Kiev fandom back in the early 80's. As for the professional organisation, the Ukrainian Science Fiction and Fantasy Professional Association, it is in the process of being established. I hope it will be born this Summer. (31.3.92)

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

One might imagine that the wonderful cover on THE MENTOR 73 depicts Edward Scissorhands handling balloons after surgery to replace the spiky digits he had in the movie - it's certainly his face.

Enjoyed the Brent Lillie and David Tansey stories, really excellent - both rather on the question of how responsible we beneficiaries of ancient massacres should feel. An important question to which I certainly have no answer. But as a minimum it is essential to understand what lies beneath what we call civilization.

The Karapetyan artfolio is startling, more surrealist than fantasy or sf - except for the next-to-last plate, which seems to be lifted from Gustave Dore's illos for Dante's INFERNO. (28.3.92).

DON BOYD, PO Box 19, Spit Junction, NSW 2088.

I go along with Pamela Boal in the armchair travel afforded by fanzines: I too find it interesting to observe how O/S fans follow their SF pursuits. I think I will send R. Mileva of Bulgaria the occasional SF paperback when I'm in the book exchanges. Bulgaria was one of the hardest of the hardline commo countries but I always assumed they got plenty of Western stuff like Hungary and Yugoslavia. Bit of a surprise that Bulgarian SF fans have not been getting the good stuff.

Harry Andruschak gets photocopies for 3c a page? And no charge for double-sided. I think I'll slash my wrists. That's American go-getter competition for you. It's 20c a copy here, Harry; a few ultra-cheap bargains at 8 to 12c sometimes.

[Yes, it is very cheap. With offset, I can do 200 copies of a 50 page (25 sheet) zine for 4c a sheet (both sides). - Ron]

Brian Earl Brown's query about Australian-written stories being seen as inferior if aping generic US settings: he is correct in his guess - I don't mind such stories set in the US but, illustrating the point with another genre, what would be the point of Aussies writing detective stories set in Los Angeles with American characters? There's nothing wrong with it, and they might become popular like Carter Brown, but I'll bet Americans would like to read about

Aussie gumshoes, or an Aussie gumshoe let loose on the New Yorkers & vice versa. I like to see an American and Australian juxtaposed to compare the cultural differences (and there are more similarities than differences). An American Vietnam vet would get a lot of solace from Stuart Rintoul's *ASHES OF VIETNAM* which deals with the incredible violence and consequent guilt of Aussie soldiers in Vietnam.

I wonder if Julie Vaux has come across Princeton psychologist Julien Jayne's book on the evolution of consciousness. Jayne analysed the development of written Greek works to say that consciousness as we know it didn't exist a few thousand years ago. He states that early Greeks hallucinated voices and visions when they read words or suffered stress. This hallucinating comes from Wernick's sector (language) of the brain. Imagine reading a book and hearing a hallucinated external voice speaking the words to you, possibly with a visual illusion. Through language we have now learned how to think internally and don't need the subconscious to throw up a command about how to handle a stressful psychological problem. About one in eight people hear these hallucinated voices (there are big differences by nationality, with Brazil having a large incidence... maybe this explains that country's big "UFO-contactee" rate), usually at times of worry. I duly asked eight friends and found one who'd heard a voice when shew as worried about an art exam. Mike Hailstone in *MATALAN RAVE* has recounted a childhood voice accompanied by a visual event of the lamp cord snaking down from the ceiling. The voices in Greek history are admonitory, ie urging a course of action. In this regard Mike's childhood voice used the word "smack". Over to you, Mike.

Peter Booth's letter is interesting. I think the sense of wonder is an important element in people's liking for SF. The same sort of wonder can be found in material on UFOs (Whitley Scribeur et al), black holes, cosmology, horror, Indian mysticism, psychedelia, astral projection, Celtic fairies (a la Evans-Wentz). Early in SF definite walls were put up to say "No fantasy here... no spooks or magic". In recent times I see these walls getting pretty porous. I actually find *TERROR AUSTRALIS* more entertaining than *ANALOG* or *ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF zine*. How many others of you find that sense of wonder more available in pseudo-SF stuff?; eg the movie *POLTERGEIST*, which I liked. I also like *ERASER-HEAD*, the *Kiwi Bad Taste* movie, *BRAZIL*, *BARON MUNCHAUSEN*, *NEVER-ENDING STORY*, *BETEL-GUESE*. None of these has a lot of intellectuality obviously. But they are full of wonder. Are these children's movies? Is wonder something we feel fading with adulthood as Peter Booth perhaps suspects? (I'm looking forward to seeing *THE LAWNMOWER MAN*). The books I have been reading for that wonder (I also read dull books on Stalin or cosmological strings) are in the main non-fiction, ie Muktananda's *PLAY OF CONSCIOUSNESS* or the above-mentioned Julien Jayne tome. In fiction I actually like Stephen Donaldson's Lord Foul trilogies (or dodecazilogies by now... only read four or five). *Hands up*

all the Cthulhu nuts out there and I'll send you a Cthulhu sticker. Yo

You can see a lot of the psyche in these LoCs because the written word rarely doesn't reveal a damned thing... it usually reveals a damn lot. Sexual urge and violence are those two things society tries to control with religion and laws otherwise society could fly asunder. We can get a measure of this sexuality/violence by charting the two axes of (radicalism-conservatism) versus (tender-mindedness/tough-mindedness). How often have you heard a schoolgirl say "Oh, the far left and the far right are both the same; I don't know why they call themselves opposites."? I score 10 for radicalism and 11 for tender/tough axis on the standard tests, for the record. Maybe I'll go loonier when I get older. Fascists score right up into 30 in the latter and communists cluster up in the violent scale, too. Do these people produce the Party, or does a party attract these types?

We all know of Hitler's self-loathing and his sexual perversion of having young girls defecate on his face (refer Prof Robert Waite's book at the library); the self-loathing and masochism (plus sadism often) is evident in skinheads' safety-pins and mutilation, or bikies' rites of urinating on each other's leathers and wanting society to hate them. Fascists have a high incidence of perversion towards women (cf Prof Waite). Diversity exists among these ranks (skinhead in a suit), but none the less when we see the telltale signs of a person crying "I want to be loathed" as well as the other usual signals, we have to say "Aha, Watson, hand me my magnifying glass."

Marianne Plumridge says she's feeling jaded and is trying to regain her sense of wonder in SF. I have noticed the rising strength of comic-book art. Marianne ought to have a squizz in the specialist comic shops. There seems to be an explosion of terrific stuff in the last few years. You'll find walls full of boring Batman and Silver Surfer, but also a vast range of really adult, sense of wonder stuff. To get an idea you should peruse the comics styles within *HEAVY METAL* (Metal Hurlant) comic mag at your news-stands. Not every issue has stuff that appeals to me. A lot of their style is heavy European intellectual stuff - also a bit of light-hearted stuff. The *STARLOG* editorial mob have not spawned a magazine called *COMICS SCENE* for nothing. And Hollywood is tapping in.

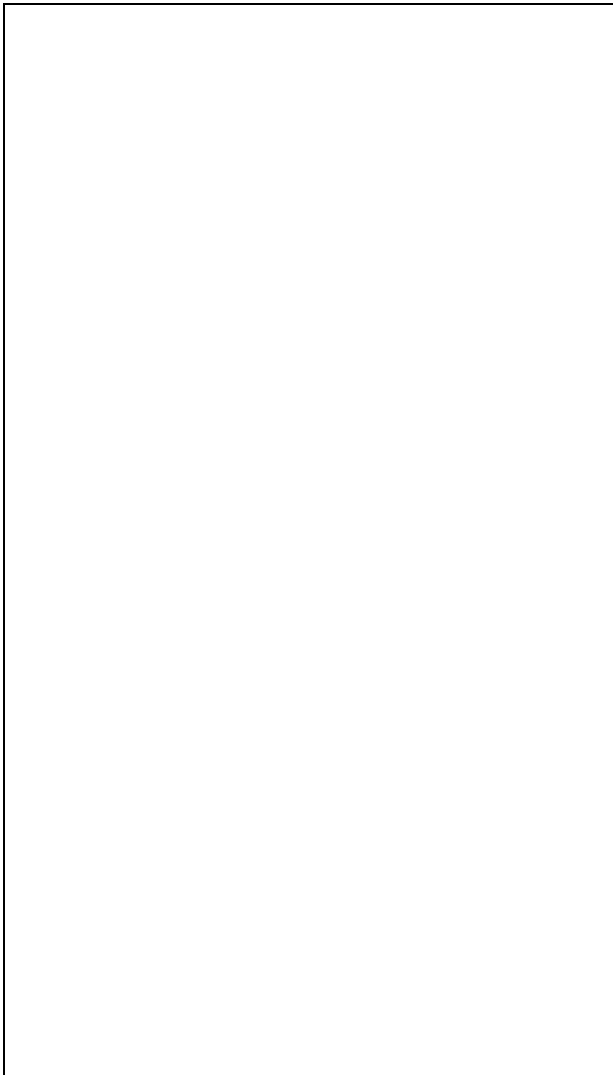
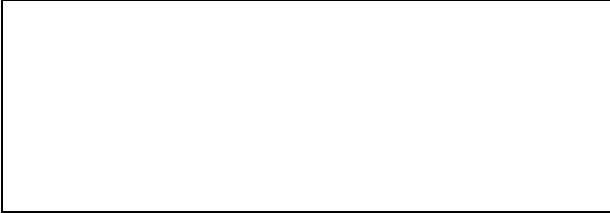
Gary Deindorfer yearns to gaze upon our astonishing Australian sky - here's something to consider, Gary: my brother was walking at night in Texas and he noticed something I never noticed in the big city lights of California. What is it? The moon is upside down in America! Or vice versa to Gary coming here.

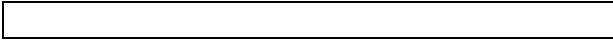
Julie Vaux speculating European cultures are descendants of psychopaths ejected from southerly matrilineal cultures: a frightening thought is that psychopaths compose 12% of the population (or 24% by American methods of determination, since ideas in the profession differ a fair bit). Psychopaths aren't all axe-murderers; they can be guys or gals in suits who are quite successful (being good social mimics) who have never needed to use the axe method (so far) because their other methods for getting

promotion (or prime ministership) have worked. I don't know if there's a gender bias in that 12% figure; I'd imagine more men would be psychopaths than women. Anyhow, that is a helluva figure. Of 17 million Australians, 2 million are psychopaths (or 4 million on American measurements)? Lucky I have a loveable, bubbly sense of humour... hardly used the axe much at all. Mrs Thatcher and Ghandi, those two loveable matriarchs, should have done a bit more ejecting of psychopaths while they had the chance.

G'day Mike; get that MATALAN RAVE out pronto. Wasn't the verb for vanishing into thin air, followed by a bolt of deafening silence "to dunheve"? Well I'd better dunheve...POP!.... (16.4.92)

I ALSO HEARD FROM many other people, most of whom just included a few lines to say that they enjoyed TMs 72 and 73. These people included Jumabek from the Kirghizstan Republic, Rod Williams of SKINNED ALIVE, John Alderson. who is back in Victoria, Andrew Darlington, Maria-Louise Stephens, Blair Hunt, Trent Jamieson, Scott Campbell who wanted longer reviews, Ibrahimova Mavluda and Abdullaeva Sahiba of Uzbekistan, Felicity Scoones of New Zealand and Noel Kerr.





IN DEPTH

by Bill Congreve

THE STAND: Stephen King; New English Library pb; \$14.95; 1423 + xvi pp; 1991.

The history of this housebrick reveals an exercise in feeble-minded publishing.

A recent phenomenon of the publishing industry is the appearance of what is euphemistically referred to as a "preferred" edition. Agis Budrys sells *THE FALLING TORCH* with a couple of added chapters cut from the earlier editions. Arthur Clarke restores a missing opening chapter to *CHILDHOODS END*. Stephen King gets to redo *THE STAND*. This means that the author gets to change the book a few years down the line and make another bunch of royalties. The publisher gets to publish a sure best-seller twice, and hence make two lots of profit. SF readers are collectors, and even though the reading public is being offered a choice, the dreaded collector's instinct makes the business profitable. I mention this in this manner because here in Australia, even when it was blatantly obvious to everybody interested that a new edition of the book was coming out, ie, after the hardback had been released, the distributor was still trying to flog off paperback printings of the old edition. This has nothing to do with King, but much to do with publishing in Australia.

This kind of edition does have one advantage. If an author gets lucky enough to strike it rich in the big, wide, wonderful world, then he/she gets the chance to go back and write what they wanted to write in the first place, not what the publisher thinks they want to write, or chooses to publish out of what has been written or rewritten.

Now, back in the days when King wasn't quite so much of a household name as he is now, *THE STAND* was to be his last book for Doubleday before he moved to a new publisher. It was a big, thick book. Given the length, and the price they would have had to charge to make a profit, and the number of copies they could expect to sell at that price, Doubleday decided they were going to make a loss which they wouldn't recoup on future books. King was leaving them! Therefore they had to make a profit on the novel and their formula told them 500 manuscript pages had to be cut to bring the price down to a level where they felt enough people would buy it. They graciously allowed King to do the editing, and the book came out in 1978. Hindsight

shows that Doubleday goofed severely. The book has been in print ever since.

Early in his career King had a slight reputation for having shopped around a couple of below par SF novels before he made it with *CARRIE*. Two of these, *THE RUNNING MAN* and *THE LONG WALK*, (which remains my favourite King novel) appeared as Bachman books. The third remains unpublished. Here was this bright young horror author rewriting the rules and blending horror and SF for the ultimate apocalypse novel. There is no point in doing a "now" and "then" review because very little has changed.

King has always been interested in rewriting the novel and in 1988 was given the chance. Now we have *THE STAND* Mark II in a work which has supposedly been totally upgraded for the '90s. The novel exists in three parts:

Part 1: *THE INVASION OF THE SLIMY ROPEY STRINGS OF YELLOW SNOT*.

The first half of *THE STAND* is as powerful a depiction of the fall of civilisation as exists in the field. My feeling is that it ranks with *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ* and *EARTH ABIDES*. But all the way through Part 1 run disturbing strands which are later pulled together into a coherent theme which is nowhere near as convincing.

The story must by now be familiar to everyone. A number of main characters survive as their loved ones die in a terrifying plague which everybody slowly realises must be man-made. The government deny all respon-sibility and say there is no problem, the army studies the disease in plague centres, whole towns and cities are quarantined, the military co-operate and export the virus around the world to solve the communications problem suffered by all dystopias, the media is strangled - sometimes on air, the survivors start killing each other off, and the Monty Python crew wander down the western sidewalk calling out: 'Bring out yer dead!'. These central characters, both good and bad, slowly pull themselves together into groups, have lots of adventures, and follow the dreams sent them by a 108 year old earth mother called Mother Abigail who leads them to Boulder, Colorado.

The bad guys chase each other off following Randall Flagg to Las Vegas. One of them, the Trashcan Man, does his best at cleaning up the rest of the world with a few good, well-lit fires along the way.

The key to understanding the novel, and perhaps the key to knowing why it annoys a lot of SF readers, lies on p.140 of the NEL paperback edition. Dick Dietz, a sympathetic and intelligent military type, tells Stu Redman (our hero) there is no blame for the disaster. The responsibility has been spread so wide that it no longer exists and the escape of the killer flu virus is an accident. Later in this chapter Redman has the first of many dreams which promises the possibility of sanctuary somewhere in the Rockies. This juxtaposition of images seems to identify technology as the boogeyman who's gonna bite our balls. On page 314 Harold Lauder, an ambiguous character who finally turns evil, tells Fran Goldsmith it is the military bureaucracy who has blundered in destroying the world. This throws the blame the other way.

In Ch.37 we have a meeting between Stu Redman and another of our heroes, Glen Bateman. Bateman is a sociologist and a very likeable and sympathetic character. King has Bateman reinforce his argument of runaway technology in dialogue which is too extensive to reproduce here. Meanwhile the bad guys are given a direction in evil by the boogeyman technology/bureaucracy. This abrogates their personal responsibility for their actions to a third party.

King walks a tightrope between blaming science and technology, or blaming the social usages of these for the fall of his fictional society. On the one hand he has his sympathetic characters identify the elusive concept of science/mix/technology as the source of our doom, and on the other he has his villains blame poor administration.

King is walking dangerous ground. He is discussing a democratic society's power structure classifying and making secret those projects which it knows its own population will not condone. Hence the power structure refuses to be responsible to the people who put it in place and is therefore corrupt. Is this human nature? Is King trying to teach us a lesson in the way we engineer our political infrastructure?

Part 2: SIT ON THE FENCE AND GET A SCRATCHY ARSE.

This is the middle. Middles can be long and boring. King tries hard. We meet Mother Abigail, earth mother to a jealous God, a beautiful and likeable old negro woman who lectures us immediately on the "old is best" theme and who tells us what are her favourite pieces of nineteenth century technology.

The bad guys are getting it all together in Las Vegas. King has most of his surviving technical support people go there and hence they get the street lights working very quickly. It is safe at night because Flagg has all the drug takers in his society crucified. They have a recognizable social structure, from top to bottom, at a time when the good guys in Colorado are still trying to reinvent

democracy. Democracy is hard. We all knew that didn't we? Ask the aboriginals.

King's middle is carried by the characters, not by the plot, and apart from reinforcing a few themes, the big ideas are left alone. Wish he would lose weight.

Part 3: THE DETERMINATION OF THE KILLER TECHNOLOGY.

For a more complete discussion of technological determinism, see your local "History and Philosophy of Science" lecturer. Then ask them about private sector science policy in Australia. Instead, I will offer a populist definition that seems to fit King's purposes. Techno-logical Determinism (note the capitals) is when you point your loaded gun at the Reds under the bed (sorry, this is the 90's - the eco-fanatic/Moslem extremists offering your kiddies lollies at the bus stop) and thinking it is the bullet which will save you. Then, of course, it will only save you if you have bigger and better bullets than the other guy.

If you are a male sociology student it is when you are sticking your loaded gun up some sweet smelling slick little twat and blaming your sperm for holding the party that's going to tie you to a lawn mower and a dishwasher for the next twenty years. I've never been a female sociology student so I don't feel qualified to comment further than that.

In THE STAND, King fires bullets that take care of the majority of his fictional universe.

Spoiler alert! In the next couple of paragraphs I'm going to spoil the ending. If you haven't read this thing yet, go and crack a bottle of red wine.

Mother Abigail does the bible bit and disappears into the metaphorical desert of a Rocky Mountain autumn and comes back to send the core of our beloved heroes off on a mission to the bad guys in Las Vegas. To put it in a nutshell, they are sent there to witness the end. When I first reviewed the original version several years ago, I was vastly disappointed to find that King solves his plot by having his bad guys accidentally blowing themselves away with a Hbomb. Some things never change. This, of course, is absolutely deliberate on King's part.

Causality breaks down here. Flagg's new society is falling apart from a dearth of spirit caused partly by Flagg's (and technological society as personified by Flagg's magic) lack of faith in himself. A death of spirit is misusing the technology it has made available to itself and hence kills itself. Flagg represents a power structure which is losing control. King has recreated the novel's beginning in a microcosm. The bad guys were going to die anyway - their death is an accidental one of oversight and lack of control over individual people. The plot as King presents it doesn't require the good guys to be present at the end as the plot elements which lead up to the blow-up have been set in motion before Flagg is aware of the good guys arriving. So why is King killing off his heroes?

King is giving his new society a warning. One hero escapes to carry the word. The good guys must witness the bad guys kill themselves with an accident of technology. Good must see that death, both spiritually and

physically, comes of evil. Good must experience death resulting from evil, that evil will kill them, too, even when they are innocent. Of course, the thing that bothers an SF reader is that King seems to be ambivalent as to the nature of the evil. Is science and technology evil? Or is it society's use of them? Given King's emphasis on individual and social responsibility I don't believe he is advocating technological determinism, but I do believe he loses track of some of the differences in his labyrinthine plotting. King is still walking the edge, but he is leaning to one side, and it is this ambiguity which reduces the novel's effect.

Was it all worth it? I enjoyed the book. Despite the rewrite, there are still parts that are dated. For instance one character, when searching for money in the middle of the night, has to scrape out the drawers rather than visit the nearest auto teller. One character is told he will go to trial for murder in nine days, and a few paragraphs later is told he will go to trial in four days. King's verbal diarrhoea runs riot and needs to be edited. Finally, perhaps my biggest complaint is that after a decade of evolution of the horror genre, Randall Flagg really isn't such a bag guy. There's lots worse hiding under the covers of other, more recent, books.

This brings us full circle to the industry side of things. This novel is crying out to be edited. With the new revisions included, the book should still be several hundred pages shorter, but publishers don't do that sort of thing to King any more. When it was first published in a trade edition in 1990 Doubleday got cold feet and didn't print enough copies. A print run of 400,000 left the book stranded at the top of the best-seller lists with not enough copies to satisfy demand. The history of the volume is littered with debris which would kill most midlist novels stone dead. Yet this thing has been a huge best-seller twice!

It is not only Doubleday who have made mistakes. For the first English paperback printing NEL put a blurb on the back which they then printed over. "In 1978 only part of the story could be told. So disturbing is THE STAND

that on first publication it was thought prudent to present it in a cut version. Now the whole story must be told..." A publisher accusing itself of censorship? No wonder it was blacked out!

THE STAND is a fascinating book for many reasons.

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And now for something completely different. Prices. We have been told that book prices are different in England and Australia even though Australia receives the English editions. I believe I read a figure that said Australian prices were some 31% higher. If an author is paid a royalty at the rate of a percentage of the cover price, and if English publishers deal with Australian distributors on a firm sale basis, then is the Australian royalty paid at the English end based on the English price, or is it paid from the Australian end based on the Australian price? Stephen King, for instance, would earn at least 10% royalty, and his share of the extra 31% charged in Australia for English published books works out to a very tidy sum. Does anyone know the answer to this?

THE STEPHEN KING COMPANION; George Beahm (ed); Futura; 540 + xx pp. \$10.95 (Underneath the price sticker!).

A generally useful, chatty, and informative work of Steve King trivia. Unfortunately the English edition is two years old and creaks a bit. It should have been updated. It also doesn't contain any collector's information on King's English editions - for instance the value of the NEL paperbacks of the Bachman books which must be much scarcer than the US editions, even though they aren't firsts.

The book is also not as complete as it could be. The Bachman novels get a very cursory summary while every other book, even the unpublished work, gets a more thorough treatment.

A useful volume for King collectors, but not the "bible" it could have been.

OUT OF OZ

Snippets of Fannish Happenings

by Ron Clarke

I have been planning on having a short column in TM about fannish doings for those few Australian fans who don't follow newszines like THYME, or for those overseas fen who receive TM.

There are still several clubzines coming out - the regular ones are ETHEL THE AARDVARK and the Canberra SF Society's Newsletter. ETHEL is a mixture, and seems to be a typical clubzine, with reviews of films and books, with short articles and every so often publishes a short short story by a club member. The Canberra SF Newsletter is mostly fiction - they have many short story competitions and the stories they publish have the ultimate aim of appearing in their paperback edition of SINGULARITIES.

There is a proliferation of horror fanzines at the moment: along with the staples such as EOD and TERROR AUSTRALIS, there are now such zines coming out of the depths of Queensland, one of which is Rod Williams' SKINNED ALIVE, issues 3 and 4 of which were mostly reviews of films. Chris Masters has announced a new horror zine called SHOGGOTH, which from all the publicity, should be interesting when it comes out.

An event that got me out of the garage was the release of a new fantasy/sf comic in Australia: OBLAGON. I had been sent a copy of the first issue, and an invitation to go to the official launch in the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney at 7pm on February 20. The comic has on its staff Jozef Severeke, and I was pleased to see that some of the artwork that I had previously published in TM, and which I had trouble reproducing, has been printed therein. The front and back covers are in full colour on glossy paper. The interior is b&w but the whole comic looks to be a quality publication. The stories are a mixture of fantasy and sf and are by some very good young artists and authors: Kevin Wotton, Martin Coombe Bruce Love, Danny Wallis, Jozef Szekeres, Felice Ferrer, Adam Murphy and Julie Ditrich

When I arrived at Townhall, I found that there was another event that night, within several dozen metres of the QVB - Queen Elizabeth II was opening the renovated Town

Hall. I had to wend my way through meandering crowds to get to the QVB. The launch was held in The Cartoon Gallery, the manager of which, Michael Heins, greeted everyone coming in. The opening was fun - there were visiting Americans from the comics convention in Darling Harbour - OZCON 92. There were several short speeches and then everyone partook of the spread food.

I think that the reason the half dozen conventions in Australia each year don't break even is because of two things - the people running them haven't the faintest idea of how to control the financial aspects of the cons; and the recession is still biting deep in Oz. The deciding factor of my going to Syncon was that a committee member rang me up at home and asked if I were going to the con, and if I was, would I like to go on a fanzine panel. Naturally I said "yes", but decided not to stay over at the hotel - I have just had the clutch fixed in the vanette, and replace the fuser globe in the platemaker - it had blown, but at \$125 it didn't make me happy.

A group of members of NSW fandom went to NEWTCON in the Hunter Valley near Newcastle. That area is one of the best winegrowing areas in Australia. The con was called NEWTCON, which wasn't explained in the newszines that mentioned it. It is from the phrase "pissed as newts". From all I have heard, the con was a success and the revellers are looking forward to next years'.

ADDRESSES:

ETHEL THE AARDVARK, PO Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vic 3005.

Canberra SF Society, PO Box 47, Civic Square, ACT 2608.

Chris Masters (EOD, SHOGGOTH), PO Box 7545, St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004.

OBLAGON, Kaleidoscope Pub. P/L, PO Box 725, Pymble, NSW 2073. A\$3.75.

SKINNED ALIVE, Rod Williams, 35 Caribb-ean St, Keperra, Qld 4054.

THE HEMINGWAY HOAX by Joe Haldeman. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1991. 155pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

It is some time since I read a novel by Joe Haldeman, and judging by this novel, I have been missing something.

The novel opens up quietly, with John Baird visiting Key West in some of his researches for future notes on his Hemingway research. He meets Castle, who expresses interest in Hemingway and gets into conversation with Baird. Castle is actually a shyster, and tries to trap Baird into something illegal. Baird refuses to be drawn, but when he returns home to his wife, expresses interest in what he had been talking about with Castle. After intense discussion with his wife, they invite Castle over and soon the plot thickens with their plan to create a literary hoax with Hemingway's lost manuscripts as the centre-piece.

An SF element enters when a strange entity enters the train carriage Baird is in and tells Baird to stop his plans for the Hemingway Hoax. Baird refuses without more into. Good solid SF adventure.

CLAY'S ARK by Octavia Butler. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1984. 201pp. On sale now.

Octavia Butler has a good grasp of characterisation and tension creating tools. I enjoyed her previous Patternmaster series and hoped that this present offering would be as good.

Clay's Ark is a starship, which when it returns to Earth, crashes and burns. There is only one survivor, and he is trying to ensure that the authorities don't find him. The whole novel is his story as he attempts to evade capture. This is helped by the state of US society at the time. The cities have collapsed and those who have the time and money have lit out for the desert and other away-from-it places. Eli managed to find such a farm when he was nearly dead from exhaustion and he used his new abilities to take over from the inhabitants.

How he and the survivors live and try to make up their numbers is told in riveting fashion. A SF adventure novel that is well worth getting.

WHITE QUEEN by Gwyneth Jones. Gollancz hc, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 312pp. A\$38. On sale now.

WHITE QUEEN is set in the not-too-distant future, in the first decades of next century. Conditions have gone down hill and the global economy, is in a mess. In the midst of this, the aliens land, in three places, one of which is in Africa.

Johnny Guglioli used to be a top video journalist, but he "caught" the QV virus, which destroyed the artificial flesh that most electronic circuitry was now based on. He was surprised when Braemar Wilson, a muck-raking journalist, tries to get his aid in a project involving the aliens. After some persuading he agrees and soon finds himself up to his neck in international intrigue again.

In one of the blurbs Jones is compared to Le Guin in her writing style. There is some similarity. This is an erudite novel, and for readers who like to consume novels that make them think, then they will like this it. Though don't start reading it and presume that you can finish it in several hours. It was written to be read slowly and savoured. Definitely a novel to be read when the reader is feeling bright and clear-headed.

SONG OF THE SAURIALS by Kate Novak & Jeff Grubb. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 315pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

SONG OF THE SAURIALS is the last of The Finder's Stone trilogy, which is set in the Forgotten Realms (TSR) world.

The Evil God Moander is loose on the world again, killing, maiming and doing evil deeds. The Nameless Bard is on trial for the deaths of his apprentices and he is now being persuaded by his friends Alias, Akabar, Dragonbait and Ruskettle to at least *try* to stop the rampaging god.

There is skrying, devilry and much fighting before things are even likely to be put back together. There are some interesting things in the novel - orcs for one, and whoever did the artwork for the cover, the pose of the dinosaur-like figure make it look suspiciously like some other creature from another mode...

SOUL RIDER by Jack L. Chalker. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1985. 427pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Book 3 of Masters of Flux and Anchor. And there will be a fourth book forthcoming to tie them all together.

The story continues with the opening of the Hellgates, which are the portals which had been closed for over two thousand years. Mervyn, Casie and Spirit must try together to defeat the forces that would shortly issue forth and invade their land. There is a lot of fighting, this time with modern arms and soldiers - rifles, machine guns, cannon and gliders. It is not until the end of the novel that the aliens arrive - with machine-like ships and voices.

With still one novel to go, the action will still be on-going. If this is the first time you have seen this novel, then I suggest you get the other two (SPIRITS OF FLUX AND ANCHOR and EMPIRES OF FLUX AND ANCHOR) as the author says the three were written as one novel.

GARDEN OF RAMA by Arthur C. Clarke & Gentry Lee. (C) 1991. 398pp. On sale now.

The third volume in the Rama saga. I haven't read the second volume, so I was wondering if I could follow the plot, as the second and third volumes obviously are continuous in plot-line. As is apparently the fourth volume...

The giant artifact/spaceship named Rama is accelerating towards the star Sirius and the three stranded human cosmonauts are caught on it. Nicole and her husband Richard Wakefeld are at least together; Michael is the third and but for the fact that the three are steadfast friends, could have felt left out. The journey to Sirius takes about 14 years, and some of the time is spent in sleep. Richard is temporary out of it when he gets upset with Nicole's decision to have a child by Michael, but all comes together when they reach the vicinity of Sirius and the giant construct they find in orbit. They meet representatives of the Node intelligence and are told part of the plan for the humans, and have to decide who will go back to the Solar System and who will stay. If I tell any more I will spoil the plot.

I found the first half of the novel very slow moving (perhaps because I didn't have the necessary background information) but the latter half made up for it. Excellent "hard" sf.

THE GREAT HUNT by Robert Jordan. Orbit trade pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 577pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

Book two of The Wheel of Time saga. There is a beautiful double-page full colour painting just before the title page, illustrating The Great Hunt, I would presume.

THE GREAT HUNT continues the quest for the Horn of Valere, which had been discovered, only to have it stolen. The band of fellows - Rand al'Thor, Mat and Perrin. The three young men whose task it was to find the horn again. The hunt was also for the dagger of Shadar Logoth and they would have many adventures on their way to find them.

There was also an ancient evil abroad in the land - the Dark One Ba'alzamon had summoned about a hundred of the people who had the corruption deep in them and gave them each a task that would help his evil designs. The

three would come in contact with many of this large group - including the woman with the rounded bosom and rich clothing.

Quest fantasy, well written.

BLUE MOON RISING by Simon Green. VGSF trade pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 448pp. A\$18. On sale now.

This book is written with tongue firmly in cheek. It tells of how a kingdom, deep in a forest and hidden for generations, is set upon by a Darkwood. The youngest son, Rupert, is sent on a quest, but he comes back with the princess *and* the dragon. Also with a unicorn. There are other Characters about the castle - knights, astrologers, a king, and several others.

Green has a smooth style to go with his cheeked tongue and the while thing goes over well. There seems to be more and more fantasy coming out - who said that it was beginning to paper off? And there does seem to be less creative stuff, and more pedestrian fare. BLUE MOON RISING is a good beginner novel for those who like the mainstream idea of a fantasy, though if you are a regular reader of this genre you will find this to your liking for some light reading.

THE TOMBS OF ATUAN by Ursula Le Guin. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1971. 155pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Volume two of the Earthsea trilogy. Even though there are four books - A WIZARD OF EARTH-SEA, THE TOMBS OF ATUAN, THE FARTHEST SHORE and TEHANU.

Tenar was taken from her home to be the First Princess of the Nameless Ones. She was to serve her time in the underground Tombs of Atuan and she thought that she was to spend the rest of her life there. It was a total surprise when she disturbed the thief Ged trying to steal the Ring of Erreth-Akbe. She soon found that he was more than a simple thief - he was also a powerful wizard and she determined to join forces so as to escape the labyrinth.

The novel, indeed the first three books, have been translated into several languages and have taken their place as a fantasy classic. If you are missing this volume it is a good opportunity to purchase it.

KING'S SACRIFICE by Margaret Weis. Bantam Spectra pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1991. 519pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This time Margaret Weis has written an sf novel and updated and re-written it to make it saleable.

KING'S SACRIFICE is quite a mixture of elements. There are space attacks, and a cast of characters that have some background to them. There is a lot of action packed into the over five hundred pages, and younger readers will find them a quick and engrossing read.

To give you some idea of the plot, I'll quote from the back cover blurb: "Young Starfire is the hope of the galaxy, an end to corrupt government, an end to the terror of the laien Corasians... or is he? Protected by the War-lord

Derek Sagan, Lady Maigrey, and the ominous space-rotation bomb, Dion is still untried.

I think Ms Weis is trying to break out of the mold that she has created for herself with her fantasy novels. Maybe she can.

RAFT by Stephen Baxter. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins\A&R. (C) 1991. 251pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

RAFT is a "hard" sf novel - this is also on the blurb on the backcover.

When a shipload of humans go through into another universe, where gravity is billions of times stronger than in this universe, they are almost decimated. However, humans are adaptable and manage to live on in three colonies. One is on a huge raft, held up by a forest of trees, which is where the few remaining scientists dwell. Another is are two mining settlements which exist be mining iron ore and shipping it to the raft for food and other supplies. The third is a lost colony of "bonies", who are used to frighten the children when they misbehave.

The humans have lived for generations in the vast nebula; however now the nebula is red and dying and they must try to devise a method of saving themselves. Excellent Sf. Loved it.

THE PLAYER OF GAMES by Ian M. Banks. Orbit trade pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1988. 309pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

Ian Banks has written three novels set in the Culture - I have reviewed USE OF WEAPONS last issue. THE PLAYER OF GAMES was his second; the first was CONSIDER PHLEBAS.

Jernau Marai Gurgeh was a player of games. In the Culture, most people lacked for nothing - there was no need for money and wars were obsolete - mainly because the Culture worked at it. Gurgeh had spent the past 60 years of his life playing games, which he found in many civilizations, but he played them against his friends, usually, and almost always won. He was considered one of the greatest of the human game players. Then the Culture and an extragalactic Empire started to come to loggerheads and Gurgeh found the Culture was interested in *him* in their machinations against the Empire.

This novel can be read on many levels, and it can be said for the author that those levels are smoothly written and well integrated.

Recommended.

THE WASP FACTORY by Ian Banks. Abacus pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1984. 184pp. A\$12.99. On sale now.

THE WASP FACTORY isn't sf. It could be called, I suppose, a horror story - it is an autobiography of a teenage murderer - the writer had killed three people up to now, two of them his brothers. The writer had a fourth brother, who had been incarcerated because he went mad. He had been a trainee doctor and while he was studying at a teaching hospital, something happened to him that drove him over the edge.

That is not to say that the murderer was all there, anyway. He lived on an island with his father and was taught by his father, as the son was not registered and so did not exist as far as the System was concerned. He had totem poles with dead flies, bird's skulls and other odds and ends watching over the approached to the island and all was well until his brother escaped from confinement. Then events progressed, until by the end of the novel his whole world fell apart...

I read this because it was by Ian Banks - if you like quirky novels that you'll like this - *very* well done.

THE EYE OF THE WORLD by Robert Jordan. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 814pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

There are fantasy series and there are fantasy series. THE EYE OF THE WORLD is Book One of The Wheel of Time, which looks like being an excellent series, judging by this one.

In the foreword Lews Therin Telaman's creations and his folk and he were destroyed by the Dark One. Where Telaman himself destroyed himself stood a smoking mountain and an island. Ages on, the Wheel had turned again and another Age had dawned. Edmond's Field was once the site of a great war, which was in the deep past. The place was now quiet and until the ugly Trollocs started again into the area, killing and destroying. Three young people's homes are the target of these raids and Rand, Mat and Perrin set out to try to make sense of what was going on.

This is quite a large book and it, and its sequel, THE GREAT HUNT, are a good sample of well-written fantasy. There are many fantasy books and series in print these days, and many readers have their own authors they follow. I think you will find Robert Jordan an author to watch. On the other hand you probably already know how good Robert Jordan is and are telling all the other fantasy readers you know this.

NEW WORLDS 1, Edited by David Garnett, consultant editor, Michael Moorcock. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 265pp. A\$10.50. On sale now.

Another try at an sf magazine in paperback format, by the same (consultant) editor that tried it before. Maybe it will work this time; at least four issues will be published.

In the first issue we have IMMACULATE by Storm Constantine, ANY MAJOR DUDE by Paul Di Filippo, HEAT ty J.D. Gresham, FLOATING DOGS by Ian McDonald, UBERMENSCH! by Kim Newman, INDETERMINACY by Jay Summers, COLOUR by Michael Moorcock, THE DESCENT OF MAN by Matthew Dickens, SOMETHING SWEET by Simon Ings and Charles Strass, FOAM by Brian Aldiss, SF NOVELS OF THE YEAR by John Clute and PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE by David Garnett (editorial).

I found some of the stories very good - ANY MAJOR DUD, UBERMENSCH! and SOMETHING SWEET were these. The rest were readable, except for the Moorcock and especially the Aldiss, which were

unreadable. All in all, good value for the 265pp, including photos of the authors.

THE SILVER BRANCH by Patricia Kennealy. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988. 553pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Volume 1 of The Keltiad. One of the books that follows Celtic legend, but set in deep space.

The books are set in deep space, but there are all manner of fantasy that abounds - Aeron was heir to the throne of Keltia and her enemies were about to loose their forces against her. This was before Earth had been contacted and she soon found that she could control great forces - was a sorceress and had enough magic that as queen she could control the destiny of her people.

The other two volumes of the triad are THE COPPER CROWN and THE THRONE OF SCONE. If you are "in" to fantasy and haven't this, the first book of the trilogy, then this is a good opportunity to get it. Smoothly written and if you like Celtic mythology, this is for you.

SASSINAK by Anne McCaffrey and Elizabeth Moon. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 333pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Volume 1 of the Planet Pirates, though a complete novel in itself. Elizabeth Moon has served in the US armed forces, and it shows (favourably) in this novel. As usual, one can pick when Anne McCaffrey is writing - there are mentions of "green eyes" and the characters "roll" their eyes.

The novel is set out into four "books", or sections and each is a segment about the life of Sassinak. As a young girl her family is massacred and she is captured by slavers. She managed to escape by (Star) Fleet and is offered a placement in its officers school. She is naturally talented and good looking, and with her drive, she comes in with honours. The goal of her life is to destroy the slavers and when she is captain of her own ship she sets about to do this.

The writing is smooth and the action is well thought out, though I got lost in the last "book" - I think it needs a good editing, or there is text missing. Still, good space opera.

DREAM WEAVER by Jonathan Wylie. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1991. 655pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The author of this novel has had two previous trilogies published: Servants of Ark and The Unbalanced Earth. As far as I can judge though, this one is a one-off novel.

The novel is about a young woman named Rebecca and a painting she had. She was quite interested in painting and her father had a young painter paint a portrait of him to go in the family archives. Another part of the story is about a city destroyed by what looked like white snow but turned out to be, when it hit the ground, salt.

The book is quite long and Wylie manages to sustain his pace through it. The author does treat the reader to several viewpoints, that of Rebecca and that of the invisible observer, but tis all easy to follow. The plot is not too tortuous and the fantasy reader will find that DREAM WEAVER makes quite an enthralling read

SUPERSTRINGS by F. David Peat. Cardinal pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1988. 348pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

Physics progresses so fast these days that a book published in 1988 is nearly behind the times. SUPERSTRINGS is subtitled And The Search For The Theory Of Everything. It is a popularisation book about two of the cutting edges of modern physics - twistors, and superstrings.

The author has a good grasp of what the general reader can take and takes pains to explain things clearly as he goes along. There were some places that my eyes started to glaze, but I managed to finish the book with most of the information Peat tried to impart lodged in my brain. The chapters are headed A Crisis in Physics; From Points to Strings; Nambu's String Theory; Grand Unification; Superstrings; Heterotic Strings; Two Dimensions in One; From Spinors to Twistors; Twistor Space; Twistor Gravity; Into Deep Waters, and a final chapter labelled Personal Postscript. Fascinating reading.

STEPHEN HAWKING by Michael White & John Gribbon. Viking h/c, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 293pp. A\$35. On sale now.

This biography is subtitled A Life in Science, and is about the well-known physicist Stephen Hawking. The story starts with his parents and continued through his life till 1990. Most people now know of Hawking - some writers say he is the most well known scientist since Einstein, because of his theories about black holes and the origin of the Universe. And, of course, about the disease which makes it impossible for him to speak normally and move about.

The book is also an up-to-date account of the latest theories of Hawking's - and goes into the background history of some of his theories. One that I hadn't heard before is that *we* live inside the event horizon of a black hole - the Universe itself is a black hole, and that there is at least one "naked singularity" - the one at the beginning of time.

This book is easier to read than SUPER-STRINGS, though again, it is not as "in depth". Both are well worth reading.

SPIDER WORLD - THE MAGICIAN by Colin Wilson. Harper Collins trade pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1992. 345pp. A\$19.95 (h/c \$32.95). On sale now.

This is the third novel in the Spider World saga. The others are THE TOWER and THE DELTA. The tower is an enormous white tower in the city of the spiders which dates from before the spiders grew in size. The Delta is a

river delta where lives an ancient alien intelligence which the spiders worship as a goddess.

In this volume there comes to the human Niall's attention that there is more than one underground city of near humans and that the inhabitants of the other city - inhabited by humanoids with webbed toes and fingers - is out to do damage to the spiders. Since the uneasy peace with the spiders Niall, being the ruler of the humans in the city, is getting used to power. The humanoids threaten this peace. Another conflict comes to his view - some of the spiders have not given up eating humans and these must be rooted out and stopped.

A simple sf/fantasy adventure series that sf beginners should find a viable introduction to the genre.

THE WORTHING SAGA by Orson Scott Card. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1978-89. 493pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Those that have read the latest releases from Legend will know that Card is a solid writer who always has something interesting to say. He is something like Simak, but with a more "earthy" style.

Working was originally from the planet Central, which was the centre of the Empire which ran the galaxy. The centre was becoming rotten, however and at least one man was determined to do something. That man was Doon, an under-secretary of Colonisation who had his reigns of power into every position in the government bureaucracy. At last he even had the ear of the Empress. When she was shown the depth of corruption, she agreed. With the sleep drug Soma holding the remnants of the Empire together, it wasn't all that hard to pull the plug. What was hard was to ensure that the Empire's enemies didn't loot the corpse. This was accomplished by colonising faster than they could.

Card has a unique style - if you can take it you'll find this novel worth the effort.

THE LORDS OF THE MOUNTAINS by Antony Swithin. Fontana pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1991, 369pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This is Book two in The Perilous Quest for Lyonesse. The first volume was PRINCES OF SANDASTRE.

Set in the land of Rockall, the island off the coast of England that has strange people and even stranger beasts. Simon Branthwaite has a colleague, Prince Avran, and has to leave his princess love, Princess Ilvan, who he had instantly fallen in love with at first sight. The twain must travel incognito as there are many things after than, not only men. One of the strangest is the grey riders, with the evil design on their garments.

The novel is not only of some pages, it is in small type - so if you want a book to wile away some of those long hours, and you are partial to fantasy, this is a good read.

SOJOURN by R.A. Salvatore. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 308pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This novel is another in a fantasy trilogy, this time set in the Forgotten Realms of TSR. It is the third in the Dark Elf Trilogy, and continues that adventure that was commenced in the earlier volumes.

Drizzt Do'Urden had escaped the Underdark and now journeyed through the surface world of Toril. For a companion he had his black panther and the two have many adventures before the events that wind up everything in the last few pages. The two have encounters with elves and other fantastical creatures, and it is obvious that this series is aimed at those young readers who are also into gaming and such. Still, I am sure that its targeted audience will find it to their liking.

I do like the two sentences, though: "Do I dare to believe that my story is fully told?"

I think not."

FALCON GUARD by Robert Thurston. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 238pp plus 34 pages of glossary. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Another series; this time it is science fiction. Also aimed at the younger readers. The first two in the series are WAY OF THE CLANS and BLOODNAME. Seems that this author is joining in the push for war novels.

'Tis the tale of how the Star League Army which had left Earth nearly three hundred years before, is returning to reclaim what they believe is rightfully theirs. They have been fighting for several years and now their ultimate victory is almost theirs. The hero of the series is Star Colonel Aidan Pryde, and he is determined that nothing will stop him in winning back the honour of the Clans.

Good swift SF adventure - this is the type of novel that will always get youngsters interested in the Sense of Wonder in SF.

HYPERON by Dan Simmons. Headline pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1989. 502pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

I reviewed THE FALL OF HYPERON in TM 72, and as I mentioned at the time, I hadn't read this novel. I have now read it, and can say that one should read them in sequence.

HYPERON won the Hugo Award for Best SF Novel in its year. It covers various plots - but is mostly about the trek to the Time Tombs by seven pilgrims. Each tells his or her story and the others listen, trying to ascertain if there is a way to tie their pilgrimage to the Time Tombs to a way to stop the Strike from killing them all. The android Keats, who is a central character in the sequel, has only a mention here. As several readers have said in the R&R Dept, these two novels should be read as one book.

I can see why HYPERON won the award - it is convoluted but easy to follow and the characters are well constructed. *Recommended*.

THE SEERESS OF KELL by David Eddings. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 444pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The fifth and final volume in The Malloreon series (and it also finally concludes The Belgariad series).

Garion, his wife, and his adopted family and his friends are finally in sight of catching up with the Child of Dark, Zandramas, who had kidnapped his infant son in the first book of the Malloreon series. The two, the Child of Dark and Garion, the Child of Dark, were to meet in the Place That Was No More and there to present themselves and enabl the Seeress of Kell, a young woman, to decide between them and decide the fate of the universe forever more. That the Seeress does and the decision is made by the Seeress in a situation that none of those attending had thought of. I like Edding's fantasy - he one of the best fantasy writers currently being published. I suggest if you buy any Eddings, buy the whole set/s at once.

BOOKS PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED:

MOVING PICTURES by Terry Pratchett. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 333pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. The h/c was reviewed serveral issues ago. A very funny discworld novel about the creation of Holy Wood on the disc. As usual Pratchett has it all together and it is quite fun. For cheering one up.

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

TRANSWORLD:

Seeress of Kell by David Eddings
Damia by Anne McCaffrey
Otherworld by Kenneth Flint
Indiana Jones & The Dance of the Giants
" " " The Seven Veils
" " " The Genesis Deluge
The Fiber People by Ed. Packard
The Comet Masters by Ed. Packard
Dream Weaver by J. Wylie
Winterlong by Elizabeth Hand
The Z. Henderson Collection
Burying the Shadow by Storm
Constantine

HODDER & STOUGHTON:

Prayers to Broken Stones

PENGUIN:

Elf Queen of Shannara by Terry Brooks
Dark Dance by Tanith Lee
Farslayers Story by F. Saberhagen
Inconstant Moon by Larry Niven
The Great Hunt by Robert Jordan
They Are Among Us by Gentle &
Gaiman
N-Space by Larry Niven

N.E. PUBLICATIONS:

Fear by L Ron Hubbard

APHELION PUBLICATIONS:

Call to the Edge by Sean McMullen
Blue Tyson by Terry

MAY RELEASES:

HODDER & STOUGHTON:

Burying the Shadow by Storm
Constantine.

PENGUIN:

The Druid of Shannara by Terry
Brooks

HARPERCOLLINS:

The Revenge of the Rose by Michael
Moorcock
The Crystal Palace by Phillis
Eisenstein
Isaac Asimov's Universe ed. by Martin
Greenberg
The Sapphire Rose by David Eddings

