

THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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THE EDITORIAL SLANT

by Ron Clarke

Well, it's time to write the Editorial for another issue. A little has been happening - I've been going to various SF group meetings around Sydney, typing up this issue of TM and trying to get some photos together for a new edition of Vol Molesworth's HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM. Graham Stone has lent me a dozen or so photos from the period 1940 to the late 1950s, which I've had screened - 8 pages of them. I've still to make up my mind if I am to print them in TM first and print extra pages for the bound edition, which is what I did for the first edition. Problem with the alternative is that when I printed the bound edition of the Argentine SF History, which I did 100 copies of, I find myself still with about 90 of them - no-one wanted them! Of course they *were* done on (good) dot matrix, but even so... I don't want to be caught the same way with the Oz History.

When I do do the bound edition it should be something that will be worth keeping. It will be laser typed and offset, with thick card covers and bound. The photographs Graham has given me the use of are from the early days of Australian fandom - the first few Conferences and the first four Conventions in the 1950's plus others, so it will be something worth keeping for those Australian fans interested in the past events and people in fandom.

One subject that has had some discussion in the last year in TM is the subject of censorship. Now there are various types of censorship - there is self-censorship, which is where film distributors/importers and book distributors either don't import the various works, or make the cuts themselves. With films the Film Censorship Board views films and advises cuts - the distributor can then make the cuts (which they usually do) or not import the film. Most films are cut *before* being submitted to the censor, as the distributors know what the censors will allow.

With books the subjects are usually wider, and I'm not sure of the exact mechanism which operates here.

Back in the 1950's, 1960's and early 1970's Australia was well known as a country with tough censorship laws (along with Britain, South Africa, etc). Nipples were whited out, and not a wisp of pubic hair could be seen; indeed

women, in the area of the belly in photographs, could be seen to be somewhat like frogs.

This all changed in 1975 when the Whitlam Labour government was elected - censorship was liberalised (no pun intended) and basically everything was allowed except for three things: Sexual violence, bestiality and child pornography. The late 1970's were a flowing of sorts for artists and publishers and adults could read what they wanted and could basically publish what they wanted.

Australia followed the US in this trend, but when the pendulum swung back in the US in the late 1980's Australia was a bit slower to follow. This was probably due to two reasons - there was no powerful "moral majority", and Australia is not lumbered with a Bill of Rights. However even here the swing is on. Slowly but surely puritanistic views are forcing changes to laws and regulations. This can be seen in those films, books, people and music which are now being banned.

Science fiction is one of the genres that this censorship has not appreciably affected, and is not that likely to. Fantasy is another. Horror fiction, on the other hand is, judging by the comments in the R&R DEPT, having its troubles in this area. I think that horror fiction, in both film, television, books and magazines has always had this threat hanging over it, and probably always will, as only a small section of the population is engrossed in the real depths that horror literature, including film, can descend and aspire to.

As I commented above, the pendulum is swinging back - at least as far as I can observe - and though such a swing, at least in Australia, is not swift, it is discernible in the long term. The small "moral majority" has had set-backs - the public really aren't backing them to the hilt, and events like the Gay Mardi Gras in Sydney and the large festive crowds of people attending and watching this do not help their cause. There is a background swell in young people however - the radio tells us that young people (teenagers) are becoming more circumspect with sex and their attitudes to it. This could, of course, be a red herring, and not applicable to the majority of the population. But it could.

The only censorship in TM I publish what I want - and this applies to any self-publishing magazine editor.

THE JAM JAR

by Brent Lillie

The jam was so high on the shelf that Mrs Sharp couldn't reach it, so Mr Klein had volunteered his services. In actual fact, Mr Klein wasn't all that much taller than Mrs Sharp, but he kept a three-rung aluminium stepladder handy for such small emergencies.

Just as Mr Klein grabbed the jar his shoe slipped on the second rung of the ladder. The storekeeper's chubby hands groped wildly at the edge of the shelf as he teetered on the point of balance, then gravity giggled and poked him in the chest. He crashed to the floor, cursing, as an avalanche of jam jars rained down upon his head.

He struggled to his feet, amazingly unharmed despite the shattered glass, and swore again as his head came into contact with what he thought was the shelf. Closer inspection, however, revealed that the object in question was a jam jar, suspended in mid-air at about Mr Klein's eye level!

It was five centimetres away from the tip of his nose, tilted at an angle of about forty-five degrees. White screw-top lid, brightly-coloured label. *Floating in mid-air!*

"Hmmm!" went Mr Klein, who reached out to grab the jar, and move it, but it refused to budge. Wrapping both hands around the jar he swung upon it with both feet off the ground, looking for all the world like an orang-outang, amusing itself on a tree branch in its enclosure at the zoo. Klein braced a foot against the wall and pulled at the jam jar with every ounce of his stocky frame, but his efforts were all to no avail. It stayed there. White screw-top lid, brightly-coloured label, *blah blah blah!*

As he slipped and crunched in the strawberry jam and broken glass people began to drift into the shop and gather in the aisles.

Groups of laughing children, fresh off the school bus, burst into the store, only to come to a skidding halt upon seeing their familiar shopkeeper struggling in mid-air. More children burst, more adults drifted, until the shop was more crowded than it had been in years. It mattered little to Silas Klein. He had reached the end of his tether.

'To Hell with this!' the flustered storekeeper sputtered, and he stormed into the back room, emerging moments later with a sledge-hammer that Thor must have used in lieu of cash to settle an outstanding account.

'Stand back!' Klein boomed.

The hammer carved an arc. It struck the jar with awesome force. The head of the hammer parted company with the heavy wooded handle and shot across the room, slamming into a vending machine. The glass bulb exploded and hundreds of multi-coloured balls of bubble-gum cascaded to the floor.

The children rioted.

With screams of delight, they pursued the rolling, tumbling, rumbling blue, green, red and yellow globes of gum to every corner of the store. The few adults who had drifted into the store to see what all the commotion was about stood as still as statues, numbed by the ringing in their ears. After looking at the kids, at the shattered vending machine, and at the gum-balls, they refocused their attention on the jam jar.

It wasn't even scratched.

In a small city apartment, a black and white tabby cat sat upon a table, picking at what remained of an old lady's dinner; occasionally, the cat would lick its paws and send its green lighthouse eyes on a furtive sweep around the kitchen.

Mother-of-pearl ears twitched at the slow heavy footsteps that sounded in the hallway. Sinewy muscles tensed as the cat prepared to leap across to the window sill, and then down into the yard.

It was early morning. Dust motes danced like fireflies in the familiar ray of sunlight that always dropped into Hilda Kranch's kitchen at this time of day.

A cup of tea, a slice of toast. Arthritis. Memories. Concern for a world that no longer knew she existed. Weariness began its slow cycle into pain.

Birds sang outside. The refrigerator held its frozen breath as her woolly-slippered feet touched the cold linoleum. The black and white cat, fossilised in mid-spring, transformed an already tenuous reality into an alien landscape. Hilda Kranch's mouth dropped open (she could almost hear her father chiding her from beyond the grave: *'What are you doing, Hilda? Catching flies?'*) She shuffled forward, reached out a shabby claw. The cat, her cat, was as hard as stone, and cold as a figurine in a china shop.

Col Munning did not know the meaning of the word fear. He laughed at phobias and was not scared of spiders, enclosed spaces, heights, death, women, snakes, old desks with roll-top lids, pointed instruments or of eating maggot-infested fruit while sitting on a park bench at midnight.

He was hanging out the door of a single-engined aircraft, grinning like a madman. He pushed himself out into the empty, eye-watering blue of a perfect sky, screaming as an eagle screams, arms spread: a five-pointed star. Five hours later, they were still looking for his body.

The pilot had confirmed the jump, but he had not seen Munning deploy his parachute. The searchers knew Munning must have crashed to earth somewhere within the borders of the defined search area - the winds that day were light, and even though a parachutist may *think* he soars like an eagle, he still drops like a stone. Possibly, they had missed him on the first sweep. He may have been speared by the topmost branches of a pine, or impacted deep in the soft soil.

After three days, they gave up. Munning's insurance company always made sure it dotted its *i*'s. Those eyes narrowed, in suspicion.

Frozen objects gradually became less of a rarity.

At a dusty showground in Montgomery, Alabama, a motor bike froze halfway through a world-record jump over thirty cars, leaving a shocked, though bemused, rider to complete the attempt on his lonesome.

In an exclusive Parisian restaurant, a classic bottle of red wine stopped centimetres from the floor, saving a waiter's job, but causing a wealthy diner to gag on a mouthful of Steak Dianne.

Insects froze, and became as floating nails, deadly to unsuspecting runners and cyclists and peckish, swooping birds. There was frozen cutlery, sporting equipment, a pepper shaker, cars, fish, orchestral instruments, religious icons, museum exhibits, fruit, trash and precious stones. In a thousand different cities, in a thousand different countries, in a thousand different tongues, people scratched their heads and wondered *why?*

After the sun swelled up and exploded, blasting the earth to atoms, they came to collect their souvenirs from an obliterated world.

They could not have saved us, despite their boundless knowledge - however, if there is some kind of life after death, the homeless ghost of humanity may find some comfort in the fact that it is not entirely forgotten.

My rescuers tell me that I will live forever but I have yet to decide whether this will be a blessing or a burden. So far, each blinding new experience only serves to bind me closer to my memories of Earth. A black and white cat is my constant companion and I often watch the caged butterfly for hours on end, wondering if it as lonely as I. They preserved one each of the things that took their fancy. Only one. I would give the universe and everything in it for the touch of a woman's hand.

Once, I was sifting through the things they saved and I found a jar of jam hidden beneath the folds of my parachute. As I rolled it in my hands it slipped and fell, and smashed to pieces on the floor.

THE END

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #17

by Buck Coulson

This year I've learned more about bus service in the U.S. Igor Toloconnicov spent a few days with us in May; we picked him up at the bus station in Marion, IN, on May 16, and delivered him to the bus station in Richmond, IN, on May 19. The Marion bus station is now 5 miles from town; the bus company wanted it close to the interstate highway for the convenience of the bus drivers. First-time visitors to Marion may receive a slight shock; the station is a gas (or petrol, if you prefer) station with an attached "convenience store" (which is a small grocery stocked mostly with bread, milk, soft drinks, cake and candy, and assorted easy-to-prepare foods and some basics like soap and toothpaste.) There is no other building in sight. To get to Marion from the bus station, one can be met, call a taxi, or walk. Igor was buying bus tickets as he went, rather than travelling on a general pass, and when we questioned the clerk at the Richmond station (which is in a fast-food restaurant), we were told that tickets were not sold there. Could he buy one from the driver? They didn't know. Another restaurant nearby had pay telephones, and a call to the Indianapolis regional headquarters elicited the information that yes, he could buy a ticket from the driver. When the bus arrived, the driver said no, he didn't sell tickets, but Igor could get his ticket at his destination in Columbus, OH. One wonders how many passengers arrive at their destination and disappear without paying; perhaps luggage is held for ransom and not released until a ticket is produced.

Igor was an excellent guest. He smokes, but noticed the sign on our door - he could hardly miss it - announcing "No smoking beyond this point", and went outdoors when he needed a cigarette. Conversation was sometimes stopped for questions because of Igor's accent and my tendency to slur my pronunciation, but on the whole there wasn't much of a problem. It's true what they say about Russians and chess, though; Igor noticed a chess board and after that we played more games than I'd played in the last 25 years. (Igor won all but one or two). He's talking to authors and collecting books for possible reprinting in Russia; we took him up to the used-book store in Wabash and he acquired a sackful which I will send off to him Real Soon Now. His reaction to our firearms was interesting; "This means you are free." (The National

Rifle Association would be proud of him.) I do have a few more guns than freedom requires, because I like them, and a half-dozen or so are family heirlooms. I don't think Juanita showed him the automatic pistol she keeps within reach of her desk chair, but he didn't miss it. I showed him most of the arsenal.

The brakes went bad on the car just before Igor's arrival, so I drove very carefully when picking him up. The next day I took the car into the garage and walked the 7½ miles home. I could have asked for a ride from the garage manager, and been given one, but I wanted to see what it would be like. No problems, and I made it in 2½ hours. Much easier than walking the dog 4 or 5 miles; the dog stops more frequently to investigate things, but the rest of the time he's hauling on the leash to see if he can move me along faster. Severian is a very impatient animal. Also an efficient one; the other day when I was walking him he was attacked by 5 dogs. Took him about a minute to disperse the lot; he went after one at a time. As soon as the first dog ran, he turned on the second one, completely ignoring the rest. The last two never really got in their licks; when the third dog ran, they went with him. I've never been a runner, but I'm getting pretty good at walking. And hanging onto a leash during dog fights.

Our lawn is the worse for wear this year, because the lawn-mower had been in the shop most of the spring. We can't really afford a new one, so I finally began using a scythe on the lawn, in between rains and visitors. The scythe is one I inherited from Dad, and he told me it didn't work well on grass, but it does cut the tops off, though leaving the lawn looking somewhat ragged. Mostly the problem is that it rains frequently, we need to get into town to do shopping at irregular intervals, I have a review column to get out (and try to actually read what I'm reviewing), and so on. Plus the fact that I'd rather sit around and read, rather than doing all this other stuff. Oh yes, the rain means that we need to spray the apple trees now and then, when it looks like it will be clear for a few days. One needs insects for pollination, but I could do without so *many* of them.

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FROM HUDDERSFIELD TO THE STARS

by Steve Sneyd

"Proto-SF, the appearance of what we recognise as SFnal images and ideas before SF as a genre existed, is a "game" of endless possibilities, playable right back to Gilgameshian Sumer or, more certainly, Ancient Greece.

Sometimes considerable "stretching" is needed to draw such writings "within the canon". On occasion, however, the fit seems so easy and immediate as to leave the reader feeling both a sense of discovery and an immediate feeling of kinship - and also, on occasion, puzzling at length over the source of such "out of time", from our hindsight at any rate, thinking.

In the course of researching a talk on early poetry in the Huddersfield area (given to the Huddersfield Authors' Circle in February 1993, and itself an expansion and development of themes put forward in the Introduction to my 1991 Hilltop Press Publication, *THE CAMBODUNUM CHAPBOOK COMPANION*, a bibliography of past and present poetry from this area of Yorkshire), I reread in the town's Local History Library an "epic poem" called *THE STAR-SEER*, by a sadly neglected 19th C poet called William Dearden.

I was even more forcibly struck than on first reading a couple of years before by the strongly SFnal elements present in places and particularly in a startling account of a voyage into outer space, undertaken when the poem's male protagonist is in effect drugged and kidnapped aboard a spaceship, to be taken to a distant star and there inducted into various astrological secrets.

The "why" of the voyage, the pretext for its inclusion in the story, need concern us little. What I did and do find notable is the startlingly modern elements of a description, written in the third decade of the 19th C, which could yet in parts be used without undue allowance as "poetic commentary" for film of a contemporary space flight. This particularly includes a stunning description of the Earth as seen from space, which (due to the fortuitous non-arrival of a booked interview) it proved possible to read on air during the March 28, 1993 broadcast of "Northern Line", community

radio station Huddersfield FM's arts programme (a circumstance I mention only since it seemed in some curious way to "complete a circle" - the work of a man whose vision was before his time, being read long after his time, indeed, but also when the truth of his description had been confirmed by those famous Apollo pictures looking back on our planet.)

William Dearden was born in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire (today very reliant on tourism, crafts and arts to replace a dying textile industry, then just at the cusp of its rise to textile prosperity) in 1804. Educated at the historic Heptonstall Grammar School, high on a hilltop above his birthplace, he was originally intended to enter the Church, but instead at 17 found himself "thrown on his own resources" for his livelihood, and became a school teacher in a variety of places. From 1830-48, he was Principal of King Street Academy, Huddersfield. While in the town he edited Dearden's *Miscellany*, an early "little magazine" of sorts.

Later the Headmaster of the Grammar school at Warley near Halifax, he died in January 1889, having been a friend of many notable writers, including Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, and the Brontes, although unlike them his writings are now effectively forgotten.

The story of *THE STAR-SEER* (published in 1837 by Leyland & Son of Huddersfield; the date Dec 29, 1836 within the text is presumably that of the author's completion of the writing) is complex. In essence it is the story of Harold, inheritor of the Tower of Oswald (a castle precariously perched on a rock in the Upper Calder Valley, west of Hebden Bridge - the location intended is perhaps that of the ancient hunting lodge of Erringden Forest at Horsehold, since the physical descriptions are a reasonable match). The account begins with Harold meeting in the wood, and falling in love with, Editha of Kirklees (near Huddersfield - Kirklees Priory, incidentally, is where Robin Hood died). Later, he is called to the wars in Spain. Editha goes in disguise to fight by his side. He is captured, his fate a mystery. Editha returns to England, disconsolate, but hears of the arrival at Oswald Tower of a

mysterious "Star-Seer", Anseimo, and makes a "pilgrimage" there in hopes of learning Harold's fate from the trespasser.

Instead, she is amazed to discover that Anseimo, "the splendid aerial voyager", is in fact Harold, but now equipped with vast knowledge gained on his extra-terrestrial journey.

Their regained happiness is destroyed because "a fatal star" causes him to turn against her. In the end he is impelled to kill Editha - then, in a dramatic finale, "... Oswald Tower, with all it contained/fell from its rocky height into a yawning chasm, which immediately/closed over the engulfed ruins."

That is where the saga itself ends - but it is time to return to the "proto-SF" point where we began that journey amid the stars, and in particular the description Dearden gives us (remember, this is written in 1837) of the Earth from space:

"Now, in dim dizziness of distance, rolled,
Like a huge ball of ebony and gold,
In the blue sea of space, Earth's ponderous globe,
Half under veil of night, half with the robe
Of the sun's brightness clad...alternate seen...
Sailing amid ten thousand worlds! the sheen
Of their proud glories shining into nought
The radiance which our bark around it wrought!"

Dearden, who elsewhere cites Kepler, who "fancied the earth to be an animal, sometimes sweating, sometimes shaking, by the impressions and comminations of the ambient ether.", does not here personify the Earth in this way, though there are elements in the description of Harold's Natal (and fatal) Star reminiscent of this viewpoint.

However, as the "bright aerial bark" continues its voyage ("... on its path sublime/Sped the bright wonder meting laws to Time"), Dearden does give us a splendidly SFnal description, full of Sense of Wonder, of a "graveyard" of dead planets, a fitting extract with which to end this brief look at relevant aspects of THE STAR-SEER, and particularly its Canto III and the account of The Aerial (more precisely, in our terminology, Spatial) Voyage:

"On its wild track, the bright aerial bark;
Illumining far around the infinite dark;
Through which emerging, gilded momentarily,
Like huge wrecks drifting on a moonless sea,
In silent, sullen majesty, the weird
Ghosts of lost worlds, with glory once ensphered!
And uncouth shapes, scared from the womb of night,
Flitted about, with feeble glowworm light;
Then shrunk again within the horrid shroud
Of that black dark's interminable cloud!"

Another, somewhat later instance of this "proto-sf" element in theme and description occurring in work from this area (the presence of such another example raises the interesting question as to the extent of the influence of Dearden's work on subsequent poets in "the neighbourhood"), is George Calvert's massive two volume work, partly financed by advance subscriptions, entitled UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, A POEM, IN TEN EPOCHS, DIVIDED INTO TWENTY-SIX BOOKS." (An indication of the size of this 1861 publication is that Vol. I is 386 pages. It is also a sad indication of the failure of this publication to grip its

readership that there are uncut pages in the second volume in both the copies held by Huddersfield Local History Library). The book, which works its way through future epochs in a way reminiscent of Stapledon (albeit with a highly religious tone - Epoch 7, for example, is The Millenium, and the 8th the Age After the Millenium), is perhaps of most interest to the seeker after "SFnal elements", even though here closely entwined with the "tropes and icons" of an epic religious verse in the Miltonic tradition, in its account of the First Epoch.

To quote the author's prose introduction to this Epoch, "the poem opens supposing ten million years to have passed away - and our world and the whole planetary system destroyed. ... A new world and a second race of men, Cherubim and other heavenly powers have free intercourse" (*note* - this word should clearly be interpreted in the light of the 19th C context) "with the inhabitants - but not permitted to tell of sin in heaven - nor of the fall of man. Great festal jubilees are held - commemorative of the creation of man. The millionth festival is about to be held - the famed of men and women there - from every quarter of the world."

In a sense the argument of this First Epoch, devoted to "a second world of men unfallen", is that of exposing the fallacy, as Calvert sees it, in the suggestion "that man in his natural state will not have God to reign over him in any form."

But in the (very lengthy, it must be said) process of developing his account, Calvert gives us a variety of images of this far future time which are also well in tune with the imagery science fiction tends to believe exclusively its own. For example, these lines:

"And to enhance your bliss, ye shall be throned
High counsellors to the innumerable beings
Who are inhabitants of suns, and stars,
Ornate with orient constellations fair,
Attractive once to sages on the earth,
Who nightly watched their course, and mused on god."

(The italics are mine)

Nor is that extract atypical of Calvert's description of the working of time upon our Solar System, albeit simplistic in its time-scale, is vividly SFnal in its portrayal of change and flux of matter -

"Adown the whirl of Time's voracious gulf,
Eternity, ten million years had rolled:
No vestige of the earth, or sun, or moon,
Or Mars, or Saturn's fiery-belted globe (...)
The comets in their vast and wandering course,
God's ministers that sweep the depths of space,
Of straying ruined worlds and stars decayed,
Had hurled them from their blighted spheres, and heaped
Them to all matter purified, wherefrom
The angel worlds, and worlds fro highest beings,
Are tae'en."

Moreover, the utopian planet, sinless as Blish's Lithia, on which "this second race of men" had "lived harmoniously" a million years, while in many ways a fairly conventional paradise, has interesting individual touches appropriate to an SFnal approach to the description had such

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A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIAN "FANTASTICA"

by Andrew Lubenski

PART THREE.

Romanticism came again, but this time it was socialist romanticism.

The storm of the Revolution and the Civil war had left an inefaceable mark upon all kinds of art and also upon scientific fantasy, of course. As we tried to show, Russian SF didn't become as romantic and mystical as it was in the Nineteenth Century, but it did become mainly social. So what was remarkable, at first sight, was the metamorphosis which occurred with Russian SF in the thirties. Saving all outward signs of social literature and using the basic facts of science it came again in due course to romanticism. But that romanticism was of a special kind; it was "socialist romanticism" (I think that the term "socialist romanticism" is known to Western readers, but I want to use the term "socialist romanticism" for the purpose of describing some of the processes in Soviet SF of that period of time). It is astonishing only at first sight.

The Revolution had finished, the new ruling class - the nomenclature¹ - had won victory and strengthened their place in society, and the totalitarian State began to create its own myths in which the romance of labour, "the romance of the five year plans", and "the romance of the subjugation of the North" played the leading roll. And with that "romance" they directed the brains of several generations of the Soviet people. It is only now that there have been published, for example, Shalamov's stories, where the author, knowing about the GULAG from his own experience, shows that it was no romantic volunteers that subjugated the North, but it was done so by so called "enemies of the Soviet people". At that time the powerful propaganda machine was started up. And Stalin used it, in particular, to deceive many Western intellectuals such as Feichtwanger, etc. Soviet SF became a component of the machine, and just be thankful to the fact it acquired its romantic form. At least that form let the authors publish their works.

The founder of socialist romanticism in Russian fantasy was the writer Alexander Belyaev. He was also one of the founders of Soviet SF. In spite of this fact, Belyaev's works were based upon scientific facts and upon the extrapolation of its possibilities. That fact was noted by H. G. Wells, who met with Belyaev in 1934. Herbert Wells incidentally noted that "... there is incredibly a lot of fantasy in Western science fiction, and there is so incredibly little of science." It is interesting that such a condition has redoubled from that time, and not only in the West. So Stanislav Lem says in his article SCIENCE FICTION AND COSMOLOGY: "SF fences itself off so hard from cosmological science, that it isn't able to perceive signals, eg new information, from science with the exception of the information which succeeded in putting itself in the first pages of some newspapers (such as rumours about black holes)" (1977). And further, "But nothing is neglected in modern SF as much as intelligence..."

Belyaev's works contained enough science. As researcher, M. Sokolova remarks, "Belyaev wished that all scientific achievements would be submitted to the interests of the people." A. Belyaev showed interest in all that was to subjugate Nature, though it was a man-made rain (VCBID, 1930), or suburbs (THE GREEN SYMPHONY, 1930), or using wind energy (THE KITE, 1931), the extraction of water in a desert (THE SUN HORSES, 1931), or problems of peat-cutting (THE DEVIL'S BOG, 1931). He wrote about wind power, atomic engines, gliding, using chemistry in farming, and about metallic dirigibles .

Some of Belyaev's works are dedicated to the problems of conquering the depths of the ocean. In the novel UNDERWATER FARMERS (1936) he depicted a Soviet farm (Sovchoz) at the bottom of the sea, where they cultivated water-plants. Huge plantations gave much farm produce and valuable raw materials (: M. Sokolova. From her afterword to the collection PROFESSOR DOWEL'S HEAD²).

It was what was later named "the fantasy of the near future". Such fantasy extrapolated some trends of science and engineering to the future (to the near future, as a general rule).

Many of those predictions came true, but it is for these reasons that A. Belyaev was named the Soviet Jules Verne. In Leningrad he read Tsiolkovski's works³ and took up Tsiolkovski's ideas, though at that time many authorities on science were sceptical about those ideas. Belyaev wrote THE AIRSHIP (1934), where he used Tsiolkovski's ideas about metallic dirigibles. THE JUMP INTO NOTHING (1934) was where he described a journey to Venus, and in THE STAR KATS⁴ he anticipated (in the wake of Tsiolkovski) the appearance of laboratories and stations in outer space, and journeys to the Moon.

The most popular of Belyaev's novels were THE AMPHIBIOUS MAN (1928), and PROFESSOR DOWEL'S HEAD (1937). There were two films based on the plots of these books. The novel THE AMPHIBIOUS MAN was about Professor Salvadore, who grafted a shark's gills to his adopted son and thus made him capable of living under water. In PROFESSOR DOWEL'S HEAD Belyaev depicted a professor's head which could work without his body. The two novels were anti-bourgeois (anti-bourgeoisness is the other side of socialist romanticism). The chief idea of the novels was that in bourgeois society all achievements of science and engineering did great harm to the people. Now we know this was not only in bourgeois society.... But in the 20's and 30's (the GULAG was created, millions of people were sent to prisons and hundred of thousands were shot dead) the revolutionary romanticism in Soviet SF had performed its role. "A. Belyaev wanted to show a beautiful future to his readers," wrote M. Sokolova, "he depicted lovely towns which were full of greenery, air and light; towns with an artificial climate, comfortable homes, airports on the roofs of buildings, electric cars, fast trains, towns where all the powers of Nature would be useful to people".⁵ Did he write it sincerely? Undoubtedly. The creators of "socialist romanticism" were themselves deceived by that very romanticism. Those who were not deceived wrote about a wholly different subject. Michael Bulgakov (1891-1940) at that time wrote THE DEVILIADA, THE FATAL EGGS, THE DOG'S HEART and finally the immortal novel THE MASTER AND MARGUERITA. But M. Bulgakov did not expect that his works would be published. And they were not published, then. Evgeny Zamyatnin wrote the dystopia WE. Alexander Grin continued and developed the traditions of Russian romanticism. But it was only "socialist romanticism" that became the official policy of Soviet SF for a long time.

I would like to say more about Alexander Grin, because he stood alone in Russian literature, although he was completely within the bounds of its traditions. Yet during Grin's life he was called the Russian Edgar Poe, the Russian Bret Gart, the Russian Jack London. He was accused that his pen-name (A. Grin) was picked for prestige as a foreign name.⁶ But A. Grin was not an imitator. "A. Grin was not a transplanted exotic plant growing on the edge of the soil of Russian literature," wrote the researcher of Grin's creations, V. Vichrov. "And if we look for the origin of his creative style then we find it in popular fairy tales, in Gogol's THE NOSE or THE PORTRAIT, in Dostoevsky, and in the fine novels and stories of the Russian writer N. P. Vagner (1828-1907)⁷ who used the pen name Cat Murlike. Vagner's book was well known from A. Grin's childhood. <...> Alexander Grin is not an exotic flower or a transplanted one, he is not the other

person on the multi-coloured cornfield of Russian literature; he grew on its soil, his roots are in that soil."⁸ A. Grin himself did not regard one of his most famous novels, THE SCINTILLATING UNIVERSE, as a fantastic novel. He spoke of it as a "symbolic novel", where "no man flew, but the spirit did". However, it was undoubtedly a philosophical fantasy.

The official critics of Soviet literature glossed over the works of the Grins, Bulgakovs, and the Zamyatnins for a long time. Incidentally, Alexander Grin's fantastic world is quite an original phenomenon. Evgeny Zamyatnin's novel WE (1920) is a classic dystopia. It is a novel which has a warning. This novel "... was perceived by his contemporaries as a cruel caricature of the future socialist and communist society".⁸ "I" dissolved in WE, during Zamyatnin's lifetime (he was forced to leave Russia in 1931). The society which denied individuality was described by many authors. E. Zamyatnin is usually mentioned together with A. Huxley and G. Gruel. "But it is a great thing for us that E. Zamyatnin was the first," remarked O. Michailov⁹. Yes, Russia was the first.

Then Germany followed Russia's example and today can anybody say that the world finally overcame the temptation of totalitarianism? E. Zamyatnin really brilliantly forecast a general tendency of socialism, which is the dissolution of I into We. Mathematician and publicist Igor Shafarevich wrote in the book SOCIALISM AS A PHENOMENON OF WORLD HISTORY, "At the least, three components of the socialist ideal - the destruction of private property, the destruction of the family, and equality - can be arrived at from one principle. This principle is *the suppression of individuality*. We can find some evidence that the socialist ideology is inimical to individuality. < ... > Marxism often voices a supposition that a person doesn't exist as an individual, that the individual is a pure invention of philosophers and that everyone is a member of the appointed class..."¹⁰

E. Zamyatnin gave warning of danger. This danger was the creation of an *anonymous society*. But was he the first? Thomas Moore also described a rather terrible society, and not without reason he was prized in the manuals of Soviet scientific communism. I Shafarevitch, though, reviewed the novel WE and gave the society created by the writer's fantasizing a comprehensive testimonial. However, I. Shafarevitch wrote about the real tendencies of real socialism. "We see that all the elements of the socialist ideal, such as the destruction of private property, family and hierarchy and hostility to religion can be considered as a display of the one fundamental principle, which is the suppression of individuality. We can see this principle in action if we can gather together the most typical traits which came into existence in socialist theory or practice during the two thousand five hundred years from Plato to the Berlin Comune N1, and to construct a model of the "ideal" socialist society, although such a society never existed: People are dressed equally and their faces also look equal. They live in barracks, there is a labour service and after work people eat and seek relaxation at their work place. They walk only if their chiefs allow them to walk. Sexual activity and everything connected with it is checked by doctors and bureaucrats. All children are brought up in State creches and schools from the time they are born. Philosophy and art is completely political and are subordinated to the educational purposes for the State.

Everything is geared to obey the one idea, which is the destruction or suppression of individuality, to such an extent that it is not a social force any more.

Dostoevsky compared such a society with a bee hive or ant-hill. It is an accurate comparison. In this instance we really have a model of the ANONYMOUS SOCIETY¹¹. At any rate the Soviet powers quickly saw through Grin, Bulgakov, Platonov and Zamyatin. (The witch-hunting of Zamyatin began after his novel *WE* was published in the magazine *RUSSIA'S WILL* in Prague. It was translated from English into Russian). Works by these authors (with the exception of Grin's novels) weren't published for quite a while. "... If we note the stormy social events in this country for the last three or four years then we can ask, who could foretell that the majority of masterpieces, which were rescued from oblivion, would belong to the fantasy genre?" wrote J. Medvedev.¹² Those masterpieces were Zamyatin's *WE*, Efremov's *THE BULL'S HOUR*, Chayanov's *MY BROTHER ALEXEI'S JOURNEY TO THE PEASANT'S UTOPIAN COUNTRY*, Platonov's *KOTLOVAN (THE FOUNTAIN PIT)*, *CHEVENGUR*, *THE JUVENALIS SEA*, and Bulgakov's *THE FATAL EGGS*, *THE DEIVLIADA* and *THE DOG'S HEART*. These works were published by SAMIZDAT¹³ and readers could only read them secretly. They always ran the risk of being imprisoned for such reading. Famous Russian fantasy and scientist Kir Bulichev¹⁴ defined the 1930's as a fatal year for Soviet fantasy. "... All the fantasy works of the great writers were published before 1930. As far as I know, only three writers continued to create fantasy, but they didn't hope to publish anything. They were M. Bulgakov, A. Platonov, and Vs. Ivanov. No other great literary artists wrote any fantastical works during the last ten years."¹⁵

The changes that took place in Russia exerted influence upon its literature. The new economic police were abolished and people with differing opinions were put into prisons. (Frequently people were put into prison in order to acquire cheap labour, and it was exactly at that time the outrageous word *RABCILA*¹⁶ appeared in the Russian language. Fantasy, as Kir Bulichev wrote, wasn't made an especial sacrifice. "Fantasy was in trouble because of its specific characteristics. Real fantasy can exist only when there is the possibility of seeking an Alternative"¹⁷ But in a totalitarian society any seeking of alternatives has always been treasonable.

The author of the novel *THE JOURNEY OF MY BROTHER ALEXEI TO THE PEASANT'S UTOPIA*, the scientist and economist Professor A. Chayanov, who published the novel under the pseudonym Ivan Kremnev in 1920, sought such an alternative. According to his utopia, peasants, not the proletariat, won victory. Could Stalin forgive such an attack on the idea of the proletariat's dictatorship? Of course he couldn't. And he did not forgive. Chayanov and many other economists were arrested. "And then," wrote Kir Bulichev, "there was an event unique in the history of world fantasy. Chayanov's utopia, *MY BROTHER'S JOURNEY*, created the excuse for a political trial and the deaths of many scientists. Investigator Agranov found in Chayanov's utopia that in 1984 the ruling party in Soviet Russia would have the name the Labour Peasant's Party. The fantastical tale was announced as a manifesto for a group of conspirators and its utopian subject as a program for a actual

existing party. Unfortunately life is more fantastical than any fantastic novel. Dozens of prisoners were subjected to torture and "acknowledged" that they belonged to the fantastical party. They pointed to Chayanov as the Chairman of the Party, and Chayanov himself, after he had looked through his old friends' testimonies, also "acknowledged". The criminal procedure against the Labour Peasant's Party was closed. Chayanov was shot dead. It was a convincing lesson for Soviet writers."¹⁸

Many publishing houses and magazines were closed. "Between 1930 and 1935 was a period of death for Soviet fantasy," considered Dir Bulichev. Then he defined "fantasy of the near future" as a narrow political literature. (V. Goncharov. D. Dar (late A. Belyaev) wrote, "near future fantasy" was a result of the destruction of fantasy as a belles lettres in the beginning of the 30's. "Near future fantasy" was a mode of existence for many writers including Alexander Belyaev, who was the greater of them."¹⁹

Some re-animation of science fiction occurred towards the end of the 30's. It was provoked by the progress of science and technology and the approaching World War. All these facts demanded that young people seek new forms of training. Engineers (Nemtsov, Dolgushin, Ochotnikdov, Saporin, Vladko) entered SF and propagandistic fantasy novels were published. Among them were G. Adamov's *THE SECRET OF THE TWO OCEANS*, A. Kanzantsev's *THE FLAMING ISLAND* and P. Pavlenko's *IN THE EAST*. Pavlenko was even awarded with Stalin's Prize for the "right" foretelling of the victory over Japan. "It was the first case of Stalin's Prize being awarded to a fantasy novel," wrote Kir Bulichev.

As we can see, Stalin's regime treated SF (and all literature in general) very seriously. They punished writers for seeking out alternatives and they rewarded others for the "creative development" of Stalin's ideas. But these propagandistic SF novels were bad because they maintained an illusion about a quick and easy victory in the approaching war.

And war was not the time for fantasy. The total outcome of the 30's and 40's was that Soviet science fiction became a secondary kind of literature in reader's and publisher's eyes.

NOTES:

1. The nomenclature of the Party and Government leaders and officials.
2. A. Belyaev. *PROFESSOR DOWEL'S HEAD*, the collection of works, Moscow, 1987.
3. K. A. Tsiolkovski was named as the father of astronautics.
4. The novel was dedicated to K. A. Tsiolkovski and *KATS* was the acronym of the name of K. A. Tsiolkovski.
5. *Ibidem*, p. 458.
6. The true name of the writer was Grinevski. He was born in 1880 in the Vyatka region in the provincial town Slobodskoy. His father was a clerk.
7. We didn't mention that famous writer in Part 1 of the History. N. P. Vagner (1829-1907) was a scientist, corresponding member of the Petersburg Academy of Sciences and a writer. He was the author of the "Cat Murlike Fairy-tales."

8. V. Vichrov. THE KNIGHT OF A DREAM, the foreword to the collection of Grin's works, Moscow, 1965. O. Michailov. The grossmeister of literature in the book EL ZAMYATNIN, THE SELECTED STORIES, Moscow, 1989. p.16.
9. Ibid.
10. I. Shafarevitch. SOCIALISM AS THE PHENOMENON OF WORLD HISTORY. Moscow. 1991, pp. 331-332.)
11. Ibid. pp.338-339.
12. The afterword to the collection of the works RUSSIAN FANTASTICAL PROSE AT THE END OF THE XXIX AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE XX CENTURIES. Moscow. 1991. p.453.
13. The underground publishing house.
14. Kir Bulichev is the pen-name of Dr. Igor Mogeiko.
15. Kir Bulichev. The Epoch's Stepdaughter in the Year Book THE CHRONOGRAPH. Moscow. 1980. pp.368.
16. The labour force. But the first part (ROB) of the word RABCILA also means "a slave" in Russian, and anybody would understand the whole word as "a slave force".
17. Ibid. p.369.
18. Ibid. pp. 369-370.
19. Ibid. p. 381.

A painting by S. Ljubenko

PART 4 - FILLING THE EMPTINESS.

We have already shown that fantasy in Russia (the USSR) in Stalin's time did not have any significant achievements, and it was doomed to a subservient role in Soviet literature by the course of events. But, incidentally, the atmosphere of Soviet society was fantastic; the State had its myths and fantasies. S. I. Grabovski even proposed to consider Stalin as the greatest fantast. He wrote, "There is a great temptation to consider Stalin as the greatest science fiction author of all time. No-one before him and no-one after him could produce fantasy so complete that even H. G. Wells himself would believe it for some time during his visit to the USSR in the early 30's. No-one could turn his personal failures (peasantry collectivization, the first Five-year plan, the war against Finland) into somebody else's "dizziness from success" with catastrophic results for his own former comrades.

At the very start of the period of collective farm organisation, Stalin promised to make the USSR the granary of the whole world in three years. These years passed and the USSR was embraced by a disastrous famine. Six million people died of famine in the Ukraine alone, Agriculture had fallen into decay and even now hasn't come into its own. This simple fact is enough to enter into history one of the most horrendous villains. But even up till now... and after the August '91 coup attempt failure - there are millions of people, even in the Ukraine, who consider Stalin as the greatest and wisest person; one who loved his people, and took care of them. Well, even Robert A. Heinlein and Isaac Asimov taken together have no such devoted fans as Stalin has¹.

In Stalin's dictatorship the conditions were such that any science fiction writer could only write about the theme "It's nice to live in the Soviet land"². And it will be better to live in the USSR in the near future. (Accordingly, one may write about "It's disgusting to live in capitalist countries" and it will be worse to live in such countries in the future).

"... Soviet reality of the 30's-50's was an astonishing mix of utopian practice with the social myth and deliberate arbitrary fantasizing of the ruling elite," wrote S. I. Grabovski, "No doubt that some grandiose projects, like the transarctic railroad, an underwater tunnel to the island of Sakhalin, etc, were initiated by Stalin, not out of economic and political needs, but to leave his name in history. <...>. Literary science fiction of that period appeared as the necessary supplement to the general project of "building communism". It was "near future" science fiction, presented by a closed group of "ideologically correct" authors who were allowed to ponder future worlds"³. If any author was not ideologically blameless, as officials saw it, then it was very dangerous for him and he would be in great trouble. (Later I shall show this, as in the case of Soviet science fiction writer I. Efremov.)

S. I. Grabovsky also drew attention to the anti-ecological orientation of Soviet SF (it seems it is the first mention about ecology in articles on Soviet science fiction). In accordance with the majority of novels of that time. "...the Earth's climate is radically changed, cyclopic constructions are erected, eg the Polar Bridge across the

Polar ocean, giant mountains are blown up or moved from place to place, the direction of rivers are changed and historical cities are completely reconstructed."

Technology and anti-ecologism are indissolubly connected with the acceleration of the so-called "class struggle". According to those science fiction writers, everywhere, in every laboratory there are spies, other vermin and "Enemies of the people", or simply people who confess to the "capitalist way of life" and Western values. All these people are trying to destroy the plans of the "building of communism", to organise shortages and to destroy the results of scientists' work. However multiple NKVD-KGB special agents render these enemies harmless. The special agents function is to save the credulous intellectuals who deliberately give the Soviet's secrets to the foreign spies, to punish the guilty and to show those doubters their place.⁴ Naturally, the anti-ecological nature of Soviet SF was determined and the anti-ecological policy of the Soviet economy brought the USSR to ecological catastrophe. The Aral Sea almost disappeared, the length of human life has shortened, there were nuclear catastrophies in the Urals and Chernobyl. The projects of communism must be finished at any price, including at the cost of people's health and life. But it was an unconscious anti-ecologism. Soviet society came to recognise ecology only in the sixties. Results of the rapacity of Nature were described by I. Efremov in his novel THE BULL'S HOUR (the outside world of the planet Tormance). "...Forests disappeared, rivers dried up, fertile soils were destroyed <...> there were mountains of carcasses of wild animals which had been poisoned because people used fertilisers excessively.... Billions of tons of coal, oil, and natural gas were burned wastefully, masses of trees were felled <...> There were gigantic cities that had to be abandoned owing to lack of water, pieces of reinforced concrete, asphalt, and iron sprawled everywhere. Enormous hydro-electric power-stations were blocked with silt, huge dams were broken up by moving blocks of the Earth's crust.... "New illnesses were springing up but medicine couldn't handle the struggle with them. Heredity defects and mental illnesses became a real distress."

I. A. Kolchenko, in his work THE LIMITS OF FANTASY wrote - "Pictures of the destruction of the biosphere by people's irresponsibility which was depicted by talented artists stagger us by its authenticity".⁵ The novel THE BULL'S HOUR was withdrawn from all the libraries in the USSR for the reason of that authenticity. Passions about creative work and about Ivan Efremov's personality stormed up.

Ivan Efremov (1907-1972) is the greatest writer in Soviet SF (and it is not only in SF; he was a famous paleontologist). The first stories of I. Efremov (there were ten in all) were published in 1944. They were awarded the prize of the notable Russian writer Alexei Tolstoi. In 1947 the story THE STARSHIPS was published, then the dilogy THE GREAT ARCH (which was about alien civilizations) was issued and, lastly, the utopian novel ANDROMEDA was published which overcome the "emptiness" of Soviet science fiction. In this

novel Efremov depicted the communist society that would exist in thousands of years time. It was an unprecedented thing for the 40's and 50's. But it wasn't an unprecedented thing for Russian fantasy at all. There had been THE YEAR 4338 by Odoevski. (Odoevski, who lived in Pushkin's time, forecast that Russia would be the first country to go into outer space. "The novel appeared as a bolt from the blue," wrote J. Medvedev in his work THE LIGHT OVER THE LAKE OF DARKNESS, "There were long queues in front of news-stands where the magazine *TEKHNIKA MOLODEGDY* ("Engineering for Youth") was sold⁶, in which this novel was first printed.

I. Efremov explained his interest in futurism in his article *COSMOS AND PALEONTOLOGY*, where he emphasised the unity of all that which existed in the Universe. He wrote, "... this unity allows us to understand and even to foretell processes of development of events in other worlds, and paleontology has a special place in it."

It seems to me that the decisive influence on the cosmological theme in Efremov's creative work required a knowledge of such little known works of K. Tsiolkovski as *THE WILL OF THE UNIVERSE*, *THE CAUSE OF THE COSMOS*, *THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE COSMOS*, *THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH AND MANKIND* and several others of Tsiolkovski's works. In the above Tsiolkovski showed imposing pictures of the universe, which is fully populated. He considered questions of rescuing mankind when the sun's temperature was reduced and considered questions of man's immortality and cosmic architecture.⁷

J. Medvedev ascribed Efremov to "the school of Russian cosmosm" which was represented by such authors as V. Odoevski, A. V. Sucho-Kobelin, N. F. Fedorov, V. I. Vernadski, N. K. Rerich, N. G. Cholodni and A. L. Chidgevski. "Now this famous list is reinforced by I. Efremov"⁸ As we can see, "the father of astronautics" (K. Tsiolkovski) ideas exercised great influence on Soviet SF. But only after Efremov's appearance did these ideas obtain powerful artistic expression⁹.

There were also Efremov's novels *THE RAZOR'S EDGE*, *TAIS OF ATHENS*, *THE BULL'S HOUR*, which followed the novel *ANDROMEDA*. The latter was named by T. A. Chernishova as "the best comprehensive utopia". Chernishova writes, "In this novel was summed up the utopist's search, and the first principles of Utopia were fixed in the reader's mind. Maybe it formed the principle meaning of the novel, and maybe the secret of its world-wide success lies in that."¹⁰ But this novel had other things going for it. I. Mogeiko considered that "the novel *ANDROMEDA* is a real Utopia. It is the attempt to depict an ideal communist society. And it is in despite of its popularity up to now, it's despite the fact that this novel had many imitations and had much significance in the history of Soviet SF. I venture to say that it is only an attempt and no more."¹¹ Efremov's widow disputed this opinion: "I. Efremov... considered that every writer or every scientist had a right to show his own model of the future, and to say that "that it is only an attempt" is at least inane."

The novel *THE BULL'S HOUR* that was written four years before Efremov's death was the cause of his persecution by the officials. "I had occasion more than once," wrote J. Medvedev, "And especially in the middle of the 60's to say that the cause of the negative attitude of the authorities to the

novel *THE BULL'S HOUR* was "a gloom of predictions" and "making a cartoon of the communist future". But time, as it is know, has put everything into perspective.¹²

In the early 70's people were excited by the story *PROTEY* by the same J. Dedvedev. In this story he, in an indirect way, accused science fiction writers the brothers Strugatski that they had informed against Efremov to the KGB. This story provoked great interest and many people protested (see supplement I to Chapter 4). Not long ago the popular weekly magazine *ARGUMENTS AND FACTS* returned to this espionage version. The magazine printed: "Who was Ivan Efremov? What does the author of *ROBINSON CRUSOE* Daniel Defoe and the great science fiction writer Ivan Efremov have in common? The first created the English secret service and the second probably was its agent. As we know in the 70's the KGB thoroughly examined the story that I. Efremov was an agent of the Intelligence Service. And what is interesting is that they didn't definitely rule out that Ivan Efremov and Michael A. who was a son of the English timber industry boss living in Russia before 1917, was the same person,. The reason for the long lived examination of the espionage story was Efremov's sudden death, which came an hour after he received a strange letter from abroad. It was thought that the letter was impregnated with a toxic agent and that is why the KGB was charged to examine the case of Efremov's death."

It is possible that this story is fit only for a future fantastic story,¹³ though another popular weekly magazine *OGONEK* ("The Small Light") showed an interest in what is written in the *ARGUMENTS AND FACTS*, and published a letter from the scientist A. Kashirtsev: "Who was Ivan Efremov? Such was an article titled in the weekly magazine *ARGUMENTS AND FACTS*, #18, 1992, which expounded the story of the KGB looking into Ivan Efremov's life. According to this story I. Efremov and Michael A. were the same person, who has an agent of the English secret service. I think that such a popular magazine must refrain from publishing such a story, especially if it came from the KGB. This article flings mud at our greatest compatriot."

"I was associated with I. Efremov at sessions of the Scientific Council of the Paleontological Research Institute and also at lobbies. He was a highly talented scientist who wrote many books on old fossils and moreover, he created a new branch of science about forms and conditions of the burying of old fossils."

"It is known that Efremov was a homeless child in the years of the Revolution, then a detachment of the Red Army gave shelter to him and he was later wounded. After that he was a workman in Leningrad, served as a sailor and sailed the Caspian and Ochotok seas. He graduated at Leningrad Mining Institute and worked at the Geological Museum. Efremov was a founder of the world-wide, well-known Paleontological Museum."

"I. Efremov belonged to the category of men with spontaneous excess talent," wrote writer Ju. Medvedev. In 1944 Efremov suddenly published ten stories and from that time his popularity as a science fiction writer grew rapidly. His books *THE GREAT ARCH*, *ANDROMEDA* and *THE RAZOR'S EDGE* were published at short intervals. His last novel, *THE BULL'S HOUR* (1968-69) had a sense of purpose against Soviet totalitarianism, but the Chinese names of its

main characters mislead the censors and the novel was published. This book was a best-seller. After six months officials raised the alarm and the book was withdrawn from all libraries in the USSR. An atmosphere of hostility was created around Efremov. The story by the KGB was published with the sole purpose of discrediting and annihilating Efremov.¹⁴ Disputes will obviously continue, but I think a statement that the espionage story was published with the sole purpose of discrediting Efremov is convincing (although in this case we haven't direct evidence, but we know that such methods were widespread and even the chief of the KGB L. Beria was, after all, declared an "English spy"!)

Whatever, Ivan Efremov launched the new stage of the recent history of Soviet SF. (This history came to a close in 1991, with the history of the USSR.) A whole galaxy of science fiction writers appeared after him. The brothers Arcady and Boris Strugatski were the most important and well-known among these. The first novel that was written by Arcady Strugatski appeared in 1956. It was BIKINI'S ASHES and was co-written by L., Petrov¹⁵. This novel wasn't SF. Subsequently the brothers Strugatski created many famous literary works. They published their first SF stories in 1958.

The next year they published their first SF novel, IN THE LAND OF THE CRIMSON CLOUDS. The novel received third prize in the competition for the best book about science and engineering for youth (the first prize was won by Efremov's ANDROMEDA). It was the first and only State prize for the brothers Strugatski,¹⁶ but they have had many other prizes from readers. The International Small Planets Centre (Cambridge, USA) conferred to a small planet (3054) the name Strugatskia-1977 RE7. (The planet was discovered the 11th of September 1977 by the astronomer N. S. Cherkasov)¹⁷. This fact, and also the other international prizes testify to the international recognition of the brothers Strugatski's creativity. Khrushchev's thaw gave the brothers Strugatski a free hand. (N. S. Khrushchev, who was Stalin's brother-in-arms, after coming to power moved away from the former repressive policy and gave indulgences to culture and the arts). "Khrushchev's thaw period in the sphere of mind was the time of "romantic communism"", wrote A. Stolyarov, "Communism was a faith, but not a theory; it was a Kingdom of God on Earth and, as any faith, it does not allow critique or analysis".¹⁸

The thaw passed quickly and a lot of Strugatski's works didn't suit the authorities' taste. Their novel TROIKA'S TALE was published as an abridged edition in 1966 and its next release had to wait till 1987. It was thus because this novel was a sharp lampoon of bureaucracy. But the first part of the novel MONDAY BEGINS SATURDAY, in which criticism was disguised, had been in print all through. The book THE UGLY SWANS was written in 1967 but was published 20 years later. The novel SNAIL ON A HILLSIDE (1968) was published in a complete form in 1988. Before 1988 this novel, which "was the most intelligent and most important novel of the 20th Century" (A. Zerkalov) was published in sections (THE FOREST and THE MANAGEMENT) in different parts of the country. It was published in the collection ELLIN'S SECRET, Leningrad, 1966 and in the magazine BAIKAL #1 and 2, 1968. THE DOOMED TOWN (1969) was also published in 1988. This doesn't mean that the brothers Strugatski's novels were not known to readers. The

Samizdat¹⁹ (a typical Russian phenomenon) made all these books relatively accessible (see also the supplement II to Chapter 4). But none of the State publishing houses wanted to publish the Strugatski's works, for although they didn't encroach upon the ideals of communism, they did lance boils....

The brothers Strugatski were out of favour and their works were secretly prohibited. However, there was a continuing persecution which took place, even by some writers. "The second part (of ITS DIFFICULT TO BE A GOD) and the first part (of THE DISTANT RAINBOW) only confuse our youth and they do not help them to understand the development of mankind's laws", wrote the writer V. Nemtsov. "We are all, the citizens of this socialist society, more benevolent and humane than the characters of Strugatski's works. We partake in the course of historical events, we help people who fight for liberty and for national independence. And we shall do so as long as we have any revolutionary spirit."²⁰

The science fiction writer V. Nemtsov had political, not literary grievances against the science fiction writers the brothers Strugatski. But, as Kir Bulichev said, "... the offensive language only frightened the officials". An intelligent book has always been a terrible thing for communist rulers. In the novel IT'S DIFFICULT TO BE A GOD, the brothers Strugatski warned people of the danger of interfering in other people's destiny. However, the Power which is always ready to support any revolution in any part of the world didn't like this warning of danger. I. Efremov answered V. Nemtsov. He wrote: "The novel IT'S DIFFICULT TO BE A GOD I consider as the best literary work of Soviet SF of late"²¹.

It was later in the 60's that there was a boom in SF (it was the second boom after the 20's). Dozens of books were published, the annual FANTASTICA was commenced, and the series of books The Library of Modern Fantasy became a model for other countries. The active science fiction writers were I. Efremov, G. Gurevitch, A. Strugatski, B. Strugatski, V. Savchenko, S. Gansovski, O. Larionova, A. Gromova, father and son Abramovs, A. Kazantsev, V. Michnovksi, A. Dneprov, S. Snegov, G. Altov, G. Gor, I. Varshavski, E. Parnov, E. Voiskuski, L. Lagin, L. Lukodyanov and many others. The Soviet readers got the chance to read some foreign author's works. (This chance was, certainly, restricted by "ideological opinions".)

This did have an unexpected effect. As J. Grekov wrote, "... these circumstances caused a sharp polarisation of the two layers of our fantasy. Hack literature immediately seized on the new examples and in a large number of works, which resembled one another, appeared a lot of Toms and Johns with laser rifles"²². However, acquaintance with ideas from foreign science fiction was of great significance for the development of Soviet SF. At the time of the boom (in the 60's) many fan clubs were springing up. The fan clubs in Moscow, Charkov, Tbilisi and Saratov started in 1961-72. (Taratoo club, "The Reflection", is the oldest in our country. It dates from 1965 and is still active). It, as M. Yakubovski considered, was the first wave of fandom.

"However, clubs which were born spontaneously now died spontaneously, and for different reasons. In some cases enthusiasm vanished because they were depressed by the mercenary spirit, and confirmed booklovers became "stingy knights" of books. In other cases enthusiasm blazed without warmth and it's fervour couldn't kindle an interest in social organisation. Besides, the basis of fan clubs were students, who often lost interest. This didn't contribute to the longevity of fan clubs"²³.

By the time of the second wave, the fan clubs were created mainly with the help of newspapers, where science fiction stories were published from time to time. (Such fan clubs were Rifei (Perm²⁴), Fant (Chabarovsk), Kluf (Stavropol), Alfant (Kaliningrad) and all the others.) The small editorial board for SF literature²⁵ in the publishing house "Molodaya Gvardia" ("The Young Guard") that belonged to the Central Committee of the Soviet Young Communist League (KOMSOMOL) was of great importance for the development of science fiction at that time. "All the trends of modern Soviet science fiction were developed and clearly defined by that editorial board alone. All writers who produced literature after the appearance of the novel ANDROMEDA received their first baptism of fire by that small editorial board. That board also created the boom in the 60's," wrote A. Strugatski.²⁶

So, now we can summarize. During the period of time from the 50's to the end of the 60's the intellectual emptiness of Soviet SF was overcome, the "near future" principle was thrown out and science fiction works again became works of art; many brilliant writers appeared, large numbers of fan clubs arose and it was becoming easier for anyone to be published. Wasn't that great? If only!....

NOTES:

1. S. I. Grabovski. Stalin and Science Fiction . CHERNOBILIZATION, #4,5. Kiev, 1992.
2. Words from a popular song of that time.
3. Ibidem, p.8
4. Ibidem, p.9
5. I. A. Kolchenki. The Limits of Fantasy, in a collection, SANATORIUM, series The Compass Points of Fantasy, Moscow, 1989, p. 342
6. Juri Medvedev, The Light over Darkness Lake, in the book IN THE WORLD OF FANTASY, Moscow, 1989, pp.103-4.
7. J. Medvedev, Ibidem, p.103-4.
8. J. Medvedev, Ibidem, p.109.
9. "The father of astronautics" believed in cosmic strangers (or did he know about them?). Once K. Tsiolkovski made a curious note on the letter that was sent to him from Tomsk city by a student, A. Jutkin. He wrote, "The high creator's endeavours to help us are possible because they are continuing even now." (ON THE BRINK OF THE IMPOSSIBLE, #9, 1992, p.2).
10. T. A. Chernishova, "The Nature of Fantasy", IRKUTSK, 1984, p.318.
11. From the book IN THE WORLD OF FANTASY, Moscow, 1989, p.232.
12. J. Medvedev, Ibidem, p.103.
13. "The Arguments and Facts", #18 (May 1992). "Who was Ivan Efremov?"
14. OGENEK #31-33. (August, 1992), p.4.
15. It's interesting that Z. Petrov's wife was Mr Khrushchev's (one time leader of the USSR) grand-daughter.
16. I. Efremov still received the State prize as a scientist for his work on paleontology (THE TAPHONOMY AND GEOLOGY CHRONICLE).
17. THE MEASURE F, #3, 1990, p.21.
18. THE LITERARY REVIEW, #5, 1990, p.40.
19. The underground publishing house.
20. V. Nemtsov. "For Whom do Fantasists write?", the newspaper IZVESTIA, 19th January 1966.
21. The newspaper KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA, Jan 22, 1966.
22. T. Grekov. Afterword to the collection "In the Circle of Light", KISHINEV, 1989, p. 683.
23. Bor Bagalyak. THE LITERATURE REVIEW #2, 1984, pp.94-5.
24. The names of cities are in brackets.
25. The chiefs of this editorial board were Mr Gemaitis and Mrs B. Klueva.
26. A. Strugatski, B. Strugatski, THE STATE OF LITERARY SF, 1986 (MSS).

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A PERSONAL REFERENCE LIBRARY ON A BUDGET

by James Verran

DICTIONARIES: the bare essentials.

Dictionaries, like encyclopedias, change very little from year to year. For the most part, updated versions remain unaltered except for words which have wormed their way into the language through popular usage. Because many good dictionaries (and nearly all the bad ones) are also published in paperback versions, it is possible to own a very comprehensive, recent edition for a modest outlay.

It is good practice to "road test" a volume before laying out the "ready". The ideal is a book that will open easily with good access to the centre columns of adjacent pages. Stiffly bound volumes that require two hands to hold open should be avoided. A dictionary with the highest number of head-words per dollar and clear print is preferable.

Pocket-sized dictionaries are seldom comprehensive enough and often too "fiddly" for a busy writer; although, some "pocket" dictionaries must have been named with pocket battleships in mind.

If the budget will stretch, buy top of the range for use as a master dictionary and an easier to handle, soft cover version for everyday use. The cheaper, everyday book will wear out within a few years and can be replaced by a newer edition. The more comprehensive master dictionary will last much longer, but after fifteen to twenty years that too will need updating.

While the Macquarie Dictionaries are shunned by some writers, for no apparent reason than the *Australian Cringe*, they provide an excellent reference source for unusual words and alternative spellings. Unfortunately, The Budget MACQUARIE DICTIONARY (telephone book size) is no longer produced. In its day it was about the best value for money dictionary available. Okay, so it wasn't classy, but its words per dollar made it a winner. The modern MACQUARIES are available in all popular sizes with prices to match.

Another fine dictionary for the Aussie writer is the CONCISE OXFORD AUSTRALIAN DICTIONARY of Current English (price unavailable) published by the Oxford University

Press, Melbourne. Flexibly bound in hard-cover, it is just the right size and less ambiguous than most Oz dictionaries. What appears to be an updated version of the above, is the CONCISE OXFORD AUSTRALIAN DICTIONARY (hard cover, \$34.95 - compact, soft cover, \$12.95). The "OXFORDS" are not always readily available, but their consistently high standard of presentation makes them worth ordering.

Although not dictionaries in the accepted sense, The OXFORD WRITERS' AND EDITORS' GUIDE (SOFT COVER, \$17.95 TO \$24.95 depending on where you shop) and the COLLINS ENGLISH SPELLING DICTIONARY are extremely valuable writers' tools. The OXFORD WRITERS' AND EDITORS' GUIDE clarifies many areas of spelling and style (someone has to arbitrate) and the COLLINS ENGLISH SPELLING DICTIONARIES (soft cover, \$14.95) provides a convenient, alphabetical list of acknowledged spelling. The OXFORD AUSTRALIAN COMPACT SPELLER (\$4.95), while quite small, just begs to sit beside the typewriter or word processor keyboard.

ROGET'S THESAURUS seems to have been done by about every publisher at some time or other and paperback versions from various, obscure publishers can be had cheaply. Although a comprehensive resource for alternative words, phrases and idioms, its system of cross referencing is a bit unwieldy.

The NEW COLLINS DICTIONARY & THESAURUS (hard cover, \$39.95) is clearly printed, with alphabetically arranged thesaurus entries at the foot of each page. Despite its comparatively high price, the two-in-one format makes it an excellent choice as a master dictionary/thesaurus. The COLLINS CONCISE DICTIONARY & THESAURUS (soft cover, \$19.95), is somewhat smaller, but better suited to a keyboard companion role.

Although the two-in-one format is becoming the standard, separate dictionaries are preferable. A pair of smaller books is easier to handle and often more individually comprehensive than a combined volume.

Foreign language dictionaries are an asset to monolingual writers who need to introduce foreign words or phrases into story dialogue. Apart from pre-owned, school and college textbooks, the Collins GEM Series currently offers the most affordable, foreign language library. Even the fascinating, Greek/English dictionary, with its "Greek as she is written" entries, can be understood with a little cerebral application. Overall, the GEM Series is well worth owning. At \$6.95 a volume, they may be purchased singly, as required.

A major inconvenience in the above dictionaries is the system of International Phonetic Alphabet Symbols used as a guide to pronunciation. This clever innovation is a pain unless the key to its code is reproduced as a footnote on every page. For sheer simplicity, the system used by Avon Books in their OXFORD AMERICAN DICTIONARY should be given consideration for colloquial (kolokwial) publications.

The cost of building a businesslike collection of reference books, whether dictionaries or "how to"s, can be alleviated with a little cunning. Relatives maybe browbeaten, or otherwise "trained" to give gift vouchers for presents: all large book retailers sell them. Why not suggest that several

family members "chip in" to save themselves the trouble of gift hunting? Libraries sometimes sell off surplus editions and by arriving early, good clean copies may be acquired at realistic prices. Watch the local papers for upcoming school and charity jumble sales, they are well worth a browse.

The canny buyer will find most reference books are considerably cheaper prior to the release of later editions. To illustrate this point, the hard cover COAD, mentioned previously, was recently on sale in a major book store for \$19.95. Check the book and stationery shelves of supermarkets. Discount book sellers often have piles of remaindered and liquidation stock.

Membership of a reputable, mail order book club is a good way to acquire pre-release editions at member rates. Be aware that such clubs often charge a flat rate for packing and postage; one book may cost as much to mail as several. This may negate any cost advantage if purchasing a single book. There are unlimited possibilities for the dedicated book junkie, so check out *all* potential sources frequently.

- James Verran

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #17 (cont. from page 5)

It was a cool day, broken by occasional heat spells. High temperature ranged from 50° to 80°, but mostly on the low side. And wet side.

The Miesels visited May 30, Memorial Day, "to get away from that damned race". The Indianapolis 500 draws mobs of people into the city; all the hotels are filled, as well as hotels in smaller towns up to 70 miles from Indianapolis. Traffic is fierce, as in noise. It's great for the city's finances; not so great for residents who have no interest in auto racing.

John and I worked on my target backstop, which needed work after a windstorm pretty well ruined it. It's going to be good and solid now; Juanita commented that people driving by will think we're building some sort of monument back there. (Probably a pagan one; we're the county oddballs. But people are friendly; there isn't the distrust of anything different that a lot of authors attribute to rural residents. The locals don't want to do the same things we do, but they don't care if we do them, as long as it doesn't interfere with their own activities.)

- Buck Coulson

FROM HUDDERSFIELD TO THE STARS (cont from page 7)

been Calvert's intention - for example "Even music had no discord here", there were "no pompous idlers vain,/None having here invented usury" and, as specific evidence of the way science had progressed, not only was it true that "Stronomic science compassed the fixed stars", but also weathermen had at last achieved accurate forecasting (in Calvert's words "... slightest change for heat, or rain or dew,/For days before it came, was certain known.").

In this utopia, not only animals but even "The finny tribes" were tractable in response to a race "free from slightest wrong ... love their guiding law."

An attractive picture is drawn of the setting chosen for "high festivals/Commemorative of the distant time/When the first pair awoke to life and bliss" including a "crystal lake ... the rising banks ... gemmed with works of art", and a sheltering ring of mountains, even on whose miles high summits "Doth verdue smile, and mansions crown their crowns!"

Like many an intentional writer of SF, Calvert has wrought this far-future verbal paradise only to (lengthily, indeed over-lengthily) labour page by page to destroy its

peace and happiness - albeit in his case with the aim of its truer salvation much later!

Before leaving the subject of "Proto-SF" among 19th C poets published in the Huddersfield area, however, one final instance deserves mention. Writing in 1895, the same year that H. G. Wells' TIME MACHINE was published, James Walker in THE ETERNAL AND OTHER POEMS, gave us lines which, whether or not its author knew Wells' new book or had instead come by some quite independent path to his imagery, seem to encapsulate the essence of that great SFnal theme, the challenge and wonder of Time itself, as well as causing to reflect on the indirect way such rivulets of imagery have, however indirectly, gathered to lead to what we now regard as an established genre of SF poetry.

"And all our galaxies and milky-way
Would dwindle to a dubious starry spray...
And time is but a tiny bubble on
A sea without a shore."

END

JET-ACE LOGAN: THE NEXT GENERATION

by Andrew Darlington

The Making of "Terror From Moon 33"

Two things conspired to wreck my adolescent chances of academic success. One was Elvis Presley. The other was JET-ACE LOGAN. Like some kind of encyclographic print-out of my puberty years the convoluted exploits of the "Space Command" Pilot of the Future both mapped and ghosted the highs and lows of my own intellectual development. While I should have been studying for academe I was living in picture strips dazzled by molten lava-pools on Mercury, dodging lethal acid-mists on Venus, weaving through the asteroids and way out beyond the rings of Saturn, compiling charts of favourite serials, sketching in my own additions to them, memorising and cross-referencing the internal continuity of the Solar System as it would be exactly one hundred years into my own personal tomorrows

Jet-Ace Logan began in COMET (8th September 1956) when I was eight, and although initially attracted by the lavish front page use of gravure colour illustrating Buffalo Bill's Western action my brief Cowboy phase was rapidly eclipsed by the allure of the monochrome SF on the pages within. The first long serial was illustrated by Geoff Campion, but by 1957 a series of sharp fast-paced six-part David Motton scripts were shocked to life by John Gillatt whose genius for creating strong characters placed Logan a cut above his contemporaries. Space heroes were not exactly scarce in the mid-fifties. Although the unprecedented explosion of Dan Dare had rocketed the genre into overdrive he was well into decline by the time I was old enough to take notice, Captain Condor (in LION) was seldom served by sympathetic art-work, Rick Random (SUPER DETECTIVE LIBRARY) and Space Ace (LONE STAR) lacked distribution, while Jet Morgan, tied to the BBC Light Programme serials lacked longevity. But Logan, restricted story-wise to the Solar System, explored each world in turn, was menaced from the stars and got kidnapped to the stars, time-travelled or shifted sideways into alternate universes, and he ignited my imagination.

Published anonymously it was only through - at first, fan letters, then correspondence, and finally interviews that I was able to allocate names. I'd been reading Ken Bulmer and Michael Moorcock fiction in novels and adult magazines (like NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY) long before

discovering it was Bulmer who'd written the Jet-Ace Logan serial about simultaneous electrical storms on both planets "transmitting" dragons from Saturn to Earth. The story appeared weekly in TIGER after "Fleetway" had swallowed COMET around the time I moved from primary to secondary education. And later I learned that two of the fifteen THRILLER PICTURE LIBRARY graphic novels featuring Logan were the result of Michael Moorcock's scripts illuminated by Ron Turner art. Both of them were excellent examples of visual Science Fiction; TIMES FIVE takes Logan's crew into the heart of a comet where, inside an alien spacecraft, they discover a matter duplicating device. While POWER FROM NOWHERE uses an experimental faster-than-light drive to visit a variety of worlds superbly envisaged by Turner whose fascinating concepts of extraterrestrial architecture and dramatic statuary adds dimensions of reality to the plot.

Logan enjoyed his best years in TIGER courtesy of the amazing inventive Frank S Pepper; until the adventures ceased 22 August 1964 - although reprints carried the name into the 1970's. I'd moved into alternate realities by then. John Gillatt went on to illustrate DAN DARE in the EAGLE relaunch, and is now working on SCORER for the DAILY MIRROR. Ron Turner - who'd earlier done superb SF book jackets, went on to 2000 AD and JUDGE DREDD. Frank S Pepper, with whom I was privileged to enjoy and long and rewarding correspondence, died in November 1988.

This project - TERROR FROM MOON 33, is an act of love. In the spirit of Grant Morrison's recent DARE, it's an ironic recreation and an affectionate tribute magiced into hyperdrive by Ron Turner's exquisite collaboration. His creative input - see the detailed action reflected in the space helmet, the duplicated moonlet exterior on the cabin monitor, the formation of three concentric circles making up the title lay-out, are a joy to me.

I'd never get to sing back-up on an Elvis Presley single.

But writing this JET-ACE LOGAN story with Michael Moorcock's original Logan artist Ron Turner is the closest equivalent I can imagine.

- Andrew Darlington

IN DEPTH #7

by **Bill Congreve**

In April I had the pleasure of driving to Perth for Swancon 18, the Australian National Convention held over the Easter weekend. I don't want to say too much about the convention for half the people reading this probably attended and the other half would probably find it boring. So just a couple of quick takes. Terry Pratchett was a charming, accessible and very witty GoH. There wasn't much of interest on the business side of SF. It is possibly the largest convention held in Australia outside of either of the Worldcons held in Melbourne. I'll let other people argue about that. My guess at attendance was about 350 full timers. Every night after the convention I wandered back to the Newcastle St YHA where, by one of those happy coincidences that travellers often find, I could join in a loud, happy and drunken game of team Scrabble until 4am. Who said Perth was a foreign culture isolated from the rest of the nation?

I found the drive across the Nullarbor Plain boringly civilized. So much for the two jerrycans of petrol and tank of water I took along. It even rained on the way home! The furthest distance between petrol stations was about 193 kms, and that was the last bit before reaching Norseman, WA. Every gas station has a motel, caravan park and souvenir shop. And WA has these amazing ten metre tall red broccoli shaped eucalypts. Of course I'm referring to mallee scrub, but gee its pretty when there's a bit of iron oxide in the soil!

Here are a couple of interesting observations. The Royal Flying Doctor Service emergency landing strips along the route are marked out on the highway itself. Great fun if you're in a rush from Perth to Adelaide and one of the locals gets acute appendicitis! The cliffs at the head of The Great Australian Bight are one of those icons that must be recognised in order to understand the "bush legend" endemic in early Australian popular culture; now I know why Sean McMullen wrote CALL TO THE EDGE. A glass recycler would have a wet-dream looking at the amount of glass sitting along the roadside waiting for some intrepid person to go and pick it all up. The population density of rabbits across the Nullarbor must be approaching one rabbit per fifty metres square.

A final observation: I'm convinced that there is a conspiracy amongst Australian truck drivers to create, by the process of "interactive evolution", an intelligent species of kangaroo.

They're trying it for rabbits too, but in that case I'm sure they have less chance of success.

#

WEIRD FAMILY TALES; Ken Wisman; collection; 1993; 66+vi pp; Earth Prime Productions; paperback?; \$3.95 (US).

Some nice people in the US sent Ron galleys of this small press chapbook. The address is PO Box 29127, Parma, OH 44129, USA. Hence this review.

Weird Family Tales posits the author, as first person narrator and hero of these stories, in the context of a family that commonly suffers from supernatural manifestations.

There is a long tradition for this sort of thing. William Hope Hodgson was one of the earliest writers with his CARNACKI THE GHOST HUNTER stories. Another competent writer in the field is Australia's Rick Kennett whose fictional hero, Ernie Pine, is also a reluctant ghost hunter.

Wisman's character is also a reluctant hero. But the reluctance is a surface manifestation only for it is obvious that his hero enjoys these confrontations just as much as his creator enjoyed writing them.

Of the seven stories, five have previously appeared in other small press horror publications in the US. The stories are prefaced by short and cryptic introductions which, while they often give away ideas and endings, work to lead the reader on into the story. My own favorite is the story of Brother Endle, who found, cared for and then fell in love with a six foot butterfly. Then there is Brother Senechelle who created his own destiny in a love of music, Uncle Endrik who confronts his past, Captain Seofon, whose ancestors have marital problems of a nautical nature...

Wisman has been widely published in SF and Fantasy magazines around the world, and three of these stories were nominated for Bram Stoker awards for short stories. (The Bram Stoker Awards are handed out by the Horror Writers of America.) Gee if I had a family like this I wouldn't know whether to take lessons from Ernie Pine or go hide under the bedclothes. Mixed with it all is a delightful sense of political incorrectness as Ken Wisman rescues his family with a vodka martini clenched firmly in one hand.

Light, escapist and very enjoyable.

#

THE BURLESQUE OF FRANKENSTEIN; George Isaacs; Graham Stone (pub); 30+x pp; hardback; burlesque script; 1989; \$12.95 (Aust).

Both this item and the next have been published as a labour of love by long time Sydney SF enthusiast, 2nd hand bookseller and publisher Graham Stone.

THE BURLESQUE OF FRANKENSTEIN was first published by its author, George Isaacs, as part of a longer book RHYME AND PROSE, AND A BURLESQUE AND ITS HISTORY, first published in 1865. Isaacs was a figure better known for his satirical journalism (under the by-line A. Pendragon), and a novel THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH, the first novel published in South Australia.

THE BURLESQUE OF FRANKENSTEIN was intended for a music hall theatrical production, but for reasons which Isaacs goes into in his introduction, it never reached fruition. He published it in the hope that it would find its way back to England, be produced there, and then be "copied" by Australian theatrical producers for the stage in Australia. While explaining this, Isaacs refers to the work as "original" (in context with other Australian burlesque productions which were stolen from their original UK productions) but, as Stone notes in an afterword, there had already been several theatrical productions of Frankenstein in the UK. Not to mention the original novel. Therefore, this version of Frankenstein must be accepted for what it is, another music hall comedy adaptation of the original novel.

Having said that, the script is very witty, full of horrible puns (which seems to be the style of the day) and such lines as:

Oh! I'll tell mamma I saw you kissing Joe,
And I'll tell Joe I saw Jim kissing you.

and:

To prove a foot's a hand, as if when proved,
A man would be a monkey once removed.

Isaacs is faithful to the spirit of the Frankenstein mythology even if not to the word of Shelley's novel and he has enormous fun with the song, dance and wordplay of this work.

A note for collectors. THE BURLESQUE OF FRANKENSTEIN is one of many such productions from the middle of last century, but may be the only to survive, simply because the author took the trouble to see it in print. It is also reminiscent of a part of popular culture that has receded in importance around the world with the advent of movies and radio. Quite apart from this inherent interest, I enjoyed the work for its own sake. The book is only short but this first edition has been beautifully stitched and hardbound by the publisher: Graham Stone, GPO Box 4440, Sydney, 2001.

#

THE INNER DOMAIN; Phil Collas; Graham Stone (pub); 35 pp; hardback; novelette; 1989; \$12.95 (Aust).

This story creaks a little around the edges to a reader from the 90s, but it is of interest to collectors because it may be the first story sold to a US science fiction magazine by an author resident in Australia. It was first published in the October 1935 AMAZING. Due to the suspicious loss of

another couple of manuscripts, and because of his interest in other subjects, the author wrote no more SF.

THE INNER DOMAIN is typical of much SF from the period. There is little or no characterisation. We see no further into the hero, Winslow, than that he is a hardworking mining engineer with a bit of curiosity. The action is described rather than shown - also typical of the time. However there are ideas hanging out all over the place and the background is well conceived and described. The story is little more than a travelogue of the experiences of the characters. It concerns includes time travel, two unknown underground civilisations, and a mysterious race of monsters whose genesis is never explained; however the fate of these civilisations and their interaction with the mainstream of humanity on the Earth's surface moves quite logically. It is this story, rather than Winslow's experiences that is the point of THE INNER DOMAIN.

As with THE BURLESQUE OF FRANKENSTEIN it has been photocopied from the original publication (sometimes poorly) and beautifully bound by the publisher. This is the first edition of its independent publication. For collectors and historians of Australian SF.

#

I just saw on TV a few shorts of a highly derivative Michael Douglas film called Falling Down, directed (I think) by a guy called Schumacher. Apparently all the critics love its serious treatment of the frustrations of dealing with today's bureaucracy. Have a look at it and then go and read Stephen King's ROADWORK, one of the Bachman books, and write Ron a LOC about King's inability to garner serious critical recognition.

#

AUREALIS No 10; Strasser and Higgins, editors; Chimaera Publications; 88 pp; magazine; \$6.95.

So which is the better magazine, AUREALIS or EIDOLON? My feeling is that EIDOLON's general standard is higher, but at least once every couple of issues AUREALIS reaches a higher standard than any yet reached by its competition. Is competition the right word? Their co-existence proves the magazines complement each other.

AUREALIS no. 10 features the usual three colour cover art with all the inherent restrictions that go with that format. I found the cover intriguing, but rather static and unexciting. The interiors give a much stronger idea of the kind of artwork favoured by the editors. Given that AUREALIS is sold on newsstand as well as by subscription you would expect this to be the other way around. The interior b&w illustrations are generally excellent and augur well for the future of Australia's SF artists. The interior layout is not quite as well done and is often untidy with pages of uneven length.

On to the stories. DEFECT, by Misha Kumashov leads off the issue. This reprises an old theme of insanity on an isolated planetary outpost. The comic interest of a robot programmed to imitate a psychotic French chef was a bit much, but it served its purpose as diversion. Darren Goossens' story of the moral dilemma forced on an only child in a broken marriage is set against a background of ecological catastrophe. This is the strongest story in the book and I found the ending fitting and just. Janet Fennell's TOO MUCH

TO REMEMBER makes a point about the conflict of new and old science, and mankind's ability to absorb new science. John Jarvis's horror story, THE RETRIBUTION OF GEORGE POOLE, is a not particularly new treatment of a very old idea. An immoral businessman picks up a hitch-hiker who is more, or less, than he seems to be.

Michael Pryor's IT'S ALL IN THE WAY YOU LOOK AT IT is suitably bizarre and ironic. It got a little too clever with plot twists and one-liners towards the end and as a result lost its feeling for its characters and the identification of the reader. 'BY STARS ABOVE by Mentor regular, Blair Hunt, made its point but seemed a little compressed. Sophia Peters beautifully retells the tale of Scheherazade in ONE FINAL STORY, not only her first sale, but the first story she has submitted to a professional magazine. Watch for her by-line in the future.

That's about it for the fiction. Not their best, but some effective pieces. A bunch of fairly new writers; easily the two strongest stories are from writers making their first sales (Goossens and Peters). As with a lot of Aussie SF, these are often moral fables with predetermined endings that use SF conventions without telling a story. This is both a good thing and a bad thing. Good, because a sprinkling of this kind of story provides variety and this is often the kind of writing new authors produce, but bad because it is very limiting in nature to a writer's talents and a magazine can easily be swamped with this sort of material. But AUREALIS traditionally has provided a home for new writers while our more experienced writers are moving on to novels and better paying overseas magazines.

After the fiction comes reviews of George Turner's BRAINCHILD and Paul Voermans' AND DISREGARDS THE REST, followed by the author bios. An uneven issue, not up to the standards of their issue 8, but still eminently readable.

Chimaera Publications, PO Box 538, Mt Waverley, Vic 3149, Australia. Subscriptions are \$24 per year in Australia. Overseas subs are \$31 seairmail and \$39 airmail, less for NZ.

#

EIDOLON No 11; Richard Scriven, Jonathan Scriven and Jeremy Byrne (eds); Eidolon Publications; 96 pp; magazine; \$6.95.

This is the issue produced to carry the Eidolon flag at Swancon 18. I say this because it is vastly superior to No 10, almost as if they had held over the better stories, and because it has a very strong West Australian slant.

EIDOLON is a perfect bound, digest sized small press magazine with a low print run and production standards as high as anything in the SF world. The subscriber's copies all have a black cover with nothing but the Eidolon logo. Bookshop copies are white, with the same logo, and the words "EIDOLON: The Journal of Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy". The printing on the spine is some kind of gold stamp which, on my copies at least, has faded to illegibility by the time I've read it. The first two issues of EIDOLON have got to be about the most collectable items in Australian SF at the moment.

No 11 is the Greg Egan special issue. THE MORAL VIROLOGIST has been reprinted from one of the Pulphouse "hardback" magazines. It's an effective tale of the ethical degeneracy of an evangelistic scientist on a crusade to save

the world's morality. Above everything else Egan is a believer in logic, and his fiction is an example of the way he thinks. Following this is an extensive and illuminating interview with Egan, and then a bibliography of his work. Simply for the above items this issue of Eidolon is destined to become a collector's item.

Following the Egan stuff comes Duncan Evans with an effective and amusing circus tale, ELROY'S NEW ROUTINE. Sean McMullen then does a long spiel on West Australian SF writers and their published work. He does a good job but the piece is limited from not having had any personal input from the writers covered.

WHITE CHRISTMAS by Sean Williams confirms my suspicion that the author doesn't like Adelaide. His original concept for INTIMATE ARMAGEDDONS was to flood the city, now in this EIDOLON story he has drowned it under an avalanche of microscopic alien von Neuman machines that eat anything dead. Or perhaps this is Sean's way of expressing affection. Loved the story.

EMPATHY by Steve Woodman is a murder mystery with hi-tec by Steve Woodman that suffers a little by chopping quickly between scenes that aren't fully realised. META CARCINOMA by Chris Lawson is an effective medical SF story.

The fiction in this issue is of quite a high standard, easily the best they've done for a few issues. If EIDOLON can continue to attract stories of this quality then their continued slow but steady growth is assured.

EIDOLON also provides an interesting range of non-fiction. The film reviews are done by the stylish Robin Pen who won this year's Ditmar for fan writing. Robin is just as cogent, informed and angry an observer as Harlan Ellison, but perhaps more stylish. He occasionally loses track of his arguments in the impressive flow of words he builds around them, but the result is always entertaining.

There is EIDOLON's annual but not-quite-exhaustive list of Australian SF, Fantasy, and Horror published in 1992. For some reason it includes stories published in EOD where the author has other listings (Kennett, Williams) but ignores better stories from the same magazine. They usually publish a review column but that has been replaced this issue by the Egan interview and the In Print listing mentioned above.

Eidolon Publications, PO Box 225, North Perth, West Australia. Subs \$24 in Australia, \$44 airmail overseas, \$34 surface mail overseas. Cheques made payable to Richard Scriven.

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THE SPECIALIST; Wynne Whiteford; novel; 1990; 246 + viii pp; Ace paperback; \$3.95 (US).

This is Whiteford's sixth novel from Ace. Reading it was a very frustrating experience.

Three of Whiteford's earlier novels, BREATHING SPACE ONLY, SAPPHIRE ROAD and THOR'S HAMMER were first published in Australia by Cory & Collins before being reprinted by Ace as part of a multi-book deal. These three novels cover a range of themes from the breakdown of society, to space colonisation and first contact. SAPPHIRE ROAD, which reads like halves of two entirely separate and quite complete novels, is the most ambitious of these books. Whiteford has a habit of shifting locations, secondary

characters, background and themes in the middle of a novel, leaving the reader unsatisfied and the plot structure of the first half not only unresolved, but entirely irrelevant to the fate of his central character. This is partly the problem with THE SPECIALIST.

THE SPECIALIST opens with reporter Lance Garrith flying himself and his camera-man from Australia to Hawaii to interview an astronomer who has discovered an object in a strange orbit near Mars. With the interview conducted the pair fly back to Australia where Garrith prepares his rather sensationalist news programme. There is a threat against his life, and while the show goes to air (live), a fruitcake with a pistol of advanced and unknown manufacture is arrested in the audience.

The style is always fairly competent, the dialogue is clear, if lifeless, the physical backgrounds are clearly drawn. My largest problem is with the plotting and the characters. Garrith is sent off to Mars by his boss to cover what may become the biggest story in human history - first contact! It will take Garrith six months to reach Mars. And in the meantime Solar News is going to sit on their arses and risk losing their scoop simply because they want one journalist rather than another to cover it? While there are open communication links between Earth and Mars available for the use of anybody with a story to tell to a rival? This is the point, very early in the book, where Whiteford lost me. He makes some attempt to cover it by saying that Solar News "controls the news set-up from the Martian end", but who owns a story that any man and his dog has the means and opportunity to tell?

The plot is full of little breaks in logic. Garrith knows his person has been violated in an illegal operation to install a body control and bugging device. Okay, he suspects the device is dangerous to remove, but he makes no effort to even attempt having the device investigated. Then he keeps screwing the woman responsible. Then he allows another girlfriend to move in and live with the people he knows are guilty? Some people are allowed to make real-time "phone" conversations from a space ship while others must record what they want to say on a "disk" that is then broadcast? These are just a couple of examples. Whiteford's characters are often dragged by their noses through plot devices that both make them appear idiots and which are totally irrelevant to the larger scheme of the book.

The above problems would be less obvious if enough care had been taken with the characters so that they were able to drive the plot, rather than vice-versa. But Garrith, and every other major character, remains an unemotional tool.

In the early parts of THE SPECIALIST, Whiteford introduces a lot of new technology without showing how this technology affects either society or individuals. It is this apparent early fault which leads into the ideas that save the novel. Whiteford is comparing the old attitudes of a static Earth society with the new society on Mars which is driven, often in wildly different directions, by perceived excellence, ruthless intelligence, and high technology. Martian society is a technocratic anarchy, very nearly lawless. My own favorite

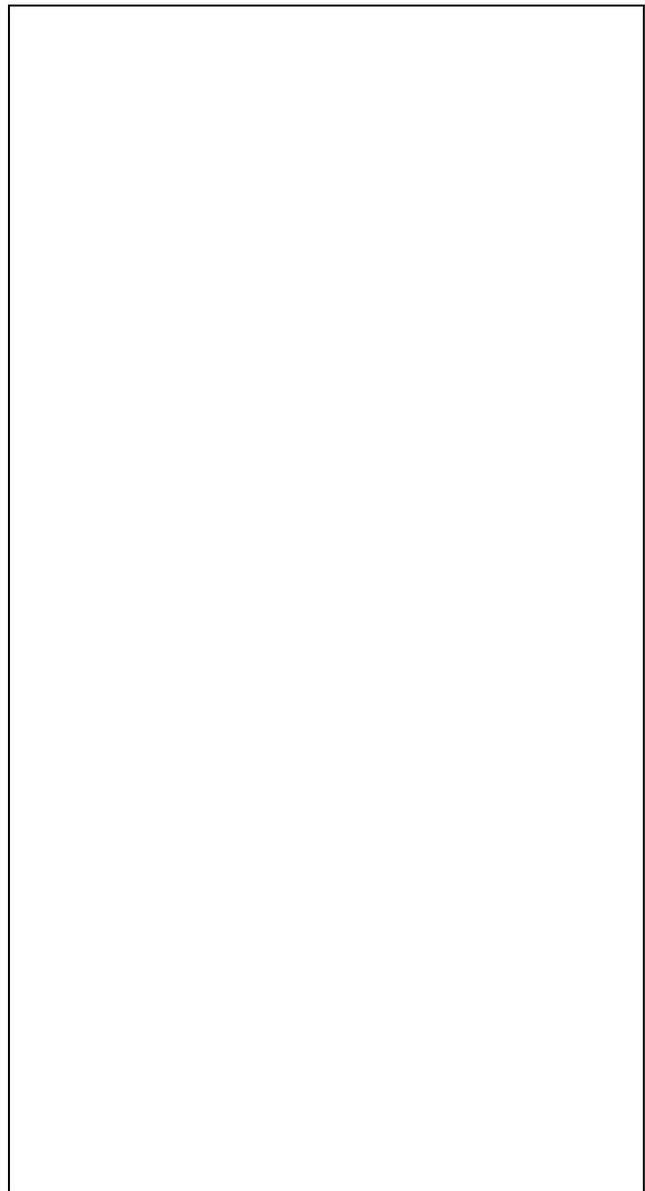
concept from this part of the novel is the family of clones whose older members are supported by cybernetics.

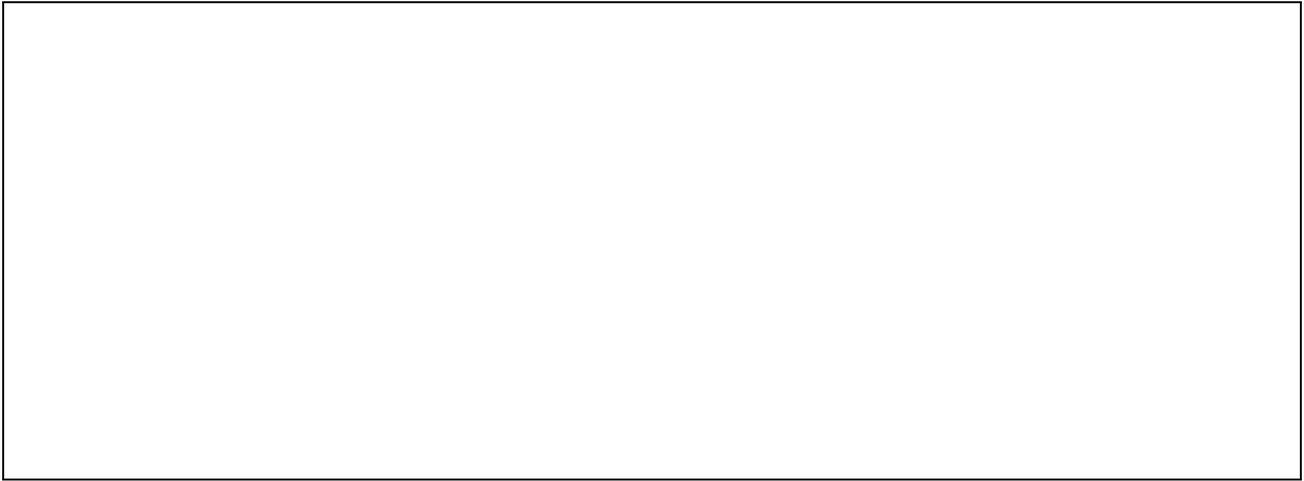
Whiteford's ideas come to the rescue of THE SPECIALIST, but be prepared to slog through a mishmash of poorly conceived plot devices to reach them.

#

Next issue we're right into the heavyweights. Books to be reviewed include Terry Lane's factional GOD: The Interview, Leigh Blackmore's eagerly awaited horror anthology TERROR AUSTRALIS, Damien Brodericks's THE SEA'S FURTHEST EDGE and Lucy Sussex's MY LADY TONGUE & OTHER TALES.

- Bill Congreve





ELIZABETH GARROTT, PO Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281, USA.

Bill Congreve: I fully agree that Game-world fiction is probably the worst subgenre of professionally-published SF/Fantasy. It is, of course, a subset of "franchise" or "rent-a-world" fiction, which in turn is a subset of "shared world" fiction. Larry Niven's *Man Kzin Wars* milieu, in which he invited writers whose military SF he admires to write, is as good as the generally top-notch writers who write in it. The professional Friends of Darkover books, professionally edited, are professional stories, some (but not all) approaching MZB's level. *But*: a fanzine was recently sent to Mrs. Bradley with a story set in the same era as a new novel she had at the publisher. The publisher insisted on withdrawing the novel for fear of a plagiarism suit from the fan. The fear is, alas, not frivolous. We true fans at Darkover regret the loss of the true product. The milieux built for other writers to write in... I've seen - couldn't get into - one game-world novel co-written by an author I otherwise admire: imagine net stockings, short shorts, high heels and as see-through blouse, on the street corner.

Michael Hailstone: Your surname would seem to justify an interest in meteorology. The trouble with SRI - or common use of the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) (which I can read fairly comfortably) - is that it exacerbates the situation of the English-speaking world being "divided by a common language". In an era when the Indonesians and Malaysians are working on harmonizing the two standards for spelling IndoMalay, going to phonetic spellings tends to separate dialects, and also to part 3rd person and past forms from the 1st-2nd person present of *say*, for example. (On the other hand, visual differentiation of the past tense of *read* could be useful). I agree that the popular American misconception that "and" throws the following pronoun into Subjective is a real wall-climber. It is a pendulum swing reaction from such uses as "me and John went...", without teaching (or *understanding* on the teacher's part) of the grammar involved. (Both my Grammars are several years dead).

PS, I have 3 cousins, Isabel, David, and Dennis Klker, whom I last heard from in Australia. Do any of you perchance know any of them? (-.4.93)

JOE FISHER, 177 Wyrallah Rd., East Lismore, NSW 2480.

Steve Carter's cover [on TM 79] was just disgusting enough to be good (I love those body parts floating in the background).

COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS was a very good little (if you can call 12¹/₄ pages - not to mention 7 chapters - little) story. Nice to see a pure fantasy story amongst the pages of THE MENTOR (there's no doubt been many before but this is only my second issue of the magazine). Perhaps it was because the story *was* fantasy and therefore different from the others) but COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS stood out like a ... like a ... well, like a thing that stands out because its good.

HEY, HE'S A FISH was somewhat beyond me (around 400 light years beyond, I think). I have to admit I'm not a big one for poetry at the best of times (all that "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" and "By nightshade, ruby grape of Prosperine", all sounds a bit... well, fruity to me.) (You can tell I've had my Keats anthology out, can't you). Can anyone explain to me why this poem suddenly turns into a

computer program near the end? Is this clever? What happens if you use this program? Does the fish dance? Does it sing? Do I dare to eat a peach? Let us go then, you and I, when the evening is spread out against the sky, like a patient etherized upon - SORRY! I think I lost control there for a second - In the room the women come and go, talking of WHOOPS! Lost it again. But I'm fine now. Really. Honestly.

Now, ESCAPE FROM YINN. Well, what can I say? (Whatever it is it'll probably be longer than the actual story - blimey, talk about short and sweet!). Liked the bit about the "actuality helmets". Perhaps Brent Lillie should expand that idea a bit into a full story? I won't ever mention the last line.

And what of Issue 78's final piece of peripheral punctuality with people and places (alliteration tends to dull all sense in a sentence don't it?) Well, I think the Prize for Colloquial Knowledge (rather unfortunate that those initials are P.R.I.C.K, but there you go) goes to Evan Rainer and his PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE. Come on, own up. Who looked up what peripatetic means? Anyway, the story was bloody good. Funny, inventive and vunderbar in all areas. I kacked myself when I read the bit about Ray walking all over Sydney, pretending to do things and trying to throw off any pursuit, while all the time Vladimir just waited for him to come back past the "Chew n' Spew" (a typical Australian name). An enjoyable trip through a future of espionage-gone-mad (I won't say that its zany or wacky, I promise. And did anyone pick up on the crime-reporter's name? Surely she's not still around!?)

Can't say I dived into the sci-fi in Argentina story with enthusiasm. I did have a skim through it though. It was interesting to see some of the covers of the mags over there (why are there so many frogs on the covers of EL PENDULO? {And bare breasted women for that matter?})

I was much more impressed with Issue 78's comic section than I was with Issue 77's. THE INITIATE was not too bad at all: quite well drawn and an OK story. I'll look forward to the next part.

I could talk about the other four pages of poetry but after my last experience (being possessed by the spirit of T. S. Eliot isn't much fun) I think I'll just go and have a little lie down somewhere.... (30.4.93)

I have to admit that the main reason I enjoy reading THE MENTOR is for the fiction. I find it fascinating that all these people are out there in the *same country* writing such great stuff. It makes me wonder whether I can ever hope to compete against some of them....

Anyway, to get back to the thrust of my opening line, I'd like to elaborate by saying that I tend to go all glassy eyed and vacant when confronted by pages of in-depth info on every aspect of science fiction imaginable. I guess in that way I'm not really a hard-core sci-fi fan - my main reason for reading sci-fi stories/novels or watching sci-fi TV/movies is because I like the genre and above all, find it *entertaining*.

Again, I've lost the thread of what I was saying... Oh yes. Though I say that about such articles I was rather surprised to find myself first reading Sean Williams' article on WHAT IS SF FOR? and, now, commenting on it.

Before I go into it further though, I'll just comment on the article's rather inventive end-note numbering. Nearly every italicized quote was unnumbered, but, fitting them logically between the numbers before and after I then looked

them up. A couple of them, I found, seemed to say (what am I talking about? they *did* say) "From her foreword" or "From his introduction". Just one thing, Sean, who the ruddy heck are you talking about? "Her" who? "His" who? I also went to look up a quote about the "inner space" in SF (number 19 it was) and the bleedin' *end-note* wasn't there this time! Auuuggghhh! I'm sure there's got to be something wrong there somewhere. Admittedly, I was listening to Guns 'N Roses and The Screaming Jets (not at the same time, though) as I read the article but I don't think even Al Rose screaming at me to get in the ring could frig me up *that* bad! I'm not trying to be picky or anything but it was kinda annoying. I also loved the mis-print THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE. Not Ron's though, apparently....

Now, to the article itself. I think, Sean, that you had a lot of good points and expressed them well (with a little help from a veritable cornucopia of quotes and references). Looks like a lot of research went into it. I'd have preferred some more on TV and film sci-fi, but that's just a personal fetish. I don't agree with you Sean, though when you practically slagged off TV and film sci-fi as being purely commercial-orientated. Shows like DOCTOR WHO, BLAKE'S 7 and RED DWARF have some great sci-fi ideas in them (and RED DWARF is bloody funny to boot). I think you've confused the writers of these shows (as well as the writers and directors of many of the popular sci-fi films) with the business hierarchy behind them. The writers, I'm sure, don't write simply because they want to stuff their pockets and available orifices with money. Its the people with the dosh in the first place which limit the writers to a certain extent. Take DOCTOR WHO for example. Now, episodes are *still* not being made four years after it left our screens. The BBC programmers in their wisdom don't seem to think its a ratings winner any longer, despite receiving unbelievable amounts of money from video sales of the show. A great and now classic idea has been halted because of the holders of the budget. The expensive Hollywood sci-films are no doubt popular but does that mean they *can't* be great sci-fi yarns as well? Even a show like RED DWARF, which is a comedy, has some fantastic science-fiction ideas (for goodness sake, one of the main characters is a hologram, using the "resurrection" idea popular among scientists (not to mention theologians) - where a person's entire life and personality is encoded on computer disc and "resurrected" after their death). To lump all these together as "pulp" and, therefore, somehow not *true* science-fiction, is just too gross a generalization.

As a general chronology of science-fiction though, and as an attempt to classify an extremely elusive term, Sean's article wasn't too bad. I liked the Blackadder reference in there too (probably unintentional, but still), about the "willing suspension of disbelief" or "No one's going to be staring in disbelief at *my* willing suspension!"

Right! Now, just a quick note on the fiction in Issue #79. PRAY FOR THE PREY was quite good. Everything flowed along quite well and it was an enjoyable read.

I enjoyed Brent Lillie's THE BROOKLYN BLUES far better than ESCAPE FROM YINN in Issue #78. It reminded me a little of RUNNING LATE, an excellent BBC drama starring Peter Bowles that I saw fairly recently and highly recommend if ever the chance arises for anyone to see it.

One quick reference to a letter in the R & R DEPT, from Brian Earl Brown who has the misfortune to be an American. He mentioned he had recently read the book adaptations of RED DWARF and found them "confusing". A mega-fan of RED DWARF I have to leap atop my pacing steed, lower my lance (so to speak) and charge to its defense.

In an interview in RED DWARF MAGAZINE, the writers Bob Grant and Doug Naylor explained that the things they changed in the novels were things they wished they'd done on the TV series. They also said that the books were "the proper epic" - the definitive version. I hope, Brian Earl Brown, that that clears up your confusion. (20.5.93).

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

I have just finished reading THE MENTOR #76, which arrived in late November. I am still pretty far behind in my reading, though I believe I am beginning to catch up. Please bear with me.

In this issue, I particularly liked Sean Williams's LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK. It seemed better developed than most of the other fiction that I've read in your zine. On the other hand, Shane Dix's USED BOOKS seemed too obvious. There was a story somewhat like that on a TV show not too long ago; I think it was an episode of MONSTERS. I don't know if you've seen that in Australia; it was a syndicated series. Evan Rainer's THE AFFAIR OF THE MARTIAN CADAVER was a well-done pastiche or parody; I couldn't tell which it was supposed to be.

The article ARGENTINIAN SF HISTORY by Claudio Omar Noguerolet apparently suffers from poor translation. It also went into a lot of detail without analysis; it seemed more a laundry list than a history. However, it was still interesting to the extent that I know very little about South American literature.

I find the front cover somewhat grotesque, but I liked the bacover. (25.4.93)

J. C. HARTLEY, 14 Rosebank, Rawtenstall, Rossendale BB4 7RD, UK.

Only now getting around to writing to say thanks for THE MENTOR 77 and thanks for including GRAND TOUR, I can even forgive the typos, as I understand they're something of a tradition.

Very impressed with the mag even side-stapled it came across as very professional. Yes it's true 77 issues and I've never seen it before but then I've only been doing this for maybe four years and only started looking at international markets say last year, after an onslaught of addresses from S. Sneyd.

Do you ever sell a copy? If it's free to contributors, letter writers and contributors and letter writers mentioned by other contributors and letter writers, it would seem there is a thing as a philanthropic publisher.

Very much enjoyed the Andy Darlington piece. I got EAGLE regularly and very much enjoyed the Heros strips. Interested to read the resume of the story-lines, as even then I was aware of a seam of paranoia running through the strip, with persecution and false accusations. In fact paranoia seems to have been a major feature of a lot of comic-book stuff I can remember from then, say up to 1969. Cold War or was I a

weird kid? Interested in Trigan Empire mention, remember (I think) first appearance in LOOK AND LEARN, with a family fishing-trip disrupted by a huge (and wonderfully realised) space ship plummeting into a lake. The contents (or occupants) reveal background to events leading to fall of Empire. Very Gibbon; later stuff I saw (late 70's) pale by comparison. More references to earlier pieces by Andy had me hunting out KINGS OF SPACE. Don't think bad science means bad SF, even if it's sloppy research, don't think it's required to make excuses as regards what was known either. I'm pretty sure if I read Johns now I would enjoy it (did read a little bit and did) in much the same way I enjoy Lewis (not SF) and Wells, this latter transcending all other league positions of course. Re adolescent SF were there also series by Angus McVicar (McIver) and Patrick Moore? Also, has anyone else in the world read Norton's STARGUARD and found echoes of it in FUTURE LEGEND from Bowie's DIAMOND DOGS? No reason just a nagging thing I have, probably to do with the jewellery and rats.

Enjoyed pretty much all the non-fiction. As other correspondents have stated the value of things like the Argentinian SF feature is that it cracks our insularity. Am I being unbearably twee to say that the R&R DEPT has a nice family feel?

Other stuff? Couldn't shake the feeling that FERAL KILLERS was an allegory for NSW weekend nightlife. Sorry but we cling to stereotypes back in the old country (good luck with the march to republicanism by the way, would we would follow). SALE OF YOUTH left me feeling I'd missed something, I'm the last one to want explanations but it seemed to be here is a being who does these things, here are overlong sketches of the people he does them to, in place of real characterisation and the ending is a loop. And we've all written a story line like that god help us. STONE GODDESS was OK with inevitable shagging and inevitable it-was-her-all-along. There was once a terrible UK TV series in which beautiful and mysterious girl on Greek Island turned out to be Aphrodite (& move over John Fowles). Liked OBUNAGA'S FINGER even with anti-climactic ending (tough critic aren't I?) but then I'm a sucker for this cyberpunk future gangsterism thing, possibly through early exposure to Runyon or Garrison's Gorillas (remember that?).

(4.5.93)

I do sell some copies, mainly at Galaxy Bookshop in Sydney; others as sample issues and then some of my readers send \$5 as a contribution. - Ron.]

I blame Sneyd and Haines, every magazine I buy they're been there before, pissing on the termite hill, stirring up this why poetry? thing. And people still bite. But really. Why poetry? Why anything? Why the blockbuster novel? That's my gripe but I accept that trees must die for movie deals. All literary endeavour is just an exercise (calm down) what is it? An attempt to transcribe a message encoded in the big bang and hurtling toward decode in the heat/cold death? Why the SF poem? Why the SF letter? Why the nursery rhyme? Why the comic novel? Why the eccentric dance? What did Sneyd say in 76 to upset John Alderson? Steve Sneyd doesn't know anything about poetry? This is a man respected and liked (lets not forget liked) in more dimensions than the handful we juggle with. A remark of remarkable intellectual snobbery (I would hesitate to say anybody didn't

know anything about something they had scraped a toe and foothold in for the last twenty years (sorry Steve)) as snobbery goes however the - in Russia they'd have locked me up - gag took some beating; real apparatchik speak. (In Australia comrades, I can say with certainty, a man of my stamp would be too fucking pissed to put pen to paper).

Thanks Grai Hughes, Sean Williams and Duncan Evans re kind words GRAND TOUR. THE MENTOR 77 was the poem's debut Duncan, but hell, it's not that original an idea, you may have seen similar elsewhere.

Ron, your layout mutilated those Haiku you printed, I wouldn't have thought a three-line poem could sustain so much damage but I don't care d'you hear? I'm going to send you more, I'm going to swamp you, I live for my name in print and I'll risk Siberia, Victoria to stay on the mailing list.

(-.5.93)

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

The Editorial Slant was fascinating. I've always wondered how TM came together. (And the costing was interesting, too, if only in a grim kind of way. Do you remember, Ron, when TM used to cost \$36.60 for 150 issues?) If you're short of cash, Ron, why don't you charge a subscription? I, for one, would rather pay than miss out.

[I don't charge a subscription, because that would put me in obligation to produce issues - the way I like it is that I publish when I want to, and can gaffate if I want to any time - Ron]

The fiction this issue, little of it though there was, was pretty good. Brent Lillie's was the best (although my eyes pricked up at E D MAN'S BAR AND GRILL for entirely the wrong reason: Ed Mann used to play percussion for Frank Zappa). B. J. Stevens keeps getting better, but still has room to improve; the ending of PRAY FOR THE PREY bore little relevance to the rest of the story, and it took far too long for the reader to be informed that the protagonist was a woman (there was no way to tell from the prose). Also, total paralysis would have stopped Hearn's lungs and heart and killed him well before the Bleeder came, if that's what it was. I liked some of the character-interaction, however, and the bit where the spine jabbed into Hearn's leg the second time was real jaw-clenching prose.

Interesting to note, as an aside, the fact that both of these stories are horror stories. As is THE INITIATE Pt. 2. What happened to the sf this issue?

[What do you mean, horror? The stories were the type that appeared in GALAXY in the 1950's.... - Ron.]

Articles-wise, I skipped Pavel Viaznikov's NORTHERN FEN (mainly because I really hate the word "fen"; too much like a cross between "fey" and "glen" for my liking). All the others were good. Especially Don Boyd's THE BIG BOOM. (Inspiring stuff; having duly sent off an SSAE to the NSSA). The reference in OUT OF OZ to the burgeoning horror market in Australia is given further credence by Pan-MacMillan's forthcoming horror/sf release GHOST BEYOND EARTH by a Queensland writer whose surname is Hague (I think). Very glossy, very slick, and not all that bad. Due in July, or thereabouts. I'll be interested to hear what Bill has to say about it.

OUT OF OZ neglected to mention the last AUREALIS was the worst to date - or is that just my own ill-informed opinion and one not generally supported by the rest

of fandom? Here's hoping, either way, that future issues are better.

Artwork: best goes to Peggy Ranson's on page 48. Very cute.

Reviews: hadn't read *one* of the books reviewed this issue, but plan to tackle Watson's WARHAMMER tomes as soon as I can.

R&R: where the hell has Peter Booth gone? I miss the arguments. David Tansey is trying his best to fill the gap, but doesn't quite have the vitriol of the previous Rogue Boy. (Aside: last issue Brian Earl Brown suggested that Stan Schmidt might be interested in LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK, so I sent it off, just in case. It was rejected, of course, but garnered a "please send more" response, which is encouraging. One day I'll make it....).

(19.5.93)

PAVEL V. VIAZNIKOV, PO Box 344, Moscow A502, RUSSIA SU-125 502,

First of all, congratulations - your front cover looks just great. My compliments to Peggy Ranson. And I enjoyed the GODDESS OF STONE story by S. Williams. What I did *not* like was the comic strip about femosaurs... - I just hope that the artist is not one of your good friends and you will not get sore. As for horror zines, we here also have a try - the MAD LAB from the city of Nikolayev (Ukraine, Black Sea coast) was the first one and it was a good attempt; unfortunately, the #1 was also the last one. Alas, it's too expensive now to publish fanzines, and to start a prozine you must get sound support from somebody rich and with good connections.

Another good story in TM 77 was THE SALE OF YOUTH by George Ivanoff. As for the rest, I cannot say - I haven't read the magazine through yet.

As for the comment of Ned Brooks who said that I should have had lines from ANNABEL LEE credited, - well you see, at first I wanted to do it, but the name in brackets spoiled the flowing of the text; besides, I was positively sure that any person who can read English can also know E. A. Poe from the first book. Am I wrong?

An interesting piece of news: recently we had a scandalous seminar on role gaming. The members started a hot argument over last summer team-games based on the LOTR. You see, a Mr. Bogush managed to organize games in a beautiful place, at a lakeside (on the shooting grounds of an artillery regiment); all was quite nice until the gamers found out that, in fact, the Orc-Committee consisted of psychologists and sociologists who sort of conspired to conduct a series of experiments on the gamers. So, some people insisted that the researchers had no right to experiment on unsuspecting people, while the others argued that the experiments did not really affect them, that the subjects must not know of experiments to escape distortion of results.... Anyway, this summer they are again gaming at the same place near St. Petersburg (Leningrad), only this time they are going to play Soviet-(ie Russian and Ukrainian, Baltian etc.) SF-based games.... And they do not lack volunteers. Though one Feanor (I do not know his real name... sorry, Earthen name) still wants to take the experimenters to court. (29.4.93)

BILL CONGREVE, 1/26 Central Ave., Westmead, NSW 2145

Good to see a bit of debate stirred up in the LOC column. For Sydney Bounds, I agree with you absolutely. From the perspective of a writer it is great if a reviewer can acknowledge the hard work put into a novel's creation. Middleton put six months of his life into TRIAD OF DARKNESS, and I'm certain he didn't do it just so he could read bad reviews. I've twice attempted novels in the past and its only with my present third attempt that I think I'll get somewhere. This can be hard work!

However, one of the things I'm attempting to do with my reviews is to look at the publishing process which has created the books we read. If you ever get the opportunity to read this novel I think you will understand why I criticised the publisher using the term "property".

One enormous problem faced by Australian publishers today is the size of the marketplace. There isn't a lot of fiction published here, and most of what is published is supported by government grants. Publishers get grants to pay writers, publishers get grants to assist with manufacturing costs, and writers get grants to cover specific books. I don't know the size or number of grants going to publishers, but in 1992 a total of 96 writers received Australia Council grants, and we have to add onto this all the individual state government grants whose numbers I can't guess at. In terms of the British market, this is a drop in a bucket, but for the Australian market, this is quite a large source of revenue for both writers and publishers.

The majority of these grants are administered by committees of academics for works of "literary significance". A dominant source of income for publishers and writers is a government grant. If it sells as well, then that is icing on the cake. Hence we have a trend in Australia where the kind of fiction being written and published is designed to win a government grant without having to compete in the marketplace for readers. This is the same kind of "autistic communication" for which the BBC was criticised in the 1960s - programs were being produced to satisfy a small peer group rather than the viewing audience. Obviously, I'm generalizing here. But given the broader situation there is then a trend for "commercial" or "popular" fiction to be lost in the backwash.

So what is sold as popular fiction in Australia? Books imported from England (the vast majority) and the US. These imported books are "published" in Australia in a process where the local distributors are almost totally divorced from the process of creation involved with the book. Hence, as a confirmed cynic, it's my feeling that commercial fiction is regarded as "property" by publishers, distributors, critics, etc. There is still a vast snobbery against popular fiction in Australia on the part of this peer group which produces "literary fiction".

Popular fiction started breaking out of this ingrained conservative attitude in a mass way in the mid 1980s, largely as a consequence of visual media interest in the work of Australian crime novelist Peter Corris. Suddenly every man and his dog wanted to publish crime novels. Except within the small press, science fiction hasn't yet broken out of the ghetto, horror fiction is just starting to break out, and heroic fantasy, due to its very marketability, is on its way. But in every case these books are being published by people with an ingrained attitude that commercial fiction is a "property" into which they can invest minimum effort because the stuff isn't worth

anything in the first place. The only thing that will cure this is experience. Pan Mcmillan are to be congratulated for at least recognizing the market exists and attempting to move into it. Hodder and Stoughton are also becoming interested in speculative genre fiction in Australia but in their case they are dealing with freelance editors with a much greater knowledge of the genre.

Or maybe you should just nail me to a tree and call me an opinionated cynical bastard. I should emphasize here that the above are my own thoughts as a reasonable educated observer.

Last issue I wrote something incredibly stupid. Perhaps I often do this, that is for you to judge. To quote "Simply because I have read them, I'll open with the two fantasy novels." I spend a fair bit of time on IN DEPTH, usually I'll review a book after having spent a little time, about a week, thinking about what I've read. As I read I jot down notes - characters' names, place names, first impressions, and the like. This means that the act of writing a column is spread over about a month. At the time of starting last issue's column the only books I had read were the fantasy novels. Then I read and wrote the reviews for the other novels. At no time did I mean to suggest that I was reviewing without first having read the books. Please forgive me.

As for fantasy trilogies and revealing too much of a book. Perhaps I do, but in the case of fantasy trilogies, the very fact that it is a trilogy tells an educated reader something about the ending of the first two books. Guilty as charged. In fact I feel this is the case with most modern heroic fantasy whether it's a trilogy or not. In the case of other books, often the most interesting parts of the ideas and story are towards the end and often central themes aren't apparent until then. I do try to give a reader some idea of what is in store without spoiling the book. Perhaps I should be more circumspect.
(-5.93)

JOHN ALDERSON, Havelock, Vic 3465.

Do the words The End at the end of THE INITIATE mean its finished? I find it rather ghastly and filled with enormous anatomical errors. Consider one of the most prominent features, the mammarys... nature would never have them attached in the manner indicated in a creature which mainly proceeded in a horizontal position. Such pendulous glands would be too liable for hurt, and I am told that the business end is rather tender. Normally (on Earth) such glands are spread along the belly or tucked between the hind legs. I concede that with hairless creatures they may have a mass of fatty tissue. But what are they for... there appear to be no young?

I got nowhere with THE BIG BOOM. I found the language awful and stopped reading with the use of "authored". The verb is "wrote".

Humph! SWORDSMAN OF THE SHEPHERD'S STAR or Edgar Rice Burroughs maligns Venus. It may surprise readers that I have not considered Burroughs' books set on Mars, Venus, or the Centre of the Earth as science fiction, but merely fantasy, whilst I do regard his Tarzan stories as sf. The difference lies in the complete lack of scientific background for the first, whilst there may be some scientific justification for the Tarzan stories... the fact I don't

believe the science is neither here nor there; he was the writer, not me.

Before David Tansey "corrects" me again, he had better learn a lot more, including how to read. I was most careful to say that "the head of State *in* Australia is the Governor General". This is so and it is the C-G who signs bills, prorogues Parliament etc etc without reference to the Queen. That is, he is Head of State. That was bad enough but Tansey goes on with a whole wild series of inaccuracies. The Queen is Queen of Australia and Head of the Commonwealth (presumably also of places like India and Pakistan which are supposed to be republics), and she is Queen of Great Britain, not England. Nor is she English (she is Scottish) and it is nearly four hundred years since the last English blood entered the Royal Family, whilst the royal line itself is Scottish. Nor did she "in the puppet of the Governor-General" dismiss a Government. The man most hurt in this dismissal was of course the Prime Minister Whitlam, and who said many hard things on the subject, but not once did he blame the Queen. It was a personal vendetta between the two men. I agree that the Government should not have been so dismissed (though the Australian electorate took the side of the Governor-General) but I believe that the Head of State should have such power but that it should be only used when the Government has become corrupt (as recently in Thailand) or acting illegally (as happened with the Lang Government) but not for a political reason (as with Whitlam). To suggest becoming a republic will alter this is bullshit. Most republics get into our news because the president has either dismissed the Prime Minister or the Parliament. Certainly the law can be altered to prevent any such future sackings but with the minimalist position almost certainly to be taken if we become a republic all that will happen is a change of name for the C-G. But that law could be altered without becoming a republic. Incidentally recently Bill Haden (present GG) said that he receives no instructions from the Queen, and in AUSTRALIA AND THE MONARCHY Zelman Cohen has pointed out that it is almost impossible for Australia to become a republic. But it does take people's minds off the economic position of the country.

Tansey goes on to correct me about Australia having a "representative" government. This despite the lower House being The House of Representatives. We imagine that we elect someone to *represent* us in Parliament. We actually elect someone to *represent* a certain slice of the country in Parliament. That the Australian system is representative government is actually a matter of law. Tansey doesn't know what he is talking about, and his bowlerisation of preferential voting shows his total lack of grasp. Further, we have three major parties, not two, the one omitted being the National Party, who in terms of area represents most of Australia.

I must thank Shane Dix for putting my name in verse (first punishment of that nature that I know of). That limerick ought to become famous for its rhyming of "genre" with "gonna".
(24.5.93)

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

Your editorial was the most enjoyable entry in TM #79. Editors always enjoy reading about the methods, trials and pleasures, and otherwise, of other editors. Although you can run off zines at a much cheaper rate on your offset than I can on my Mita 1657 photocopier, I think there must be a great

deal more skill required in obtaining a satisfactory end result. My copier requires very little skill to operate, with the only problems likely to occur being paper creasing encountered when double-siding. With a second colour available for highlighting at the touch of a button, I doubt if I could ever switch over to an offset.

B. J. Steven's PRAY FOR THE PREY was a well-written tale. The reader is never quite sure what is going to happen next. There is a surprise lurking around every corner. I liked it.

Call me stupid. Through the first few paragraphs, I thought THE BIG BOOM was fiction, overloaded with a lot of meaningless figures. It was marginally enjoyable as an article, the type of thing I used to enjoy reading in children's volumes with name like THE MODERN MARVELS ENCYCLOPAEDIA back in the late 1950s.

A change of pace in THE BROOKLYN BLUES, which provided several interesting minutes of reading.

Why didn't the artist provide a title header for THE INITIATE! There is something about the illustrations which compels one's attention. There's a distinct style, but no story or plot. It all seems pretty pointless. I'd like to hear what any amateur analysts among TM's readers think the artist is trying to say.

There's not much point in commenting on Andrew's ERB article, as I've never read, or had the urge to read, any of Burroughs' writings.

Your OUT OF OZ once again provides a useful idea of what's recently been published between limp covers. EIDOLON seems to be the preferred point of publication, in the eyes of most local writers. SCIENCE FICTION, on the other hand, is seen as a self-indulgent waste of time. I've scanned a number of issues, wondering if anybody would actually pay for it. Someone must, I suppose....

WHAT IS SF FOR? simply covers too much ground for me to try commenting upon it detail. I anticipate this article bringing forth more letters than any other article you've published. In my case, I saw SF purely as an escape from mundane reality in my early days, whereas now it reflects mankind's aspirations on one hand, and deepest forebodings on the other. Reality and SF seem to be on a collision course more so than at any time during the past. I often wonder why so many SF fans appear to me to be the most conservative individuals one would ever expect to meet.

I now await Sean's next article, WHAT ARE SF FANS FOR?

Almost forgot to comment on the artwork. Great cover. Why can't you maintain this quality in the strip, Steve? (31.5.93)

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

Thanks for TM 78. Steve Carter certainly has a nasty imagination.

Fantasy is not my favourite reading, but COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS is good of its kind and a bit more original than most.

You do put out an interesting magazine. Undoubtedly the fascinating item in this issue was a poem: HEY, HE'S A FISH. I still can't decide why the computer jargon was included; it doesn't seem to add anything and the

poem reads well without it. Perhaps you, or the author, will tell us.

Andrew was interesting, as usual, but personally I believe Asimov was a marvellous populariser of science and that his sf comes in second place.

Brent Lillie came up with a nice pun.

For a magazine that has science fiction in large print on the cover, you do go in for a lot of fantasy. More emphasis on sf in future, please.

Argentina continues to interest me; this sort of article does broaden the mind and remind us that the USA is not the whole world.

I liked Hartley's Haikus, AUTUMN DREAMS, and PIES AND DEAD SNAILS.

At least THE INITIATE had a plot this time. Your comment about a moral attitude puzzled me, but doubtless your letter hacks will explain all. As Don Boyd writes - it hits a nerve.

Brian Earl Brown asks a good point on cities; the real development now is in the suburbs.

I must apologise to Buck Coulson for misreading him. (This was no doubt due to my unconscious assumption that all dealers must be rich). Obviously Buck is in much the same state that I am - and I do admire the way he gets about.

(25.5.93)

TERRY JEEVES, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England.

I can't say that I care for the cover (of TM 78), but otherwise the artwork was of a very high standard - as indeed was the whole production. Staying on art for a moment, the cartoon (?) strip was another no-no in my book I'm afraid, technically very well drawn, but aesthetically unpleasant and the theme otherwise - and why was it unfinished?

On the other hand, COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS was superb. As a confirmed fantasy hater and disliker of fan fiction in general, I began to read it with trepidation (my co-reader). The story grabbed me, sucked me in and I couldn't put it down until the end. Full marks to Duncan Evans, I wish the yarns in recent ANALOGS were halfway near as good.

Verran on stars and Buck Coulson were both interesting, but HEY, HE'S A FISH definitely wasn't. I thoroughly enjoyed Andy Darlington's balanced piece on Asimov and ESCAPE FROM YINN was a nice little shaggy dog story. Not having encountered any of the fact and fiction mentioned, I'm afraid Australian and Argentinian SF history were out of my orbit although I liked the cover repros. I'm afraid PERIPATETIC CORPSE left me cold, I gave up on that one half way. It had a very neat illo though - was it a pencil drawing or a monochrome wash?

[No, it was a photograph. - Ron.]

As for POETRY - what crimes are committed in its name. Sorry, but I'm of the old school where a true poem has rhyme, metre and scansion - and tells an understandable story. This modern, unrhymed, breast-beating incomprehensible stuff smacks of "Emperor's New Clothes".

LOCS also in good supply and on interesting topics. I see I'm not the only one to have disliked FERAL KILLERS - another unended epic. Can't you get Carnage and Carcinogen (which must be pseudonyms) to complete a more savoury epic. It would be an excellent item.

Reviews, generally excellent. I definitely like the type which give an idea of the story, eschew airy fairy gobbledegook and leave me to decide for myself whether or not I might like the book. Reviewers who waffle about Freudian underplots and themes reminiscent of Sappho or Sippy (her sister), leave me cold. (24.5.93)

WALTER WILLIS, 32 Warren Rd., Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 OPD.

Your editorial [In TM 78] was interesting, especially about all those strangers at the Gargoyle Club who were familiar with THE MENTOR.

COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS was well written, but had trouble overcoming my instinctive mistrust of fairy stories in fanzines. I have noticed this sort of prejudice in myself before. Looking for a book to read in the library, I found myself rejecting various categories wholesale. Like for instance, books written in the first person. It was with a shock I realised that all of my favourite books of all time... THE CORAL ISLAND, JANE EYRE and THE NIGHT LAND... every one was written in the first person.

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER was worth printing. I don't know if one could say the same about the Cherkassy "poem".

Darlington's essay on Asimov was illuminating, specially his mention that NIGHTFALL was elected Best Short Story of All Time by the SFWA. I agree with this assessment, on reflection, though with a little surprise, because in a sense NIGHTFALL is not science fiction at all. I mean, where is the science? It's more a travelogue type of thing, answering the question, what would it be like to live on a planet from which the stars are visible every thousand years.

ESCAPE FROM YINN earns some sort of prize for bare faced effrontery in the manufacture of puns.

IN DEPTH by Bill Congreve is about as interesting as possible in a survey of books one is unlikely to come across.

Evan Rainer's pastiche of a crime melodrama was well done.

Noguerol's history of sf and fandom in Argentina was fascinating. Argentina is an interesting place.

The poems are a mixed bag. Some of them are just rearranged and pretentious prose: others have real merit.

The comic strip is beautifully drawn.

Brian Earl Brown has an interesting thought to offer in his letter, namely that authors like Murray Leinster, Henry Kuttner, Blish or Van Vogt are in danger of being forgotten nowadays. I still think of Van Vogt as my favourite sf author and Blish as having written the best sf story of all time, namely SURFACE TENSION.

The reviews at the end were refreshing. I liked the occasional personal touches, as where the reviewer confesses that a book he was reading nearly made him miss his stop on the train. (27.5.93)

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

Both writing and reading poetry is such an individual experience I will not attempt to analyse my reaction to the poetry in THE MENTOR 78. I must however tell you that for me POETRY, TOO is the best collection I have ever come across in a zine. It is a joy to read a collection that does not

include stream of consciousness prose pretending to be poetry nor a piece of self conscious posturing.

Well Steve Carter surely has a powerful and individual style. The cover certainly tells a story but three human corpses and what looks like a single seater vehicle confuses the story. Incidentally Jack Cohen would hate those elbows, that is it is an alien with the gun and not an incompletely metamorphosed human. As for the comic I will wait until the end before I comment, in the hopes that the ending will be such as to turn aside the wrath I feel building up in my mind.

Brent Lillie is a gem. I love shaggy dog stories with punny endings and here's one in genre. Thanks, Brent.

COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS is well written but I found it rather unsatisfactory, even though I could not put my finger on the various sources all it's components seemed to be borrowed. Over all a little too dark for my taste, a little leavening of light and humour might have improved it.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE really works. What a difference between this and the previous Ray Bilinsky story you published. This one made me smile, the previous one tried too hard that it stumbled over itself and I didn't even realise it was a send up. Even Rainer has obviously learned that jokes are written for stand up comics but that a humorous piece of writing is the characters and situations as an integral whole. I think that is why so many follow up films (such as POLICE ACADEMY 3, 4 etc) fail. The writers get desperate and put in too many contrived jokes.

Thank you for the wealth of interest and information in all the articles. You really do give as much and more than a paid for magazine. I say paid for rather than professional as I think professional is in the production rather than in the fact of distribution to the public for money and in the production you are professional. (28.5.93)

PAULINE SCARF, 130 Macpherson St, Waverley, NSW 2024.

The illustrations on the covers of TM 77 and 79 are superb, especially TM 77. I thoroughly enjoyed all of the short stories. The HISTORY OF RUSSIAN FANTASTICA and FANDOM IN ARGENTINA were also eye-openers, and I found it worthwhile to read the viewpoints of SF fans in countries whose literature we hear very little about. I also enjoyed reading the views of fans in the UK & USA in your R & R DEPT, as well as those of your more "local" readers.

In fact I thought the whole magazine was very entertaining, and the variety of contents well-documented. The reviews too, were excellent.

The only thing I didn't like were the comics, but then, I've never been a comics buff. FERAL KILLERS in my opinion, although interesting and imaginative in some ways, was a bit "too much" for my taste.

...Mostly, I really enjoy writing horror, although at the moment I'm in the middle of doing a satirical fantasy novel. I'm hoping to find a publisher for this work once it is completed, otherwise I'll have to go back to working in an office - Boring. Either that or self-publish, which I can't actually afford to do at the moment. (6.6.93)

[Well, at this point in time I'm not interested in printing horror in THE MENTOR. If you do any sf or fantasy I'd like to see it, and this applies to other readers of THE MENTOR - Ron.

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

I cavil a bit at O'Neill's idea of forests and farms in his colonies, as Don Boyd mentions. Where is all this dirt coming from? I doubt very much if you can stick a maple seed into "dirt" made from pulverised asteroids or Moon dust and expect it to grow. Not without shipping one hell of a lot of fertilizer from Earth, anyway. Of course, once you have people in the colonies, you can use human waste products as fertilizer, but that will take time, and more plants and animals, requiring a lot of fertilizer for a lot of years. It took millenia to produce the soil of Earth (and not nearly that long to destroy a lot of it - North Africa used to feed the Roman Empire, and cedars grew in Lebanon). Manufacturing soil isn't either quick or easy.

I think that the violence in Burroughs was simply a mark of the times in which he wrote. To be "manly" was to be willing to fight. In a popular romance, GREEN FANCY, by George Barr McCutcheon, the heroine says, "Oh, it would be wonderful to marry a man who will never have to go to war", and the hero feels that she has impugned his masculinity and insulted his country. The book is copyrighted 1917, and was obviously written during the U.S. indecision over saving the world for democracy, but McCutcheon was a very popular writer and expressed a very popular sentiment. The question here was never ever the U.S. willingness to fight, but whether the Allied cause was worth fighting for. A writer merely had to convince his readers - who were generally quite willing to be convinced - that his hero had a worthwhile cause for fighting. In the U.S. at least, this emphasis on "manliness" lasted well into the 1950s and probably longer; it's just beginning to change now.

What is SF for? Entertainment; nothing else. The only difference between it and other fiction is that a specialised audience has grown up to appreciate it, and any distinct group considers its own beliefs and entertainments superior, and looks for proof of superiority to show the rest of the world.

I congratulate Lorraine Cormack; if she's down to half a dozen boxes after 3 months, she's done very well. There are still things I can't find since our move here, and that was in 1985.

On the other hand, of course, you can dismiss "someone with a name that well known". I've read a fair amount of Asimov because I liked his early work and still like his non-fiction, but there are quite a few of today's well-known writers that I dismissed after one or two stories. Asimov was popular because he was easy to understand; he knew how to simplify things for the average reader. For readers who didn't need things simplified, he could be just a shade tedious. Which is why I liked his non-fiction best; I don't have a background in science, and he made it easy to understand. (2.6.93)

JULIE HAWKINS, 26 Third Ave., Nth Katoomba, NSW 2760.

I am in my daughter's bedroom typing this and trying to remember how to use our Commodore computer. We were given an IBM compatible and I've been working on that lately. Unfortunately we don't have a printer yet. I thought about sending you this on a disk but wasn't sure about the compatibility of our programs. I am using Wordperfect 5.1 on the IBM. If you're using that or Windows I'll send you a disk next time.

[I am using Word For Windows, which can translate most programs, including Wordperfect 5.1, just as long as readers send a note telling me what program it is. - Ron.]

I've read every one of THE MENTORS you've sent me and enjoyed them. The fiction is up to standard, some I liked, some I didn't, none have really stuck, but, you can't please everyone all the time. I can't say that I really like poetry and I am not a lover of cartoons but the articles I am finding very interesting. (My kids wanted to know if they could colour in the cartoons).

I was reading Sean's article on science fiction and wishing I'd had it for Literature last year. I agree with him that trying to find a definition for sf is like fighting a losing battle. During the course of my literature studies I had to present a seminar on a specific genre. Naturally I chose sf. Like a fool I thought it would be easy. Of course the first place to start was with a definition. And that was when the trouble started. I ended up with about a dozen acceptable definitions and many more besides. When I asked the class for their definitions I ended up with even more. Many people believed it was about aliens or space travel, others thought it was about the future or time travel. Others didn't have a clue! After getting over the hurdle of a definition my seminar was well received and several people have since become readers of sf. I don't think they fall into the fan category yet, but they're getting there. As you know, I like to talk, so my seminar went for nearly two hours, slightly over the required time of thirty minutes, but I got full marks and 1st in Literature so it was worth it.

The R&R section is still as interesting as ever, some of the letters are the best part of the magazine. I'd have to stand beside Lorraine Cormack with her view on the comic - the view of woman, etc - and her view on trilogies. As a fast reader myself I enjoy the trilogies as long as, like Lorraine says, you know what you're buying. I have several trilogies on my shelf that I have read more than once, more than twice in some cases, mainly because of the depth of the stories and the characters. (8.6.93)

MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy, Argentina.

It's been an unusual year for us ... a son died in September. (Of course, believing in reincarnation as I do, I'd not be surprised if he's already back with us as our newest little grandson. This sort of thing isn't strange in our family. There've been earlier cases, but I shan't go into details right now. People who talk glibly of "reincarnation" sound so silly, usually.)

And there was the Andean volcano that draped all the provinces near it with ash - up to the knees for those who lived near it. For us, soft, powdery ash coated all the vegetation around us and filled our lungs too. Our youngest two were caught in the tractor right in Palma Sola when a wild dark gale blew from the west carrying large cinders. They covered their faces with kerchiefs and kept driving home. (Sylvia had been teaching at the high school; Tony was organizing his classes of Karate). For them, it was an unforgettable experience.

We live 20-odd kms. deeper up the wide valley, between the mountain heights. Here not a whiff of breeze occurred right then, just the enormous brick-dark cloud passing slowly over us and fine ash floating down to veil

everything. The man who works for us with the pigs asked what it could be - the radio he has hadn't told yet. (The radio I use I keep for short-wave and it only works well after sunset.)

I said to the man: "Either a volcano erupted; or there's been a hurricane passing over desert regions - or we're passing through the tail of a comet." He was very impressed, and when the news of the eruption came, he said to everybody, "The Senora was right".

Our house-maid is like part of the family. Her drunken husband had tried or threatened to kill her because she doesn't like him drinking alcohol right out of medical bottles they buy here to get drunk, mixed with water. So she had us drive her - in the pick-up - to the police at Palma Sola. They came to fetch her hubby, beat him sober "for a good lesson", and locked him up for two days. When he returned she'd moved out with her seven kiddies, helped by other relatives and neighbours, to a corner of our own land, just a few steps away, (so he'd not dare to chase her). To do this, she took half the zinc sheets from their place, and all the boards, leaving him with a tiny adobe hut three by three metres. He returned repentant, swearing never to drink again, and is now providing his wife and family from the plot he farms (not his land either) with all sorts of vegetables, as he works hard to prove his reformation. She says, "If he doesn't drink for a year I'll go back".

As you see, our lives here are very full. The talk of "virtual reality" in fanzines and over the BBC seems only silly to me. In any case, I'm doing the final typing for Book One of a study that will come to various books, on the language study of the past 30 years, and our maid comes to watch at times reverently and spread among our local hamlet of simple folk how wise I am, ha, ha, ha.

Outdoors, chickens, ducks, cats, dogs, birds, ants and whatnot are, as usual, fun to watch. Lately a huge pedigreed pig mother and her wee ones has been admitted by our boys. (Son and son-in-law), at the foot of our large backyard "because she's special". (Out of some 100 or so pigs, that's saying a lot!). (12.5.93)

MICHAEL HAILSTONE, 14 Bolden St., Heidelberg, VIC 3084.

As ever, I'm still way behind with my reading and can't see myself ever catching up, so here is another sorely belated LOC on an issue everybody else has done with commenting on long ago.

I'm disappointed with the fiction in TM #76. Your editorial policy is to publish Australian science fiction. That much is fine. You publish Australian sf, and most of those stories (at least in this issue) have a good Australian flavour; nobody can deny that. But why does the fiction in this issue abound with Americanisms? Is this the work of the authors or your editing? Whatever the case, why? Is this done to make the stories easily understood by your American readers? Is this is so, then that is a most contemptible example of the great Australian cultural cringe. I mean, why have a policy of publishing only Australian stories if those stories must be couched in American English?

Originally I was going to give you a list of examples, but it is a rather long time since I red the issue and I can't remember them all. However I'll do what I can.

THE AFFAIR OF THE MARTIAN CADAVER by

Evan Rainer, who insists on referring to a car's boot as the "trunk", although he has the leading Australian character call it a boot. (My father owned an Austin A40 back in the fifties. There are very few around nowadays. It was quite odd to see an Austin A70 of the same vintage in Bell Street just last weekend. It seems highly unlikely that one will find such an old can on Mars, if we ever settle it.)

I'm sorry, I can't find any other examples, and I have no time to read through the issue in search of them, but I remember there were quite a few in most of the fiction.

[I don't edit the fiction as such - I comment on it and refer it back to the author for any suggested changes. I presume the spelling is so the story can be submitted to the American market - I hear they are pretty parochial. - Ron.]

Rachel McGrath-Kerr's article reminds me of a sketch in the television show THE TWO RONNIES, in which big Ronny used the word "stoutism/-ist". (27.5.93)

BRENT LILLIE, 10 Cherub St., Tugun, Qld 4224.

I've just hauled TM 79 out of storage to have another gander at its contents. Great cover art. Informative editorial. Your hard work is appreciated, believe me. The fiction -PRAY FOR THE PREY. I enjoyed this. Well structured, good characters, and a text book precipice ending. THE BIG BOOM. I found informative and interesting. NORTHERN FEN was okay. Haven't read all of Andrew Darlington's article yet. I will, though. Every now and then I'll drag my collection of TM's out and browse through them, and I always stumble over a good article that I've missed on the first examination. The bad buys (and girl?) got their just R-Rated desserts in the cartoon, I see. Good stuff. Sean Williams takes the award for the best article. Perhaps you could have used another piece of short fiction towards the end?

I'd like to subscribe to all the publications you reviewed in OUT OF OZ, because most of the stories sound great. The only one in the review that I've read is AUREALIS 10. There's bumps all over my head from running up against a brick wall with that magazine, but its just a matter of coming up with the right story, I suppose. Ah, perhaps someday. No, *definitely* someday. No use being negative.

(7.6.93)

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

... I checked my records and found no LOC on THE MENTOR #77. Of course, with #77 and #78 on hand, I was able to read Bill Congreve's whole article at one sitting, which I did earlier this evening. To be honest about it, I have never heard of the fantasy stories he mentions. On the other hand, this may be due to the fact that I no longer buy SF and fantasy paperbacks. My reading material is whatever the two local libraries decide to buy.

Which is how I have come to read the 5 books by Katherine Kerr, her on-going Deverry series. No great shakes, no new ground, but light summer reading anyway. I just barely read enough SF and fantasy to still call myself a SF and fantasy fan.

Alas, some of the books the library buys are not worth reading, as far as I am concerned. The nth book of Piers Anthony's XANTH series, for example. Embarrassments from Isaac Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein.

But if I try to break out of the ghetto, what do I get? I tried THE SATANIC VERSES. Yes, the library had a copy, and I finally got around to reading this ... fantasy? allegory? Symbolistic something? ... tedious tome. If you accept that right brain/left brain stuff, then I can say that as a reader who is about 100% left brain, this book seems to be pitched towards the right-brain folks. O well, at least I can say I did finish it, which is more than I was able to do with DAHLGREN.

I must disagree with Darlington's comments on Isaac Asimov on two points.

1) While most of his best fiction was indeed 1940's and 1950's stuff, he also produced THE GODS THEMSELVES. I have always felt that this book has been under-rated ... precisely because it is not part of a series or has any relations to anything else Asimov wrote. It stands by itself, and wonderfully too, in my opinion.

2) And I feel Darlington does not give enough consideration to Asimov's vast output of science fact books. Asimov's efforts to keep science fiction fans scientifically literate deserves some kind of recognition.

I am not sure what to say about the comic strips of Carter. Seems to be a sort of "nature red of fang and claw" set on some earth-like planet. Alternate evolution? I sort of liked it, but if there was any deeper meaning, some sort of symbolism or allegory, it went over my head.

There must be something about "lost causes" that attracts fans. I am thinking about Michael Hailstone's letter regarding "Spelling Reform One" attributed by him to Harry Lindgren, although George Bernard Shaw always advocated the same idea. I am reminded about another fan who still promotes a lost cause ... Forry Ackerman and Esperanto. Come to think of it, I may have a fanzine of Michael's in my "answer any day file". Pause to look for it...

... BUSSWARBLE #4, which poo poos the idea of the destruction of the ozone layer by man-made chemicals. I'll have to LOC it once I get this letter finished. Lost causes, indeed. (6.6.93)

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

I found Sean Williams' article a source for a lot of thought. Personally I think it's dangerous to try and define the genre of science fiction.

The problem is two-fold, firstly many people who don't read science fiction have tried to define something they don't really understand. Secondly those who read the genre are too close to the subject to be objective about it.

So what's the answer, well the short answer is it's a personal thing. For mine a good definition of the genre is that it has no fear of placing the reader in a point of reference alien to anything they are liable to encounter in real life.

A good example of this is in THE MENTOR 79, a story BROOKLYN BLUES. A man enters a room of celebs, (all dead). The author throws the line that the character thinks he's in one of those "Clone Clubs". Non science fiction readers check out at this point muttering something about "Dumb idea, there's no such thing as clones". The readers left say - "I wonder what Brent's up to with this one". Brent proceeds to kill the main character - brings the guy back, to reveal that our hero has had a glimpse of some sort of after life.

What Brent has done, is throw us into an unusual setting, just as we get comfortable - snap! - he throws any preconceived ideas we had with the story out the window.

Back to the original subject, I think Sean is being a little kind to early science fiction, his comment that Gernsback wanted stories to be scientifically correct, yeah, he would have probably bought them if he had been able to get his hands on them.

As far as Campbell is concerned, if Earth won, or the story had at least one believable character in it he would have bought the thing.

Seans further comment regarding Clarke and Wells being the only writers to go close to predicting future histories is way-way of beam. I went bore people with a long list of examples - but two contemporaries of Wells, G. Griffith and A. H. White seem to have gotten things amazingly right in some of their predictions.

The article BIG BOOM was typical of the pie in the sky stuff where been hearing about for 50 plus years.

It's alright to predict what we are going to do in space, but until we develop a low cost delivery system for L.E.O., and a reason for wanting to go there its all stuff of dreams.

We will stay on the ground like wher've done every since the last Apollo lifted off the moon some twenty years ago.

The electric sled idea is great for lifting material of the moon - however do you expect people on Earth to sit back when theres the chance of miss-guided payload coming from the moon crashing through their lounge room ceilings ruining the sunday night football game.

B. J. Stevens' story PRAY FOR THE PREY raised the question of what Ron was doing when he accepted the story. It has zero character development, no character description, and worst of all the plots contrived. The heroine would never just abandoned Horne the way she did. Being in command of the group she would automatically be held responsible for his death, probably go up on chargers herself.

Irrespective of this the rest of the party would have made attempts to save the man right up until he died - even after his death they would have made some attempt to retrieve the body.

Why did Garten Kidnap the child, simply to then abandon her in the jungle, was the leader good looking?, was she a mother figure perhaps?, these and many other questions where simply not answered. (14.6.93)

MAE STRELKOV, address as above.

THE MENTOR 78 just came, but before loccing it, I decided to review all the older MENTORs to get a fuller picture of your publishing aspirations from the first issue I received (#59, July 1986)

I felt again its charm as I reread the locs, the stories, and reviews, and chuckled over the cover with the cute little X-tee like an infant unaware of his own genitals.

I made a carbon of my loc in reply, dated Feb. 24, 1987 (how long it all seems!). Now I never keep carbon copies!

It seems obvious #63 (April 1988) came next. (It had my piece on FUGITIVES). It must have arrived quickly for I have noted on the first page that I sent more on Tao in May of 88.

But then comes THE MENTOR 62 of *January 1989* with readers' comments on my FUGITIVES piece. Obviously the numbering was wrong. But it gave me an eerie sensation of time being out-of-joint! (Later! I find the explanation in your #63 editorial.)

#64 was next, *August, 1989*, with the ROLLING HEADS piece. Next: #65 and it doesn't seem to be dated, but I located it in *May 89*. Can't be possible! Time still out-of-joint somehow?...

#66 next, *March 1990*, with Szekeres' beautiful Portfolio. I was still under your genzine's spell. (Indeed, I'll be now rereading all the old stories and locs thoughtfully. Studying your artists and loccers!) #67, *May 1990*, came next. Elegant and lovely still! #68 next, *August 1990*. (You pubbed a lot of thick zines that year, and good ones.) The Arrow piece was in that one.

Next: #69, *January 1991*, a huge zine, with a lovely cover, by Mark McLeod. Very haunting. Also your report of your adventures in the Hindu Kush. Really first-rate! Mark McLeod's portfolio in it is splendid too. Another lovely cover by Mark in #70 *March 1991*. Such a dignified production and so full of good material! (I really love those McLeod covers.

Yet another exquisitely-hued McLeod cover in THE MENTOR 71, *June 1991*. (An Arrow piece in it too).

After the gorgeous covers, THE MENTOR 72's cover seems a let-down, though I enjoyed the story it illustrates, as I recall. I had stuck in this ish your card from the Volgacon! Great fun to get! Your report and photos of the Con were a pleasure to have, too.

THE MENTOR 73: *Jan 1992*. Your report on Volgacon ended with this ish, still very enjoyable.

Peggy Ranson's intensely-hued cover is very impressive. #74 next, *April 1992*. THE MENTOR goes on being dignified and lovely and profound too in its material, even the locs, frequently. I just loved your zine, of all I've seen in fanzines in a coon's age. (Since 1961).

THE MENTOR 75 next (*July 1992*). Peggy Ranson has a lovely mind as her art makes evident, and nothing can quite match her illo on page 24. I've always loathed the concert of long-bearded grandfather gods, but hers is so amused and amiable-looking as he offers the child stars like toy balloons, I just loved it.

But #76? (*October 1992*), with a shocking cover? Well, after the hundreds and hundreds of fanzines I've seen since 1992, I'm inured (I thought) to shock. Some fan art is silly, some lovely, some intriguing; on the whole usually enjoyable no matter how bizarre. But the *terror* in the fleeing cover female's face was too *real* for amusement. Well, I didn't comment in my loc. I thought: "I'll see..."

#77 brought another dreaming Peggy Ranson cover (*January 1993*). But, good Lord! FERAL KILLERS? Such flabby creatures depicted, I was really concerned. "What's happening to Ron's discerning taste?" I thought it over, glanced back at older issues, searchingly. As for "Steve Carter", (p. 23), I thought it was a very well-done illo (I'm talking again of #76). The thing was, I couldn't relate the obvious skill at drawing this "Steve Carter" showed with the FERAL KILLERS by "Carter and Carcinogen". (I didn't make the connection at once). I meanwhile read your OUT OF Oz on all the new horror zines being pubbed "down under", and noted that Chris Masters was in charge of distribution.

"Ah, that's the guy!" I thought, the one who fancies himself a Satanist, and I recall I pulled his leg about it." I reread in #76 Chris Master's loc declaring himself a near atheist and suggesting I write him for info. "By damn, I will!" I thought, just boiling over 77's FERAL KILLERS. Whoever Carcinogen was I wanted to lambast him, pin his ears back, for making THE MENTOR look suddenly so tasteless. Such flabby creatures and so pitiful, in his comic strip! No horror about it. Just poor taste. I thought Chris would pass on to the artist my low opinion and I wrote rather strongly to Chris. (I didn't keep a copy of my letter. I never do, nowadays). On page 30 of 77 you republished Peggy Ranson's exquisite "God-with-a-yarmulka" and the little infant on his lap, playing with stars. It relieved a bit of the ugliness of the comic strip but it no longer belongs.

Certainly, too much sweetness and light can be cloying. But what maddened me was the drooling style of the artist (Steve Carter) making females look so creepy. Female animals, female birds, female fish, I bet also, lizards too for all I know, (and I've had, and still have, lots of contact with wild life) are beautiful to admire. There seems to be a law of nature that freaks can still be admirable, and anybody who's looked through volumes on the world's wild life will recognise that freakish-to-our-minds creatures do exist. But they're usually quaint and probably have amusing traits. But those poor female pseudo-kangaroos (dinosaur types with woman's breasts that look ready to be bitten off by the first passing monster)? Simply unconvincing, and I felt indignation, as a female myself who respects my own fellows of the female sex, (as well as of the male sex, when not on the rampage as in Bosnia right now).

Well, I chuckled mightily over your readers' reactions in THE MENTOR 78. (And that was another creepy Steve Carter cover by the way. All those tubes and brain-stuff on display. Not in any far-off galaxy would such a creature exist).

Now, I have to confess the new strip got me interested and I'm even curious as to what happens to that Earth female when she wanders off by herself among the queer kangaroo-like mammalian females who lay eggs still. Does she join their pack? I suddenly want to know. Steve has hooked me. (Avant, retro-Satanas!) But I'll be waiting for the next Mentor to learn what occurs.

I really chuckled over readers' reactions. Very well put, on the whole! Ah, and you yourself, me lad, having to take with you a "sacrifice" to visit the Gargoyle Club! Silly! Now look! Those kids fancy themselves enlightened atheists. So there's no god and no devil, yes? So why *play* at Satanism? I've run into it personally ... Satanists who recognised me as one they really wanted to hook and get to join them. (I do have certain psychic powers, you know, that at least Satanists take seriously.) They *know!* The only thing is, whatever gifts I inherited from my mother's side, (and her maternal forebears), are serious to have and a responsibility, not for calling up spooks. In short, I do believe in "animate" spookiness, but I also know that there is a focus of brightness to counteract it into which one plugs when required.

When we lived further south (in the 1960s till 1983), a neonazi, a wealthy socialite in a closed German community drove all the way up the mountain to try to "convert" me and our son Tony. (We were just the two of us available for his try right then). We scared him that evening. I mean, as we

argued that Satan was bunkum (no matter how "real") and that goodness was positive and powerful, he got tempted to "join our side". "But Satan will be angry," he chattered wistfully. Then spooky things began happening and he got just terrified. I laughed at him.

When the meat being broiled began spitting away, he thought it was Satan and leaped to look closer; and down came the big wooden drying-rack hanging right over him and gave him a good bump on his skull. He fled back to his chair and sat there staring at it horrified.

"Bah, that's not Satan," I said. "The drying-rack does tip sometimes." But he "knew" Satan was angry. and soon fled, but with the warning to me that he'd make me fall from a high cliff even though living many kilometres away.

"You can't," I said. "I've got Jesus." (I'd noted every time I used that name he winced, sort of crumpled and hunched up like terrified, before he'd rally. He also tried another tack!)

"Your studies could make lots of money for you".

"I give them away free," I said.

"That's wrong. I could help you sell them somewhere."

"I give them away free," I repeated. (He wasn't going to hook me with the "Mammon hook").

Well, for a night or two I did wake up suddenly and see him like a vision trying to make me fall down a cliff. "Jesus!" I said, with a chuckle, knowing it was the magic word to frighten him. Soon he faded out of our lives evermore.

(He's even told us his "other, secret name", by the way. In a sense he was more honest with us than we were with him. We were pulling his leg, having a good laugh. He was so serious.)

I do find Christians so boring, I don't like to have myself labelled thus. After all, I believe in all sorts of heathen things, including Mother Earth, (a personal goddess), Karma, and what-not. Just a hodge-podge! But I draw the line at Steven Carter's art, and Carcinogen better watch out too! Yeah!
(10.6.93)

Would you believe it, Ron! I'm still going through your MENTORS! First off, I treated myself to a rereading of all the stories. You *do* have good writers!

Re: Duncan Evans & COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS (THE MENTOR 78, April 1993). I *really* enjoyed it!

Buck Coulson being called "Bob" by a disembodied voice! He's absolutely non-psycho. How *weird!* How explain it? I don't know!

Bill Congreve's Reviews.. He remarks:

"All of mankind must be responsible for" (the use or misuse of "death weapons") "because is it all of mankind which will face the consequences".

But we shouldn't blame science. It's our love for violence & aggression to blame. Scientists have to earn a living too and munitions factories are good clients. It's a dilemma for any conscientious scientist!

Over BBC I just learned of a "string of asteroids due to hit Jupiter on July 20th", I think it was, this present year. I marvel at the precision now available in calculating Celestial mechanics! It sounds like magic yet it's a purely intellectual form of reasoning.

The BBC program also described a "photo" of a sea of electrons, "very lovely". I was bewitched! It was published in NATURE, if I heard it aright. Local interference here is bad - walkie-talkies of Lumber-truck drivers & such, & gossip of wives at Lumber estates around us here!

Well! Can't say I cared for Evan Rainer's tale.

The HISTORY OF ARGENTINE SF reminds me of how I welcomed the copies I could buy in the 1950s in Buenos Aires. But once we moved to the Sierras by 1961 I saw no more issues. Besides right then I was reading up on every book I could get from libraries on the Spanish Conquest & Colonisation of South America & the natives' fates, & had begun studying their myths & languages. No time for anything else!

"Carcinogen & Carnage" *this* time produced an interesting story although the two male heroes are creeps (as the authors intended, no doubt). The femosaurs looks less flabby too!

Now: your loccers: Alderson criticised the "biological inaccuracies" in THE MENTOR 78's strip. I resented the implied scorn of the artist and story-teller for the female's concerned. No female in the wilds could be that flabby!

Grai Hughes made potent remarks I could applaud. The whole paragraph about it is so well said.

Brent Lillie likes "porno is an abattoir"? It *was* very graphically drawn - I don't criticise Carter's talent. I regret the sadism it displays. No *woman* could like that particular scene. Nasty little brats! (to dwell on it!).

Duncan Evans, now!

"Borderline-obsessive" is a good description he supplies. Isn't Bosnia (and the three-cornered hate-filled fighters there) bad enough? Why flagellate THE MENTOR's readership with *more!*

Give me COLDMACE'S quaint nastiness any day!

Rod Marsden! It was a "nice treat" was it? What's your present age, me lad?

Don Boyd has joined the hand-clapping committee, I see. But it's true the reptilian part of me is aroused. Watch out for China's old T'Liung dragon in your dreams, Don Boyd! (It was a former pet of mine for years till I reformed!)

Sean Williams want *more?* Ah! Sean!!

Shane Dix's evocation of Charles Manson & Freud I admire.

Ah, but my respect goes out especially to courageous Joe Fisher. No, you're no prude, Joe! You have good taste, that's all! Your *not* "terribly naive". *They* are! Pretending to be so blood-thirsty & dabbling w/nonsense they fancy is "Satanic". They never ran *into* Satan or they'd cower or be more discrete.

Satan can be a *gentleman*, you know. I'm not defending "him", I loathe him. But even the Archangel Michael supposedly treated him with courtesy in one story. "The Lord rebuke you", Michael only said.

I had to cope w/a silly old woman who fancied Satan served her purposes - for years! But she ended up repentant & asked that I wangle it so she could be my daughter in her next life, "to learn happiness" from me, as she put it. she was always so unhappy!

"Of course!" I said. She died happily, age 88, & I know who she is now. A *lovely* girl! New-minted!

"Satan" is an archaic Chinese form, (and also as per John Allegro in his SACRED MUSHROOM AND THE CROSS), has the "onion" for his code-name (among others), ie he's the mushroom.

The Window Of The Frightened Heart through which fearful sights are glimpsed is the phonetic the Chinese used in this case. Needless to say, I studied that clue thoroughly. Hallucinations aren't healthy if you want to stay sane. Avoid them, I say. (12.6.93)

SHORT EDITS:

MARGARET PEARCE, Belgrave, VIC. Thank you for your last issue of TM 78. I enjoyed COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS by Duncan Evans with uncritical pleasure, and snickered over Brent Lillie's irreverent little short ESCAPE FROM YINN. Are these offerings because you are feeling guilty about all this doomsday stuff you are feeding your fans? (5.5.93)

B. J. STEVENS, Sydney NSW. Sean Williams' piece [in TM 79] was entertaining and informative as were the letters from readers. I do think that some of the artwork could be better... but perhaps you receive little that is of good quality. Steve Carter's is well rendered but he keeps going back again and

again to dinosaurs. Still, that's not a complaint, just an observation. (-.5.93)

TONIA WALDEN, Carina, QLD. I'm not surprised that you received polarised reactions to Steve Carter's story in THE MENTOR - depiction of sex and violence will do that every time (unless of course it is in a publication that deals exclusively with that sort of thing). I must admit my taste runs to more subtle horror, but each to his own. I occasionally write to Antionette (the other half of SCAR) so I have seen quite a bit of their work. They recently got some of their pictures published professionally in a role-playing game book which was good for them.

I haven't finished reading all the magazines yet but the quality is impressive - I'm glad you included a short spiel on how much work goes into THE MENTOR, as I'm sure some people who have never done a fanzine before think people whip them up in an afternoon or something (I used to do a role-playing fanzine before we started the mini-comics). 19.5.93)

GEOFF JACKSON, Lincs, England. You certainly packed a lot in [THE MENTOR 77], and well presented and easily read by someone like myself who used reading spectacles. The articles were most informative, especially

(cont. p. 48)

THE FETCH by Robert Holdstock. Warner pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 396 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Robert Holdstock is one of Britain's best fantasy authors writing about primitive Britain. In THE FETCH he uses the trapping of that old land, but set in the present.

Michael Whitlock is an adopted son to Richard and Susan. They paid Michael's mother to let them adopt him and they knew that there was some difficulty with the birth. When they got the baby back home the trouble started - dirt and rubbish nearly smothered the young baby and this sort of thing continued until they gave up and swapped houses with one of their neighbours. Richard the father, never did get along with his son, and Michael was really after his father's

love. Michael had a friend, "Chalk Boy" who he played with, and who helped him "fetch" pretty things for his father - things of gold and precious stones from antiquity, usually. His father fell on bad times, sold some of the items and became in debt with a seller. From then on things only went downhill.

THE FETCH is not the usual Holdstock offering - this novel is more science fantasy, mixed with a bit of horror rather than straight fantasy.

COLD PRINT by Ramsey Campbell. Headline pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1962-1990. 500 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

Ramsey Campbell is one of the best horror writers in England, and one of the best in the world. This anthology is one where he focuses his attention on the Cthulhu Mythos of Lovecraft.

The twenty-two stories in this volume cover that Mythos in depth and readers will get their fill, but not overfull, of his excellent writing. The contents are: LOVECRAFT - AN INTRODUCTION; CHASING THE UNKNOWN; THE CHURCH IN HIGH STREET; THE ROOM IN THE CASTLE; THE HORROR FROM THE BRIDGE; THE INSECTS FROM SHAGGI; THE RENDER OF THE VEILS; THE INHABITANT OF THE LAKE; THE PLAIN OF SOUND; THE RETURN OF THE WITCH; THE MINE ON YUGGOTH; THE WILL OF STANLEY BROOKE; THE MOON-LENS; THE STONE ON THE ISLAND; BEFORE THE STORM; COLD PRINT; THE FRANKLYN PARAGRAPHS; A MADNESS FROM THE VAULTS; AMONG THE PICTURES ARE THESE; THE TUGGING; THE FACES AT PINE DUNES; BLACKED OUT and THE VOICES AT THE BEACH.

The INTRODUCTION is that - an introduction to H. P. Lovecraft. It sets the mood and background for the following stories. I like Lovecraft's stories - Campbell is truly a student of his, and sometimes surpasses the master.

ELEPHANTASM by Tanith Lee. Headline trade pb. dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1993. 310 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

Tanith Lee is another of England's horror writers, but of a later generation than Campbell. Her fantasy tends to be more of modern days, though ELEPHANTASM tends to belie this.

Annie Ember was born of the lower classes in an England where the Empire was still in full flower. She had a sister who was very close. Annie first came into contact with the phantasmagoric when she went down a narrow alley and discovered a small shop that really should not have been there. Therein she purchased a small ivory elephant.... Later Rose was murdered and later still Annie found herself working as a scullery maid for Sir Hampton Smolte and his family. Sir Hampton had spent much of his career in India and had brought many things back from that dusty and dry continent, including his hatred of it.

The young woman thought her life would get much better when she caught the eye of Rupert, Sir Hampton's son, but the son, like the father has secrets and desires that were unusual for the quiet English countryside. Soon she found herself in events that terrified her. Well-written fantasy by one of those who loves her subject.

SIGN FOR THE SACRED by Storm Constantine. Headline trade pb., dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1993. 373 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

Storm Constantine is another of the new crop of English writers, though in this case she writes fantasy, rather than horror. Some may say that Tanith Lee writes fantasy, but its background leads down into the crypt rather than the wood.

The world that SIGN FOR THE SACRED is set in is ruled by religion. The Church of Ixmarity and its god Ixmar are on top of the heap and intend to stay there. Throughout the years heretics have burned to keep that church safe, though now, under Archmage Sleeve they are put more painlessly to death. His latest problem is the (false) prophet Resenence

Jeopardy and his growing band of followers. The problem is to find Jeopardy. This search is shared by, but not together with, four other people - Lucien who is a dedicated follower of Jeopardy; Cleo, who comes into contact with one of Jeopardy's children when the boy is brought to her house to be killed; and lastly Delilah and Trajan, an unlikely couple who are thrown together by circumstances and who must stay together by necessity and to whom the attainment of meeting Jeopardy might mean their salvation in more ways than one.

The cover of this edition is one of those strange ones in purple on rock, with feathers and a portrait enthroned with laced twigs. Solid and readable fantasy.

ELVISSEY by Jack Womack. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1993. 319 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

ELVISSEY is set in the future world of Dryco, the world spanning company which has its tentacles into everything. Starting off in New York City, the world of Isabel and her husband John is expanded when they are sent by Dryco to an alternate time-line to kidnap Elvis Presley and bring him back to Dryco. In Dryco's time Elvis is still the King, though dead, and control of his millions of followers is a goal for those running Dryco.

Being black, Isabel must go on a course of the drug Melaway to get rid of her melanin. She also dyes her hair blonde - in Elvis's world they find a singular lack of negroes in the USA - apparently Germany made a separate peace with Britain in 1939 and expanded its sphere of influence. And it seemed that the USA of that time had asked the Germans how they controlled their excess populations.... Elvis is brought back, but is damaged, both physically and mentally in the process (he was not all that stable anyhow; when Isabel and John found him, he had just murdered his mother). After much manipulation the three make their way to England where Dryco plans to show Elvis to his adoring followers. Needless to say, not all goes as to plan.

If you like cyberpunk, you'll like this story, though the slang takes a bit of concentration till you get used to it.

FORWARD THE FOUNDATION by Isaac Asimov. Doubleday h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1993. 416 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Asimov's last novel, and which details the beginning of the Foundations and the events through to Seldon's death.

The Foundation books are probably Asimov's best known novels, the first trilogy rightly so. There has been another volume set in the time before FOUNDATION - PRELUDE TO FOUNDATION. This latest novel delves further into the life of Harry Seldon and into the set up of psychohistory. The writing isn't as bad as it was in PRELUDE TO FOUNDATION, though Americanisms ("mom") have crept in. There is one chapter which is out of sequence (chapter 2 in Part 4 should be been sometime after chapter 8 - in Chapter 2 he first meets the Chief Librarian Zenow, in Chapter 8 he still hadn't met Zenow...) but all in all the novel gets better the more it unfolds. Of course if the reader reads these novel in the time order of the universe of the novels, then the climax of the original trilogy is lost.

There are hundreds of thousands of Asimov fans who are also fans of the Foundation series - this is the last

novel that will be coming from the typewriter of Asimov, and really is a must for those readers.

THE GALAXY GAME by Phil James. Millennium trade pb., dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 212 pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

There are more and more authors being published in the UK who consider themselves to be humorists. And their publishers do too. Phil James is one of these authors - and the publisher says in the blurb: "Straight out of the idiots-in-space traditions of *Red Dwarf* and *Hitch Hikers' Guide* ... and a new British humorist is born".

THE GALAXY GAME is set on a space ship called the *Pioneer*, and the story is about the adventures on that ship of a mangy group of misfits, including a robot with a positronic brain. Arnold the sort-of-hero has many adventures on this ship, many having to do with the Empire, and space battles and strange goings-on in the *Pioneer*, in which he has trouble following events.

All these humorist sf novels are pretty low key, except for the destruction of the Earth in one certain series, so they aren't really gripping space operas. They do make an easy read, though, when you don't want to strain your brain cells. So if you've got a drizzly, cold day, this may while away an hour or so.

A NOMAD OF THE TIME STREAMS and THE DANCERS AT THE END OF TIME by Michael Moorcock. Millennium trade pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1971-1981. 457 pp and 538 pp. A\$24.95 ea. On sale now.

Volumes 6 and 7 of The Tales of the Eternal Champion, the continuing reprinting of Michael Moorcock's strange tales of the far future or the alternate past, this series of a total of 14 volumes looks to be the publishing feat of the decade.

Volume 6 - A NOMAD OF THE TIME STREAMS - contains the novels THE WARLORD OF THE AIR; THE LAND LEVIATHAN and THE STEEL TZAR. The thread throughout all three novels is Captain Oswald Bastable who is thrown out of time and finds himself in a future world (of his own) that he finds strange, to say the least. It is also strange to us - set in a 1973 where the British Empire still holds sway with fleets of mighty airships - Bastable meets Una Persson and a kaleidoscope of events that have him holding on to a shivering reality with slipping hands.

Volume 7 - THE DANCERS AT THE END OF TIME - continues the series with the novels AN ALIEN HEAT; THE HOLLOW LANDS and THE END OF ALL SONGS. Jherek Carnelian (a far-future ancestor of Jerry Cornelius) and Mrs Amelia Underwood meet up and join forces to try to understand the utterly strange society they find themselves in; a society that is dreamlike but could be deadly.

The novels in both these volumes were mostly written in the early 70's and the psychedelic qualities of the novels can overwhelm the reader. Vintage Moorcock.

NON-STOP by Brian Aldiss. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1958. 269 pp. A\$12.95, On sale now.

There are two top classic sf novels about societies that live in totally enclosed spaces. One is DARK UNIVERSE

by Daniel F. Galouye, the other is NON-STOP. There is possibly a third -

The world of NON-STOP is a world which the reader will readily fall into as he or she reads the adventures of Roy Complain of the Green tribe as he and the priest Marapper set out to explore their world. A world of inspection ways, strange growths and even stranger people. NON-STOP was Brian Aldiss's first novel, and it set the pace for those that followed, including HOTOUSE, which has the same far-future atmosphere.

The principle myth that permeates the novel is that of the generation starship, with strange legends of the Giants - those who run the ship - visiting the vast overgrown areas of the world they live in. There are other tribes, and there are legends that people were better off before.

If you haven't read this novel, get it. The ending may startle the reader, but the background was there all along. *Recommended*.

RED DUST by Paul J. McAuley. Gollancz h/c dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1993. 315 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

A Hugo contender, mark my words.

Set on a future Mars that is quite some time in the future, Mankind has commenced to terraform Mars, but the political events back on Earth are impinging on to the project. The USA has sunk politically, leaving the Chinese to complete the terraforming, with them sending millions of Tibetans to continue the project. Then the Chinese lost momentum, and the giant project, with its bio-engineered animals, viruses and plants, swung to a halt and started to reverse itself, the permafrost freezing again and the water from the aquifers seeping back into the ground.

Wei Lee is the grandson of one of the Ten Thousand - the ruling elite of Mars, many of whom are suspended in a life-after-death in the information cloud out near Jupiter. Their bodies may be dead, but their after-life lives on. Revolution is brewing on Mars, though, and Wei Lee is soon infected (liberally) with the fever. He is joined by various companions who help him in his endeavour to bring the rule of government back to the people.

An excellent novel - and the cover actually accurately portrays a scene from the novel, as well as being quite well executed. *Recommended*.

WHEEL OF STARS by Andre Norton. Tor pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1983. 318 pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Norton has written many fantasies - twenty four fantasy/sf novels are listed in one of the early pages of the volume, and her Witch World novels have made her reputation. Her single novel stories though, are what carries her work, and WHEEL OF STARS is one of her later ones.

Swennan Daggert is a modern Ms who is well able to take care of herself. Especially when she meets the handsome Lyle. That meeting precipitated events which pitched her into a world of action and danger. A world where the horoscope and paraphernalia of the world of the psychic create and lean on events that lead her on to more adventures.

Norton's readers will enjoy this book, especially her female readers. The plot is of the style that is somewhat romantic, though the adventure and warrior priests and

savage animals roving through the alternate world should be enough to satisfy the jaded palate of older readers.

Fantasy adventure for the younger readers.

JUNE 29, 1999 by David Wiesner. Clarion h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 30 full colour pp. 23.5 x 28 cm. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This book is obviously made for schools and/or libraries - it has reinforced binding.

The story is simple - a young science student is conducting a science experiment with hydroponic vegetables and sends them up in balloons to the ionosphere. She waits in anticipation for some to return. What does return are enormous vegetables, that drift down with the winds from the sky. Giant cabbages, cucumbers, Lima beans, artichokes and parsnips fill the skies. The news is full of them as people rush about trying to retrieve them. Holly is left wondering just what happened to her experiment to produce all the bounty. Then she notices something....

The full-page colour artwork is really something - it is first class and is worth the purchase price of the book. If you have any sf or science orientated teenagers, or pre-teens, this volume will make a great present - or even buy it for yourself. Well worth looking into.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES by Ian McDonald. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 248 pp. A\$38.95. On sale now.

Ian McDonald has written some excellent novels - KING OF MORNING, QUEEN OF DAY and HEARTS, HANDS AND VOICES two of them. This current release is a collection of his short stories.

They are: GARDENIAS; RAINMAKER COMETH; LISTEN; SPEAKING IN TONGUES; FRAGMENTS OF AN ANALYSIS OF A CASE OF HYSTERIA; APPROACHING PERPENDICULAR; FLOATING DOGS; ATOMIC AVENUE; FRONDS; WINNING and TOWARD KILIMANJARO. McDonald has got a good grasp of science, or he can put forward his scientific ideas in a form the reader can readily grasp.

Most of the stories are sf or speculative fiction. The most powerful story in the book, and one which every reader should read sometime is FLOATING DOGS, which is about programmed animals in a war fought against either robots or computers. FRAGMENTS is a fantasy, but is probably the second best story in the volume. It too is an excellent story, this time with a powerful theme about a woman whose mania passes through her worldline.

The other stories are also worth reading - this is a book to buy yourself or ask your library to get it for you.

STREETS OF BLOOD by Carl Sargent and Marc Cascoigne. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1992. 278 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

A Shadowrun pb, this time the world of the near future plays host to Jack the Ripper, as he stalks the streets of a future London.

There is also a conspiracy that must be plumbed and exposed - a conspiracy that has its roots in power and its tentacles into scores of pies. Manipulation of people and events are everyday and the shadowrunners who find

themselves caught up in the struggle find themselves flat out trying to stay alive. They are a mixed group - Rani the Ork samurai, who came from the gutters and was destined to be of great help to the others - Geraint, a lord from Wales, Serrin, an American elf who brought his talents across to help his colleagues and Francesca, who was destined to live up to her name as an enchantress of the old school.

The Shadowrun series till now hasn't been all that bad - adventure novels for those younger readers which mix science fiction and fantasy and games skills to create a reading experience that those younger readers can understand and get their teeth into. You might like to give some young readers these as a gift.

OBERNEWTYN by Isobelle Carmody. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 248 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The first in the Obernewtyn Chronicles - the other published novel being THE FARSEEKERS, which was reviewed last issue. A third in the series is in the works.

This novel was given an in-depth review by Bill Congreve in his column IN DEPTH in THE MENTOR 78. In it he said, among other things, that "some of the themes and ideas are reminiscent of more weighty tomes as Orwell's 1984 yet they are treated by the author, and then published as commercial fiction" and that he didn't think it would be published in the US, as "It isn't 'safe' enough". If you want to know what he was talking about, and read of a post-holocaust world where certain powers are coming out in the populace, and where those who display those powers are hunted through that populace, then you will enjoy this novel. There are not that many Australian fantasy authors, and not all that many are women. Many of these don't write in the fantasy tradition established overseas by those writing solely in the genre, but those that aren't are refreshing, though sometimes lack the sophistication this brings.

The series was written for children, though this time Penguin has published it, not in the Puffin edition, but in the more adult-orientated Penguin one. The story is straight forward and teenagers as well as adults will enjoy reading it and I am sure it will sell well.

THE POSITRONIC MAN by Isaac Asimov and Robert Silverberg. VGSF h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 223 pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

The last collaboration by Asimov and Silverberg. Based on the story THE BICENTENNIAL MAN, this is an expanded version of the story, with many more details that flesh in the story and give more background to the robot Andrew Martin.

The plot commences with the delivery of the newest in a line of robots - the latest in the Positronic robot series. They were still a general pathway robot - and Andrew was delivered to a private citizen who was head of one of the government technological committees. He, his wife and two daughters soon found Andrew irreplaceable and he grew to be one of the family. They found he had an artistic streak and soon he was amassing a fortune selling his wood carvings and furniture. Decades passed and eventually he showed to the robotic company that he was an artistic genius. They discontinued his line, but he managed to get a court order protecting his existence.

The novel then goes further into the differences/what it means to be a human, and Andrew, by years and degrees, becomes more human, physically, at least, replacing his metallic parts with biological ones, till he is more an android than a robot. And at last there is one last step to take.... Not a bad novel to end your career with, even if it is a collaboration.

THE GATES OF NOON by Michael Scott Rohan. VGSF trade pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 328 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.

A really strange fantasy, this one. Set in the present day, it concerns a strange freighter that sails seas that are pretty hard to get to...

Rohan has written a fantasy trilogy, THE WINTER OF THE WORLD, and the novels THE ICE KING and A SPELL OF EMPIRE. These seem to be a prelude to this novel in that he gets better as he writes. THE GATES OF NOON is quite a departure from those mentioned previously. Most of the action takes place around Thailand, where the protagonist, Stephen Fisher, is expecting the delivery of a container of goods which is quite valuable. Unfortunately it is stolen - by a crew of spooks and led by a European who the slugged guard says looks like Fisher...

The adventure is well told and the writing is slick - the reader is sucked in right from the start. The novel is nearly a set-in-the-present one, though the fantasy elements begin to pull about halfway through until by the end the reader is convinced of its reality.

If you don't like the usual sword and sorcery novels, or the quest and gods epics, you might give this a try - it is something new and you will probably enjoy it.

ZENITH by Dirk Strasser. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. (C) 1993. 394 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Bill Congreve reviewed this book in depth in the previous issue of THE MENTOR. He liked it, and I can say the same.

Dirk Strasser is co-editor of AUREALIS, and one can see his preferences in sf and fantasy by the stories that magazine publishes. What we have here is a quest novel of a kind - the protagonists have to climb an enormous mountain (a theme that comes up every so often in fantasy and sf - Leiber and Silverbert have both done novels with that theme, as has Gordon R. Dickson) and the novel follows their adventures and trials as they ascend. The adventures are not only those of the climb itself - they must go through countries that are alien to themselves and must fight through landscapes that have their own fill of strange creatures. They also must fight a powerful foe, one who is much more powerful than themselves.

Australian fantasy can be of a local or an international theme - there are not many of the former, nor is ZENITH one of these. The novel is quite long, but it is easy to read and assimilate. Good for a long weekend read.

TERROR AUSTRALIS edited by Leigh Blackmore. Coronet pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1993. 348 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

I went to the Book Launch at Galaxy Bookshop for this one and met many of the authors there, and basically had a good night.

There are 28 short stories in this anthology, plus a long introduction by Leigh Blackmore, and if I list them it's take up most of the column. Instead I'll list the authors: Leanne Frahm; Terry Dowling; Paul Lindsey; Sharon A. Hansen; Eddie Van Helden; Dr. John Hugoe-Matthews; Louise M. Steer; Robert Hood; Guy Boothby; B. J. Stevens; Kendall Hoffman; Steven Paulson; Christopher Sequeira; Ann C. Whitehead; Geoff O'Callaghan; Rick Kennett; Sean Williams; Sheila Hatherley, Leigh Blackmore; Michael Bryant; Sue Isle; Dirk Strasser; Cherry Wilder; Bill Congreve; Stephen Dedman; Greg Egan and Bill Fewer. The above list reads much like a list of the Gargoyle Club members, and many of the above have also been published in TM in one way or another.

The stories themselves? They range from forgettable to biting and well told. I particularly liked HANTU-RIMBA by Dr John Hugoe-Matthews, LOSING FAITH by Louise Steer, JOHNNY TWOFELLER by Kendall Hoffman and OUT OF THE STORM by Rick Kennett. Get this if you wish to find out what is being done in mostly well-written short Oz horror. Each story is illustrated in b&w.

TEK VENGEANCE by William Shatner. Pan trade pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. (C) 1993. 224 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

The continuing Tek Lord series. If you've been following that series you'll know that this novel is the second published by Pan Macmillan, but it is actually the fourth published.

TEK VENGEANCE opens up with an agent of the International Drug Control Agency getting blow up by his woman friend. Not that the woman was a woman - human, that is. She was a robot and was constructed with a bomb inside her to destruct when the agent kissed her. When the agent died, a piece of information vital to Jake Cardigan was not delivered and because of that Jake found himself in the Brazilian jungle with his friend Sid Gomez, and his girlfriend, Beth Kiddridge found herself in a bad situation and in conflict with the TekLords - those that had blown up the agent.

The book isn't that long; even though it is 224 pp, it is large type on a good quality paper. It is the kind of novel you could give to start someone on sf - someone young. Shatner's name is quite well known, and this type of novel might be such as to bring another reader to the genre of sf.

THE WEERDE, devised by Neil Gaiman, Mary Gentle and Roz Kaveney. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 386 pp. A\$13.95. On sale now.

This one is a strange one. The series was devised by the authors above, and the book is book 2 - book one was THE WEERDE, Book One. The background goes something like this: There are conspiracies in the world, most of them are pushed by humans. But behind those humans are the Weerde, an ancient race of shape changers that have, from the beginning, "guided" humans and their society so that the Weerde were always in charge and their own plan followed.

But behind the Weerde were the Ancients - giant semi-mortal (presumably long-lived...) mutants whose vast size and dark knowledge have so impinged on human mentality that the idea of the old gods and dragons came from these ancient beings of evil. The stories herein are: IMAGINARY TIME by Stephen Baxter; THE GIRL WHO CHANGED

EVERYTHING by Colin Greenland; DEEP IN THE NATIVE LAND by Michael Ibeji; SOUNDS AND SWEET AIRS by Graham Higgins; SERPENT'S BLOOD by Molly Brown; COVER STORY by Liz Holliday; THE IF GAME by Paula Wakefiend; THE LIONS IN THE DESERT by David Langford; THE MISSING MARTIAN by Marcus Rowland; THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE KNOWN WORLD by Elizabeth Young; RED, HOT AND DARK by Charles Stross and a PROLOGUE and an EPILOGUE by Roz Kaveney. I'll let you decide what you think of this one.

THE SORCERER'S APPENDIX by Andrew Harman. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random House. (C) 1993. 229 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

A funny fantasy. To quote from the back-cover blurb: "All is not well in the kingdom of Rhyngill. Despite regular payment of tithes, including PAYE (Pay As You Eat), the citizens are all tired and underfed. Firkin, a lad who is definitely alpha plus in the get-up-and-go department, blames the king, and sets out to find an assassin who will rid the kingdom of its ruler.... It takes a pieman, a magician and a knight with a North Country accent to help Firkin see the error of his ways!"

Harman writes with the same style as Pratchett and as the reader can see from the above, there are similar plot elements and characters. Harman is quite agile in his writing and THE SORCERER'S APPENDIX is not a chore to read. In fact it is quite enjoyable and if you are feeling in the need of a light-hearted read then this one is for you. It is fantasy rather than sf - humorous sf is harder to write, but then fantasy is easier to disbelieve, I think.

These days a good funny novel is really needed with the political and economic scene - which is probably why these sell so well. There are so many people wanting a good laugh that life does not give them - and a good laugh is not what Mills & Boon delivers, either. For a relaxing read, this novel is it.

GLORIANA by Michael Moorcock. Phoenix pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1978, 1993. 368 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

The sub-title of GLORIANA is "or The Unfulfill'd Queen". The cover illustration is a detail from *Miranda and Caliban* by James Ward and shows a blunt nosed plumpish blonde in the drapes of a nineteenth century ankle-length chemise.

Gloriana is the queen who rules Albion - and who controls an empire that spans America and nearly all of Asia. The queen is the country and the country is the queen. It is almost like Elizabethan England - though the two are more closely tied than that queen and country. Gloriana knows this and the only way she can let loose is to let herself go in those emotional ways that men of the 19 century in the Hellfire club were known for. Because of this, her enemies - and she had many - were determined to use this to plan her downfall. The principal person they had to get past was Montfallcon, her Chancellor. Montfallcon had a vast spy network and it fell primarily to him to protect the queen. The one who was most likely to succeed in destroying the queen was Captain Quire, who devoted his life to this aim.

Moorcock has several writing styles - this one is the "civilized" one - there is no blood and gore: the action is

mostly psychological. Still, another interesting volume to add to your collection. He continues to be a voracious writer.

NEW WORLDS 2 edited by David Garnett. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 291 pp. incl author listings. A\$12.95. On sale now.

The second volume of this "magazine". I say magazine because this is more a magazine than a pb, though it is paperback in size. It is filled with black-and-white photographs illustrating the stories; mostly the photos are of the authors. The feeling of the whole is very fannish - the advertisements in the back for the sf magazines, sf bookshops and the BSFA tops this off.

The second volume is also still New Wavish - there is some straight sf - CANDY BUDS by Peter Hamilton is one such, but the majority are not. The works included are: INNOCENTS by Ian McDonald; BRAIN WARS by Paul Di Filippo; CORSAIRS OF THE SECOND ETHER by Warwick Colvin Jr; RATBIRD by Brian W. Aldiss; CANDY BUDS by Peter Hamilton; GREAT BREAKTHROUGH IN DARKNESS by Marc Laidlaw; BRUISED TIME by Simon Ings; VIRTUALLY LUCID LUCY by Ian Watson; THE FACE OF THE WATERS by Jack Deighton; INHERIT THE EARTH by Stephen Baxter; A GADGET TOO FAR by David Langford; JOE PROTAGORAS IS ALIVE AND LIVING ON EARTH and THE NAME OF THE GAME IS DEATH, both by Philip K. Dick. For those who like to see what the New Wave has come to/stopped at.

THE HAND OF CHAOS by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1993. 463 pp incl singularities. A\$29.95. On sale now.

THE HAND OF CHAOS is the fifth novel in the Death Gate saga or series of novels. The first four introduced four different worlds wherein the novels were set - the next three (of which this is one) tell of the aeons-old struggle between Sartan and Patryn as they vie for supremacy.

In this part, the Assassin Hugh the Hand has been resurrected and he is given the job of completing what he had set out to do before he was killed. Haplo and Alfred are again setting out after the evil force that they had found on Arianus which had escaped and they must fight it and destroy or capture it again. The Patryn have various members of their own to protect - Haplo must decide to whether to follow the orders of one of the Patryn or to disobey him.

This series looks to be quite a large one - seven volumes - and fans of Weis and Hickman will find enough here to fill their coffers for some time to come. Now that the four worlds have been set up and partly explored, the two authors can begin setting more action there and building up more background for the other three novels. Quite a tour de force for their fans.

BOOKS PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED:

RED MARS by Kim Stanley Robinson. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1992. 668 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. The story of the first colonists on Mars. One of the best books about the first landings on Mars written in the last twenty years or so. A definite for readers of "hard" sf. Get it if you are an sf fan of any ink.

SPIDERWORLD: THE MAGICIAN by Colin Wilson. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1992. 395 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. The third in the Spiderworld series - Niall's attention is brought to the existence of other cities of humans that had been hidden from the spiders. These unruly humans threaten the peace between other humans and the spiders and Niall must intercede to preserve the peace.

WHITE QUEEN by Gwyneth Jones. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 312 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Quite an interesting read - aliens land in three places on Earth - one is in Africa. Johnny was a journalist who's career was destroyed when he caught a virus that attacked wet-ware. While expatriated in Africa he meets a strange woman who intrigues him - it turns out she is an alien; and the aliens also have politics. The author has been likened to Le Guin. A novel to read slowly to let it soak in.

HEARTS, HANDS AND VOICES by Ian McDonald. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 320 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. I found the whole novel fascinating and could not guess where the author was going in the first 4/5ths of the book. The characterisation is well done and the societies depicted are also well drawn. The novel is leaning towards speculative fiction, but it is still firmly (even though the heroine visits the land of the dead) "hard" science fiction. Worth getting.

AND DISREGARDS THE REST by Paul Voermans. VGSF pb., dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 256 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. The pb of the hardcover reviewed last year. Set in Australia, the author, an actor, has used his knowledge of the theatre to build an interesting novel about an attempted contact of aliens and the attempts of governments to destroy that attempt. It is also the story of two men trying to pull their lives back together after nearly losing them. Not bad for a first novel.

RAGNAROK by D. G. Compton and John Bribbin. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 344 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Set in Greenland, this is an adventure story about a group of scientists who think that the world is going to Hell in a handbasket and decide to do something about it. They set up a Doomsday device and threaten to set it off if the governments of the world don't start working towards peace in their time. All seems to be going well until several squads of men turn up in the vicinity of their boat....

MAGICIAN by Raymond E. Feist. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1982, 1992. 681 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. The "author's preferred edition"; revised with an additional 15,000 words that the author insists that if he had written the novel now, ten years later with his more experience, he would have included. I hope this isn't part of a trend. Heinlein may have much to answer for. I would say this book is for the completists, or those who haven't yet read this book that really made Feist a household name with readers of epic fantasy. If you haven't read it, definitely put it on your *buy* list.

THE FOUNTAINS OF PARADISE by Arthur C. Clarke. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1979. 258 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. The book that, along with that of another sf author, Greg Benford I think it was, put forward the idea of "space elevators" to the general public. The idea caught on and is now featured through the sf mythos. In this novel, which uses different locals on Earth and space, the idea is explored and the tale of the setting up of the elevator into space makes good "hard sf" reading.

TEK LAB by William Shattner. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1991. 223 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. The third in the Jake Cardigan series about the TekLords. This time Cardigan and Sid Gomez must travel to London where the adventure takes them deep into criminal territory - and Excalibur, a gang of terrorists who seem to have some link with the TekLords, who are attempting to do some double dealing and get themselves into the power elite in Britain.

THE THIEF OF ALWAYS by Clive Barker. Fontana pb., dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1992. 229 pp. A\$9.95. On sale now. illus. by Clive Barker. This one is a fable - it is about a house a thousand years old and it's owner: Mr Hood. He had been having children holiday there for all that time. Harvey Swick was such a guest - he thought he would have a good time, and he did. But the house housed dark secrets, and he finds out about these when he tries to leave. Another of Clive Barker's well constructed horror stories.

CRYSTAL LINE by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam trade pb., dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1992. 271 pp. A\$21.95. On sale now. The world of the Crystal singers has had several of McCaffrey's novels set in it. CRYSTEL LINE continues to fill in information above that world and its singular inhabitants - those that sing to cut the crystals. There are other crystals than those ordinarily cut, though. These are the black crystals, and it is much more dangerous cutting them than those others. Killashanda had heard of the planet Opal and the jewel that was a legend there. She and Lars decided to try to find out more of the alien jewel. For McCaffrey fans.

THE CARPET PEOPLE by Terry Pratchett. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1971, 1992. 190 pp. A\$8.95. On sale now. This is a rewritten version of the earlier novel Pratchett did early in his career. It is a novel aimed at children, but adults can read it and laugh, also. I enjoyed it as a piece of entertainment. This is a tale of the Carpet, and the various peoples that live in it. It is a strange country, with monsters and funny people, but the reader can recognise (sometimes with difficulty) the real events and things that the People come across. Fun reading.

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

JACARANDA WILEY - CASABLANCA by Michael Moorcock

- NOMANSLAND by D. G. Compton
- THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY by Paul Voermans
- THE MARTIAN INCA by Ian Watson

- ALLEN & UNWIN - WARPETH by Tony Daniel.
- PENGUIN - SHADOWRUN by Nigel Findley
 - IDEAL WAR by Chris Kubasik
 - THE STATE OF THE ART by Ian
- Banks - CONVERSES WITH REAL
- VAMPIRES by Carol
- Page - THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF ed Clute
 & Nicholls
 - CODGERSPACE by Alan Dean Foster
 - VAMPIRES AT MIDNIGHT ed Peter
 Haining.

THE R&R DEPT (continued from page 41)

the one on Argentine zines, etc. (I never knew they went in for that kind of thing in S. America, so it's clued me up, anyway!) And it was a pleasure to read Andrew Darlington's offering regarding the comics which I, myself remember so well. (I'm familiar with Andy's and Steve Sneyd's work from various mags I read in the UK and from the USA/Canada circuit).

Of the fiction, I liked OBUNAGA'S FINGER the best, and the artwork was ok. (6.4.93)

WAHF:

Andrei Lubenski, David Tansey, Andrew Sullivan, Raymond Rainer and Jim Verran.

Well, that's it for another issue. Money is getting tougher; I'm not accepting short notes as LoCs anymore - nor couple-of-pages fanzines as trades. Sorry. - Ron.