

THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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THE EDITORIAL SLANT by Ron Clarke

There have been quite a few books written by scientists or science writers lately attempting to bring some sort of order to the things brought to light by the "New Physics". Mostly this has been an attempt to have the scientific method explain some of the Mysteries that organised religion has had claim on for millenia.

Several issues ago there was some discussion re scientists and religion - this did bring some comments in the R&R DEPT and shows that discussion about religion is still viable. That mysticism is still rampant in the "real" world can be seen from the burgeoning Astrology columns in the newspapers and women's magazines. This is an interesting phenomenon in that it seems to be primarily women who are drawn to it. I suppose that this says something basic about women.

Since the Middle Ages the role of organised religion has lessened. Through the Nineteenth Century the Church began losing power in its ability to control the masses of people. People's education has also lessened the power of politicians and capitalists (businessmen) such as Henry Ford. The problem has been, of course, what to put in religion's place. Religion gave the moral back-pinning to society. Most of the moral attitudes in Western society started off as directives of the Christian churches. Over time the growth of Common Law has taken on a life of its own and distanced itself from organised religion. Most modern States have laws in their constitutions that prohibit a State religion. and for good reason.

With the collapse of Communism, with one of its central tenants agnosticism, this leaves millions of people without any fall-back as far as faith is concerned. One of the questions one could ask is: does a human being need faith, in the form that organised religion

supplies? The big problem that the Christian religions have is, of course, that their teachings and dogmas, and principally their dogmas, are based in a collection of writings from 2000 and more years ago. Some of those in these organised religions discount the social, moral and psychological advances in those last 2,000 years, and have shown time and time again that they can't adapt. And we all know what happens to organisms that can't adapt.

Over the last ten or so years there has been an apparent increase in crimes of violence and loss of control over the present generation's youth. I say *apparent* because I would think, if one looks over the history of the last two-hundred years, that such crimes of violence and loss of control are events that happen periodically. Especially after times of relatively tight controls over people's lives (eg WW II). One could think back to the razor gangs of the fifties, and the pushes of the last century which flourished in those societies and which, in the long run, were brought under control.

OK, enough of the past. What of the future? If the majority of readers have found nothing else from a quick reading of some of the basic ideas about evolution, one of the main ones they came away with is that if an evolutionary niche becomes vacant, something else evolves to fill it. Are we likely to find something, a something previously unnoticed, evolving to fill the niche vacated by organised religion - or will we get a mutating/adapting present religion?

Back in the fifties, there was a (humorous) idea in sf fandom that *it* would be around to take over the rebuilding of civilisation if it was destroyed by an atomic war (see THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM by Robert Bloch). Nowadays no-one would take this idea at all seriously

(or humorously, if it comes to that). Or would they? One of the main reasons they would not take it seriously is that the mean age of most fans in sf fandom has gradually risen, till it is about thirty-or-so. Much later than the late teens/early twenties of the early 1950's.

It has been readily accepted that humans need to believe in something. From early times gods were invented to explain away events which were natural but people could find no ready explanation for them. Gods were also invented to look after frightened people - primarily when they were sick and for after they died. Death was (and is...) the great leveller, and people, especially older people, were (and are) frightened about death - the great unknown. However with growing education, these myths and mysteries have gradually disappeared, leaving people with no firm base for helping themselves in time of trouble.

There have been science fiction novels about religions in the future - though some are the usual Christian ones - eg A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ. There have been religions enforced by invaders - eg REVOLT IN 2100 by Robert A. Heinlein. And there have been several of the second coming of Christ - eg MESSIAH by Gore Vidal. There must have been novels about a *new* "modern" religion, that appeared out of the blue, so to speak, that started to attract followers, but I can't think of one at the moment (other than STRANGER IN STRANGELAND). There have been some with computers as the principal focus, but mostly these have been political movements.

Those "old" religions usually were started off by prophets. Of course if someone called themselves a "prophet" these days, she or he would mostly attract the loonies. What I am thinking of is what sort of religion would attract the average educated people of today? Yes, I know that the "average educated person" of today is probably racist and gambles and reads the astrology columns 'just to see what it says about my birthdate - not that I "believe" in what it says....' Or, if no organised religion turns up, what will replace those already fading? If one goes into a church, most of the people there are elderly. There are some young families but not many. There are teenagers there, but they go because their parents force them to go, (and who don't go themselves) or because of the "social" activities - they can meet other teenagers there.

What will replace organised religion in the future - or *will* it be an organised religion? - Ron.

JAMES

by Brent Lillie

James awoke.

He was in a room, say about five metres by four. There were posters of surfers and basketballers on the wall, and the stale odour of sweaty feet permeated the air. The linen, though, was clean. The window open.

By the size of the high-top basketball shoes on the floor, he was probably ten or twelve years old, and a boy, which was obvious from the underwear dangling out of a half-shut drawer and the general state of the room. In a tank on a wooden desk in one corner, a lonely goldfish was trying to amuse itself within a sunbeam.

James threw back the blankets and got out of bed and dressed himself in a pair of black shorts and a blue tee-shirt with a surfing motif on the back. He found some clean socks in a drawer and another pair of shoes that didn't smell too bad under the bed. Before going downstairs he fed the fish and went to the bathroom.

The man in the kitchen was overweight, but stylishly attired. He looked like an upper-echelon insurance salesman. The woman turned as James entered the kitchen. The microwave oven chimed and beeped five times. While this happened, she looked James up and down, as though he were a recipe. She was attractive, in a Richie Cunningham's-mother-sort-of-way.

"Do you remember what you did to the kitten when you were four?" she asked.

James stared at her for a moment, then shrugged and shook his head.

The woman turned, the lines beside her eyes deltas of disappointment, and extracted a steaming kitten from the microwave oven. Its green eyes were huge and alive as she placed it in front of James, who had sat down at the table.

"I saved it for you," the woman said.

James picked up his knife and fork and ate. When he'd finished, he pushed what remained of the kitten aside and looked up at his mother.

"I remember now," he said. "I played with it too hard, and killed it."

After breakfast, he explored the house and yard, then went for a walk down the street. The small shop on the corner had coloured streamers hanging in the doorway, to keep the flies out. The man behind the counter was pencil-thin and he had the dark, wavy hair common to bit actors in old black and white movies, shiny slick with paraffin. When James entered the man smiled and ran a hand through his hair and then wiped his palms on the white apron he was wearing.

"Through here," he said to James. After wiping his hands again, he pushed aside a curtain at the rear of the store and gestured James into a room painted entirely in black. All around the walls were framed photographs of cricketers batting, bowling, fielding and posing in groups. James reached up and touched one of the photographs. He was at deep point. The sun was blazing down on a school oval with a badly-prepared turf wicket. Everyone was dressed in whites but the scene had a distinctive fourth division feeling about it.

The bowler reached his mark, swung around and began his run-in. The batsmen rocked back on the balls of his feet then stood on the tips of his toes and clipped down hard on the ball, which bounced twice before reaching James. He fielded it cleanly and returned it to the 'keeper.

While the bowler strolled back to his mark, James watched a fire engine make its way across the overpass two streets away from the oval, its lights flashing, its siren screaming, and the stillness and seriousness of the moment seemed like the end of the world.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the ball, flying like a rocket towards him. It struck him full in the face and bored in, squashing his eyes, his nose, his teeth. The gully fielder ambled over and plucked the ball out of James' face, then threw it to the wicket-keeper who wiped it on his shirt and lobbed it to mid-on.

Stalking away from the wicket, the dismissed batsmen shook his head and swore, his mind full of the shots he should have played. The gully fielder stood back and whistled at the dark cavity in James' face, at the eyes staring up like a frog's from the bottom of a well.

"Nice catch," he said. "Do you remember the catch you dropped in the game against Queens?"

James nodded.

"My face..."

"Hold your breath, then push it upwards, into your head."

James did so.

There was a pressure build-up behind his pushed-in features. A second later his face popped back out like something cold and metallic. The other boy had curly blonde hair and blue eyes. He was the one the girls wanted the bottle to point towards at birthday parties. He was not one of the boys who drank soft drink and tried to belch the loudest. He was handsome, strong and perfect. But James knew this golden child would take his own life at the age of eighteen, and he wondered why.

"Oh, because I was unhappy, that's all," the boy said. "Because of a girl. Look."

He was pointing at a brochure at James' feet. James bent down and picked it up. It was an advertisement for the opening of a new restaurant at the local 24hour service station. The place was all yellow and white and chrome. Before, it had been green and white and chrome. The food looked nothing like the plastic pictures above the counter, and tasted even worse. James sipped on his coffee. He was twenty now. He could tell by the size of his shoes.

The old cowboy sitting opposite folded his arms and leaned back in his chair.

"Yep. That's what's at the centre of the sun, all right. Snowmen. The angels make them strip the skin off dead dinosaurs, and braid it into long ropes."

The cowboy's Stetson changed into a top hat. His white whiskers were shrinking and growing icicles.

"And they braid the strips of skin together. The snowmen, that is. There's millions of snowmen. They melt, you see, James. And they scream and their black coal eyes sit in pools of water, thick as asphalt on the ground."

The wrinkly face was smoothing out and growing pale. The restaurant was cold, very cold. Outside, it was snowing.

"The angels use the braided ropes to make a whip called The Drive. My, it's getting warm in here" the snowman said. James shivered. The table felt like ice where his skin touched it, and his coffee was frozen in its cup. "God uses it, and it can reach everywhere. To the tiniest, most unimportant corners of space and time. Snowmen go to the sun when they melt, but you'll go to a different place, James." The snowman was melting, water dripping and splashing, spilling off the table and chair onto the floor. "Where you're going, people sit at the desks they had at school. The ones with their initials carved on them. God puts the desks six miles apart, and each desk has a telephone. When the telephone rings, you must answer." The thing opposite James was just a wet blob of snow now, sitting on the chair, but it still talked. "Suicide, James. The person on the telephone is going to kill themselves, and you've got to stop them. That's the drive, James, that's...the...drive!"

The snowman was gone, and the snow outside had melted also, into rain. There were three cars suckling at the pumps and one in the parking area. The vacant parking spaces all had dark nebulas of oil, just forward of the middle.

From inside the single parked car, a finger traced a love heart on one of the misted-up rear windows. 'Jenny loves James', it read. James walked over to the car and tried to peer through the glass.

Her head was on his shoulder, one thin arm reaching out, putting the final touches to the heart: a cupid's arrow, straight through the centre. The drive-in screen was a blur through the teeming rain.

"You're nothing like Geoff," she whispered. One of her small nipples was hard and cold and pressed into his naked chest. "I used to watch you, when you were playing cricket. Not Geoff, you. And at the party last week..." she moved sensuously under the blanket and snuggled closer. Her scent wafted up. Perfume and passion, sweetness and sweat, and her thighs felt warm and sticky from when they'd made love, earlier. "I wanted the bottle to point at you, James."

James closed his eyes as she kissed him, and he knew they would make love again soon. The car next to them was full of Geoff's friends. They had already seen the love heart on the window and they couldn't wait to tell.

James was fleeing now, away from the girl, the car, the rain, running through sand and scrub, where the air was sticky and the sun was a white-hot furnace burning behind a hole in a pale-blue sky.

He came to the tree, dead and ash-grey, with one branch that stuck out horizontally about halfway up the trunk, like a crippled arm.

Hanging from the branch was a kitten on a rope, swinging around in a slow circle, it faced him, and stared at him accusingly. James averted his eyes. There was a boy, straddling a trail bike, beside him.

The boy pointed at the tree.

"A kid hung himself here not long ago," he said from behind his full face helmet. The visor was black, and James couldn't see the boy's eyes.

James put his hands in his pockets and squeezed them tight, to hold in the fear.

"Tied one end of a rope around that branch and the other end around his neck, and then rode off on his bike. That way," he pointed. "Towards the sun."

James nodded. He could feel his shirt, sticking to his back.

"It's okay, James," the boy said. "I forgive you. She was just a girl." The boy took off his helmet and his blonde curly hair fell across his forehead. His eyes were the same pale hue as the sky. "Remember how we used to talk about the snowmen at night in bed, James? We always wanted to build a snowman but we never could. It never snows here. It's too hot."

James looked up at last and saw his brother's eyes for the first time. Even when he had been alive, James had never really seen his brother's eyes.

"Build me a snowman one day, in a place where it's always cold."

"I will," James said.

"Goodbye."

"Don't go, Geoff."

"I just have to. You know."

James nodded and Geoff put on his helmet and rode away. James walked over to the tree. On the other side, at the base of the tree in the shadows and the long grass, he sat down, with his back against the trunk and looked up at the branch. The kitten was gone. Something was carved into the trunk just above his head. He turned around. It was a heart, and the message on it made him cry. Great sobs of grief that had been a long time coming.

His parents found him that afternoon. They found their sole remaining son asleep like a forest waif at the base of the tree that had been the instrument of his brother's death, below a crude heart that had an arrow through the middle. His father scooped him up and carried him back to the car. James told him, drowsily, that he wanted to move far away, to some place where it was cold, and it snowed, and they did so, without the slightest hesitation.

You'll know his house if you ever pass it.

In the winter, when the snow lies thick on the ground, the front yard is full of snowmen. James can wake up in the morning and look out his window and see them, and he knows who he is. He is James. And he had a brother called Geoff.

Last Christmas, James got a kitten, and let me tell you, no cat has ever had it so good.

A BOOK FOR BURNING

by Bradley Row

Lyn Elvey asked me to read this book: THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY, by Sheri S. Tepper. She warned me that it was written from what she called "the woman's point of view" and that I might find it a bit difficult. In the end this proved to be a considerable understatement. In fact the book was one of the most thoroughly loathsome pieces of literature I have ever had to wade through. If ever the feminist movement has produced its equivalent of MEIN KAMPF this would have to be it.

It might be best if I were to set forth some of the background against which the events of the novel take place. The story is set in a post-holocaust future, approximately three hundred years after a series of nuclear wars have returned human civilisation to a quasi-medieval level of technology.

It is apparent that numerous societies now dot the surface of the globe each possessing little, if any, contact with the other. In between them are large stretches of radioactive territory which were once the targets of ancient nuclear attacks. In the society with which we are concerned, known as "Women's Country", we find a series of small city-states, all of them notionally independent, and frequently at war with one another. Life in these city states resembles that of ancient Sparta, although the analogy cannot be taken very far. At the age of five, each male child is taken from his mother's arms and delivered to the city garrison which is walled off from the rest of the city and is where nearly all the men live. There they are drilled in the arts of war until they attain the age of twenty-five, when they are permitted to engage in live combat.

In what might at first blush appear to be a chauvinist's dream, women do all the productive work in this society. They sow and till the fields, weave and sew the clothing and even build the houses. Men provide no other service, apart from manning the garrison and defending the city in its frequent times of conflict with its sister city-states. By the same token, however, women are strictly excluded from any form of defence role. To all appearances, especially their own, the men in these garrisons enjoy the lives of a privileged warrior cast, receiving generous rations even when the rest of the city must endure lean times as a result of famine. In reality, as we learn at the end of the novel, the warriors are little more than fatted cattle awaiting slaughter.

The emphasis in each male warrior's life is upon "honour" and wars are a distinctly low scale affair. Technology above and beyond the level of spears, swords and shields is strictly prohibited under a series of rules, known as ordinances, which govern the lives of every man and woman in these city-states. Even the use of medical technology is denied to the warrior if it would serve to relieve him from the consequences of injuries sustained in combat. Knowledge, especially technical knowledge, is a strictly *feminine* preserve, and the act of conveying it to a male warrior is a serious offence against the ordinances. The novel's heroine falls afoul of the ordinances when she

smuggles a series of books to her teenage lover, Chernon, while still a young girl.

As one can guess, contact between the sexes in this society is strictly limited. Marriage, and other incidents of what we should regard as normal family life, does not occur. The men live in the garrisons, training for war, and the women reside in their houses in the rest of the city, rearing children and performing all the other services which enable its economic life to continue. Once a year, during a festival known as carnival, the men leave the garrison and join the rest of the city. The younger boys are permitted to enjoy the company of their mothers, while the older men engage in a series of sexual liaisons with the women, called assignments, as a result of which children are born. Or so it would appear. Outside of carnival it would seem that the men and women remain celibate, apart from occasional and purely commercial encounters between the men and gypsy girls who ply their ancient trade outside the city gates.

Apart from attaining the age of twenty-five, when he becomes a seasoned warrior, the most important stage in the life of a young man takes place when he turns fifteen. It is at this point that he must make an election which will effectively govern the rest of his life. He can choose to abstain from any form of military service and retire to civilian life in the rest of the city by returning through what is known as the "Gate to Women's Country", from which the novel derives its name. By so doing the young man will ensure his safety and security, and as we eventually learn, his posterity as well, but the act of leaving the garrison in this manner is considered shameful and unmanly by his colleagues and is attended with the utmost scorn.

The young men who make this choice are humiliated by being stripped naked, subject to degrading abuse and are eventually thrust into the streets of Women's Country. They can never go back to the garrison. Such is their disgrace that they usually find it impossible to remain in the city of their birth and are obliged to seek their livelihood in a neighbouring town with a different garrison to whose members they will not be known. Even in Women's Country the lot of these conscientious objectors is scarcely enviable: they assume the rank of servitors in the women's households, performing menial chores and possessing little if any civic role to play.

Every city state is governed by a council of women although it would seem that the city's attendant garrison is largely independent of the jurisdiction of this council and under the authority of its own male commander. While the garrisons are frequently at war with one another the women's councils are in fact capable of quite close co-operation with one another as we learn toward the end of the book.

The plot unfolds with excruciating slowness (I did in fact find the book quite boring) but it can be briefly summarised. From a young age the heroine, Stavia and her elder sister, Myra, are wooed by two young boys, not much older than they, from the city garrison. It develops that their interest is not entirely romantic. It would seem that a conspiracy has developed in the garrison, which involves the warriors taking over the city. The reason Stavia and Myra find themselves being courted is that their mother, Morgot, is a member of the Council and a woman of influence in the city's affairs. The conspirators hope to obtain a clandestine link with her through which information can be channelled as they are convinced that the women in the city, or at least their leaders on the Council, are keeping secrets of the utmost importance from the men in the garrison. As it turns out, their suspicions are more than amply confirmed at the end of the novel.

It is generally considered unfair to reveal a novel's surprise ending. However in this review I propose to do so because, unfortunately, it is impossible to intelligently discuss the more disturbing aspects of this work unless I do so.

To cut a long story short an elite group of women on the various city Councils are engaged in a systematic program of selective human breeding. Unbeknown to all the other women in the city they are in fact administered a contraceptive implant which prevents them conceiving during the assignments which take place at carnival time. The women and men who participate in these assignments are deceived into believing that the latter have fathered the children who are born as a result of them. It turns out that the women are later artificially inseminated by semen specially selected by the female elite. This semen is taken from the servitors, the men who have deliberately

chosen to refrain from military duty and to adopt a life of subservience to the city women.

The reason for this eugenics program are spelled out quite clearly at the close of the book and it might be better if I were to quote it directly:

"Three hundred years ago almost everyone in the world had died in a great devastation brought about by men. It was men who made the weapons and men who were the diplomats and men who made the speeches about national pride and defence. And in the end it was men who did what ever they had to do, pushed the buttons or pulled the string to set the terrible things off. And we died ... Almost all of us. Women. Children."

This sort of thinking is almost central to feminism these days. Men, according to this view, are innately and irredeemable aggressive creatures who seek to rape and dominate women and fight with one another. And it would seem that the female elite in Ms Tepper's story are actively seeking to do something about it. They are in effect endeavouring to breed a sort of kinder, gentler type of man, a sensitive new -age guy if you will, by using genes selected from men who have demonstrated, at considerable personal and social cost to themselves, that they are unwilling to engage in aggressive behaviour.

As Stavia asks her mother:

"We're selecting, aren't we?' she said. 'And we'll keep doing it, on and on, and years will go by, and eventually, all our sons will come home, is that it? No more penis-worshippers? No more trumpets and drums and games. Wha will we do then, Margot?'

'We won't have any more wars,' Margot said, holding her tightly. 'Theoretically. No wars at all.'

In other words the wars of this society are little more than elaborate charades staged by the female elite with a view of killing off the more aggressive men and allowing their less aggressive brothers to survive.

Of course this is the less savoury aspect to this feminist utopia, one which, in my opinion, the author endeavours to gloss over and brush aside as best she can. The fact is that in order to preserve their selective breeding program the female leadership is prepared to take some very unladylike measures.

We have already seen how the vast majority of the women are deceived and artificially inseminated against their will, a crime surely ever bit as invasive as that of rape itself but committed in this case not by men but a group of women in pursuit of a utopian program.

Toward the end of the novel the men of the city garrison are beginning to get dangerously close to the truth and the female elite is well aware that this cannot be allowed to happen. In order to prevent this from happening they conspire to spark off another war in which the garrison will go to battle hopelessly outnumbered. None of the men return alive and the deaths of the garrison leaders, the members of the male conspiracy, are personally seen to by Stavia's mother, a leading member of the female elite. The novel makes it clear that the elite has been prepared to employ this kind of ruthlessness on numerous occasions in the past, when the men have threatened to become restive.

Even women are not exempt from an untimely demise if they get too close to the truth or threaten to reveal it. The heroine, Stavia, is informed by her own mother that she will be quickly killed off if she should so much as breathe a word of it.

It would be easy to attack this work on several fronts. The first is the central premise of the novel itself, which is that women are inherently such nicer and less aggressive creatures than men. Given the bloodthirsty behaviour of the female elite in this novel one wonders whether it is not so much the men as the women who are badly in need of a program of genetic modification. The behaviour of the female elite is strongly reminiscent of numerous male leaders throughout history who have been prepared to sacrifice any number of human lives in pursuit of their utopian visions. The names of Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot come readily to mind. This is of course quite ironic but the irony appears to be totally lost on the author.

The more profoundly disturbing aspect of the novel is that the author quite clearly approves of this future society and the steps which its female leadership is taking. This is of course a very serious charge which I am making and, unfortunately, not an easy one to prove, but the following points do have to be made.

Throughout the novel men are depicted in a uniformly unfavourable light. The leaders of the garrison are shown to be stupid, lecherous and violent creatures who are in fact plotting to take over the city and (surprise surprise) rape the women, especially Stavia's mother. When she eventually kills them, by leading them into a trap and ambushing them, we are led to believe that this is an act of condign justice on her part. The author does her best to direct the reader's attention away from the fact that Stavia's mother and the other members of the female elite have been deceiving, duping and murdering these men for years and that some sort of violent response to this state of affairs might well have something to be said for it.

Even Stavia's lover, Chernon, receives a less than sympathetic press at the hands of Ms Tepper. By the end of the novel he is shown to be a petulant, manipulative individual who proceeds to rape Stavia during his first sexual encounter with her. When he marches off to his death with the other members of the garrison the author quite clearly washes her hands of him.

The only males whose behaviour is described in any sort of praiseworthy manner is that of the servitors but being outcasts of the eugenics programme this could hardly be otherwise. So far as their unreconstructed brethren are concerned I can scarcely think of a single example who did not at some stage harbour intentions of raping somebody and more often than not everybody.

This of course serves Ms Tepper's purposes quiet well. By placing her spotlight upon unsatisfactory male behaviour the infinitely more reprehensible behaviour of her heroines is kept in the dark and made less visible by comparison. By way of example the novelist dwells at great lengths upon the male conspiracy to rape the women of the city but conveniently steers away from the unpleasant fact that this is in effect what the female elite have been doing for the best part of nearly three hundred years.

Ms Tepper's sympathies are also made more than apparent when the heroine, Stavia, is at length made privy to the terrible secret of Women's Country. After this information is imparted she never offers anything by way of moral condemnation for what the women have been doing, never queries or has second thoughts about the manner in which they are seeking to achieve their Utopia and at the end of the novel cheerfully dons the mantle of a Councilwoman, joins the female elite and happily participates in their lies and deceptions.

At the outset of this essay I compared Ms Tepper's novel with Hitler's book MEIN KAMPF. By now I think the comparison is quite clear. Woman's Country is in effect a sort of feminist Auschwitz in which the Final Solution is being enacted upon those men who cannot forgo their violent and sexually exploitable ways. And like her German predecessor Ms Tepper offers little but attempted justification for her repellent vision, and seems to be totally unaware of the exquisite irony involved in a feminist elite seeking to improve men by in effect descending to the depths of which, ex hypothesi, only men are presumably capable.

Ms Tepper's thinking may or may not be representative of contemporary feminism. If there are feminists who read Ms Tepper's work and find it attractive I can only suggest that they take a long hard look at themselves before presuming to assert a suspect air of moral superiority with respect to their menfolk. Ms Tepper's message appears to be that her entirely questionable feminist ends justify the means and I did not like it one bit.

- Bradley Row

HUNDRED GATES HOLT

by Duncan Evans

Strange life was burgeoning behind the house at number 14 Hazel Hollow. In the pond at the bottom of the garden, almost under the forest eaves, a pungent frothy raft lay spreading. Young Kingsley Manson had been rinsing his beer-brewing buckets here for months now, and the yeast, a hardy strain, had taken hold.

No mosquitoes *this* season at least: creeping infection had snuffed them in their nursery beds. Serious stuff, that yeast.

Most things nurtured in the shade of Hundred Gates Holt were special.

Kingsley stood, gathering up his buckets. 'Go forth and multiply,' he mumbled, smiling thinly.

'I hope that weren't some kind of clever little insult, mister!' grumbled a voice behind him.

Kingsley jumped, dropping one of his buckets into the cloudy pond. Horrid wet chuckles lapped at his ears as he floundered in after it.

'Is that you, Nanny Bane?' he quavered, not game to look.

'Face a person when yer talkin' to 'em and yer'd know, wouldn't yer?' said the voice.

Kingsley turned slowly, shoulders hunched.

A hideous mound of flesh was reared against the side fence, spilling over the protesting boards in horrible doughy folds. The uppermost blob, almost hidden beneath a crackling mop of steel-grey wool, was watching him closely through peevish little slits.

'Good morning, Nanny Bane,' he croaked.

Nanny Bane sneered, dislodging several forgotten dog-ends from the corner of her mouth. 'It was!' she snapped. 'Til a few moments ago!'

'Something wrong, Nanny Bane?' Kingsley asked, edging out of the pond and back toward the sanctuary of his little bungalow.

'Of course sumfink's wrong!' Nanny Bane roared. 'Yer don't fink I'd waste me breff on such a brainless little dick if everfink was orright, der yer?'

Kingsley shook his head.

The mountain crooked a pudgy digit. 'Come 'ere.'

It was unwise to disobey Nanny Bane. She was reputed to possess *'strange esoteric powers'*. Some even said she was half ogre in the blood -- though those who had seen her up close put it at nearer three-quarters.

Kingsley approached. A slablike hand descended and hauled him up. 'Let's talk about wasps,' Nanny Bane gurgled.

Kingsley, gaping in awe at her huge yellow tusks, failed to take it in.

'WASPS!' she yelled, and a pestilent wind plastered Kingsley's hair back.

'Wasps?' he yelped.

'Thievin', pilferin' little bastards,' Nanny Bane grumbled.

'Makin' off wiv bits of me best fats. Gettin' in among me fetishes. Bollocksin' up me hoodooes wiv their horrid little buzzin' about.'

'Er, yes, but--'

'*Spoilin me day!*' shrieked Nanny Bane, saliva pooling on the wide shelf of her bosom.

'Quite,' said Kingsley. 'But, er, it's not actually anything to do with me.'

Things were getting very noisy inside Nanny Bane now. 'Is it not? That what yer fink, is it, *Mister I'm-So-Special-I-Was-Raised-By-Wolves!?*

Kingsley nodded.

'What yer call *that* then, clever-clogs!?' roared Nanny Bane, spinning him about. Kingsley found himself facing the back wall of his bungalow.

'Um, er?' he ventured, terrified.

The ogre-witch snorted hot mucus down his collar then flung him away. 'Go an' look,' she told him. '*Then deal wiv it!*'

Without further comment she took herself off to do whatever it was that she usually did in the dark privacy of her garden shed.

As instructed, Kingsley went to look.

It was a nest, of course. A whole city of wasps inside his bungalow wall. The narrow gap between the outflow pipe from his bathroom basin and the fibro veneer was frantic with black-and-yellow traffic.

Being possessed of a nature which took delight in small, intricate things, Kingsley grew enchanted by their tiny comings and goings. *They're only wasps*, he thought. *Leave 'em be.*

In the evening, an awful howling rose up along the Hollow. Kingsley ran to the front yard and saw curtains twitching all up the street as the abrasive *blaaat* of a ridden horn grew steadily louder. A white volkswagon lurched into view. Sparks splashed as it mounted the gutter at speed and bashed its nose into a heap of similar junkers on the front lawn.

The White Fang Gang was home.

'A seven! At least!' one of his brothers was growling as they all came tumbling out in a blizzard of banknotes and green dye. 'Just look at that bonnet!' he added, lifting his leg on a rear tire.

Kingsley kept his fingers safely tucked away as the gang milled around, tongues lolling, eyes rolling -- drunk again.

'Big heist, King! Big heist! Break a keg!'

It was half past three in the morning before they stopped calling for beer, and nearly four o'clock before the last of the notorious White Fang Gang had collapsed twitching in his own sick.

Kingsley went outside to be alone with the bright moon. As he stood in the garden savouring the cool quiet, Hundred Gates Holt presented a wall of shadows, looming black above the bottom hedgerow. It whispered, even though the air was still.

Kingsley sighed. His life was not so dull ... was it? He didn't think so. Still, what wouldn't he give to ride, just once, with the White Fang Gang?

Easier say fly. His brothers always seemed faintly embarrassed by their adopted sibling's lack of fur or any usef ul kind of teeth. 'You wouldn't scare a chicken,' was the usual response. 'And if you can't scare 'em you have to bite 'em.'

They loved him though. That seemed obvious. How long would he have lasted after the old bitch died had they not?

A tug on his sleeve startled him. He whipped his head round and saw, to his relief, only a child standing beside him on the lawn. He relaxed.

'Lost in the woods were you?'

Hundred Gates Holt took at least a dozen waifs each year.

His own history was a case in point.

The little figure said nothing.

'Right,' smiled Kingsley. 'Silly question. Just look at the state of your clothes. Needles in your hair. Black as soot all over.' He touched its sunken cheek. The grey skin crackled.

'Why, I bet you could grow ... grow potatoes behind...' he faltered as the thin face lifted up to let him see.

It was out of the woods all right. But much too late. Wander-weary, it must have lain down to rest in some lightless, hidden bole weeks ago. Glaring knobs of gristle and shrivelled sockets -- home to spiders -- told what kind of sleep had claimed it there.

Terror came choking. The tiny part of Kingsley that wasn't choking wondered what indecent strength of will had animated this thing.

'What ... what can I do for you?'

Papery lips opened. A thin, reedy sound came drifting.

'*Bzzzzzzzzzz.*'

Then it went on jerky legs back into the forest, where the muttering trees claimed it for the second and (*please?*) final time.

Kingsley ran to the tool shed. He clattered and whimpered in the dark for a while, then emerged with a candle and the caulking gun. A *zombie*, for Pete's sake! Nanny's idea of subtlety. A gentle reminder wrapped around a sledgehammer.

He went to the back of his bungalow and sealed the wasps' hole.

Next morning, there were three little visitors in his bathroom. Armed with his best water pistol, Kingsley blasted them down and collected them in a coffee jar for transportation outside. He spent the next few hours tending to his beers.

Come the afternoon and the place was *filled* with wasps -- butting at the windows, crawling in little figure eights on the kitchen floor. Kingsley was dismayed. There would never be enough coffee jars to deal with this. Sooner or later they would sting him.

Unhappily he was forced to adopt more lethal measures. The bodies of the slain went down the sink

The entire business disgusted him. Apart from anything else, this was highly questionable behaviour for a vegetarian.

Where were they getting in?

Better ask where *weren't* they getting in? There was no shortage of cracks and gaps in the old plasterboard walls -- around door and window, behind cupboard and sink.

He emptied an entire tube of filler before he was satisfied.

That night after brushing his teeth he felt curious and put his ear to the wall. He heard movement, and a funny, high-pitched whining sound.

'*Meeeeeee-eeeeeee-eee?*' it said. There was a note of enquiry to it -- as if they were all fumbling around in the dark, asking each other what to do next.

Kingsley felt bad. Common sense said that everything needed to have a place.

He wondered if wasps were like bees. Did they have a queen? Was she holding court in there, behind the hot water service,

facing the crisis with regal calm? Royalty would be obliged to set an example, he thought, and encourage the subjects not to give up hope.

'Meeeeee-eeee-eee?'

'It's not my fault,' he whispered. 'It was Nanny Bane. Nanny Bane made me.'

'Beeeeee-nnnneee?'

'She's a witch. She made me do it. She hates wasps.'

'Meeeeee-eeee-eee?'

'Honest, I wanna let you out,' said Kingsley. 'But Nanny Bane's real mean. She hurts things for fun.'

'Beeeeee-nnnneee?'

It isn't fair, he decided. Knowing he was going to regret it, he went outside to do a little work around the outflow pipe.

Early next morning his brothers went padding off into the woods, growling something about a lorry load of Japanese scotch on a lonely highway somewhere. Kingsley spent the day moping in the garden, wondering if Nanny Bane would extract her revenge now or wait until after dark.

He thought about running, but realised he wouldn't know which gate to take -- even if he managed to get that far. His brothers had often warned him about the forest. It backed onto some weird and very bad places.

'The world's big and twisted, King. The Hollow's much the best part of it for the likes of us.'

So he waited.

Sunset found him fretting on the porch, listening for the roar of the gangs' latest getaway car.

Around dinner time, a mild-looking old gentleman came strolling along the footpath, a six-pack of *Von Blood's Excellent Lager* under his arm.

'Evenin', son,' he said, with a nod at Kingsley.

'Good evening, sir,' said Kingsley. Then: 'Hold on. It's Mr Bane, isn't it?'

'I should hope so,' said Mr Bane. Nanny Bane's brother had always reminded Kingsley an awful lot of that actor fellow, the one from that old film about a building society manager who wants to kill himself but ends up not doing it because an angel or something stops him.

'I haven't seen you in ages, Mr Bane,' said Kingsley, amazed. 'I thought you must have ... moved.'

Mr Bane chuckled. 'Well, Nanny's been keeping me busy about the place for quite a while. But I remember you, son. You're young Kingsley Manson.'

'That's right, sir'

'So what do you say, Kingsley? Are you up to having a beer with a boring old poop? That is if you're not too preoccupied holding up that porch rail?'

Kingsley ummed and ahed. 'What about Nanny Bane? Won't she mind?'

'I doubt it.'

Kingsley thought otherwise.

'You know, Mr Bane, I brew a pretty decent drop myself,' he said, nodding at the six pack in the crook of the old gentleman's elbow.

'I don't doubt it, son,' said Mr Bane. 'But I've been looking forward to some of old Von Blood's magic elixir for longer than I care to think about. Nothing but that for me tonight.'

Kingsley wavered.

'It'll be all right, son,' Mr Bane smiled. 'My word on it.'

'Okay,' said Kingsley, and went with Mr Bane into the tumbledown house next door.

An old radio was blating away in a corner of the living room, stirring up the dust with bursts of loud jazz.

'My sister hates music,' said Mr Bane with a glint in his eye.

'Especially jazz.'

Kingsley let out a big sigh. 'She's not home then?'

'Certainly is,' said Mr Bane. 'Out in the back garden.'

Kingsley spluttered on his excellent lager.

'Go and see her if you like,' said Mr Bane. 'She won't bite you.'

So unlikely was that last statement, Kingsley began to wonder if Mr Bane hadn't perhaps lost his marbles.

'This way,' said the old man, and led him out back.

No use trying to run for it, thought Kingsley. *It's a trap. She's got me*. She was sitting in the long grass underneath a peach tree in the middle of the yard.

'Look, Nanny,' said Mr Bane cheerfully. 'A visitor. Young Kingsley from next door.'

The ogre-witch did not move. Kingsley savoured one of his few remaining breaths and went nearer, awed by the vast bulk of her.

'I know what your thinking, Nanny Bane,' he whined. 'But I had to let 'em out.'

No response came down from the mountain.

Mr Bane chuckled. 'Been like that since she came out of her workshed this morning.'

Kingsley moved closer still and was surprised at the bustle of activity around her. There were wasps everywhere. Crawling in her hair. Roaming about on her cheap floral print dress.

'Nanny Bane?' he said.

The witch's mouth opened slightly and a little tiger-striped body launched itself aloft from the tip of her pale tongue.

'Nanny Bane!' Kingsley gasped. 'Are you okay?'

'Meeeeee-eeee-eee?' said Nanny Bane.

The End

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A SELECTION OF POETRY.

RACE AGAINST TIME

by John Francis Haines

Robson was gone, heading towards the Old town;
he would have left a suitable change of clothes
Ready for himself at each strategic point.
Every mile he ran took him further back
And we were stuck in the futurist suburbs,
Staring helplessly across the centuries
As he melted into the Middle Ages.

DISPATCH RIDER

by John Francis Haines

He climbs astride the gleaming bike
And thrusts both hands deep in the grips
Where nerves meld into circuitry
To put power at his fingertips;

Inside the helmet eyes become
As one with screens which give the road,
Soft whispers in his ear advise
The best route for his precious load.

KINFOLK

by John Francis Haines

Alone with the stars,
Fireballs that dot the heavens;
A backdrop that does
Not change, such is the distance
Between them and us.

Once thought to be fixed,
We now know they move through space
Just as we do, live
As we do, millions of years,
Burn bright, flare and die.

TRIPPING

by William P. Robertson

The House of Blue Light is a disco
that vibrates with primitive sound
Alive is a strobe light illusion
Where happiness still can be found

Memories converge on the dance floor
Flushed from their year-vaulting climb
Sweet parted lips from the Sixties
Are back from the incense of time

Hold her and feel the vibration
When music still came from the soul
Back before heartbreak became you
To find that you're once again whole

Follow the beat through a keyhole
And fly with a screech of guitar
And when you wake wild with emotion
Your trip will have healed every scar!

SLIP-KNOT

by J. C. Hartley

Back in Time, impregnating.
"I get it," she said.

Ankles crossed behind my neck.
"I'm your Mother, right?"
Suddenly limp; rocket seed
Returning to pumps.
Pained: "What did I say?"
Back on the funicular,
Bad-assed with ball-ache;
Next jaunt, I chill some writers.

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #19

by Buck Coulson

Even in these days when serials come packaged in hard covers and are called trilogies, there is an occasional article about the Good Old Days of the science fiction magazines, with references to ASTOUNDING or AMAZING or the Thrilling Publications. But nobody ever seems to talk about the failures; those magazines that lasted a few issues and disappeared. Some, of course, are hardly worth writing about, except as horrible examples, but there were some under-financed magazines that published quite excellent fiction, and anyway I need a subject for a column.

VANGUARD SCIENCE FICTION, edited by James Blish, appeared in 1958, with an issue dated June. It was, according to Blish's editorial, to be a hard-science magazine, getting its readers from the same group that supported ASTOUNDING. The cover story was by A. Bertram Chandler, and was pretty much an adventure story, wrecked spaceship and all, but as I recall, I enjoyed reading it. It postulated that love and hate were strictly Earth diseases, curable by exposure to an alien atmosphere. We'll have to wait and see how that idea holds up in reality....

The other authors in the issue were C. M. Kornbluth, James Gunn, Raymond F. Jones, and Richard Wilson, with a science article by L. Sprague de Camp and book reviews by Lester del Ray. Not a celebrity lineup, but authors who could be counted on to produce dependable material. This was the day of the 35c paperback and magazine; VANGUARD offered 20 issues for \$6.00 or a lifetime subscription for \$25. Cheap enough, but a bad buy anyway, since that first issue was all there was.

STAR SCIENCE FICTION appeared dated January 1958, with the usual 35c price. It was an attempt to turn the successful *Star* paperback series into a regular magazine, with Frederik Pohl as editor. Author lineup included Chan Davis, now pretty well forgotten but then a promising author, John A. Sentry, Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, Robert Bloch, Brian W. Aldiss, and Gavin Hyde. Davis is probably best remembered today as the author who went to jail for refusing to declare himself anti-Communist. There was surprisingly little stir about it at the time; he was supported by a good many authors and a few fans, but I was in fandom at the time and never heard of the affair until years later. Cover and interiors were by Richard Powers; I don't recall ever seeing any other black-and-white illustrations by Powers. (They weren't all that effective, but they were unique.) It was an excellent start, and I waited fairly eagerly for the next issue - which never appeared.

Ballantine went back to book publishing and produced a few more *Star* paperbacks.

GALAXY NOVELS are a fairly well-remembered publication of the 1950s, lasting for some 41 issues (or titles, depending on whether you count them as magazines or books) plus a few more in pb format as "Beacon-Galaxy" books. The novels were reprints, published in a standard 128-page magazine format. At a fairly recent Windycon, AJ Budrys looked over a few of them that Juanita and I had for sale, chuckled, and commented that the Asimov title we had was a unique version of the novel, since AJ had removed some 20,000 words of the original to make it fit the format. (If you're looking for something different...)

The GALAXY MAGABOOK series is less well known. Three of these appeared irregularly in the early 1960s (possibly more than three, but three were all I found). They advertised "Two Complete Novels", also in 128 pages. These "novels" were what were then termed "short novels" in the magazines and are now called "novellas". Selection of stories seemed to be mostly what was available. Issue #1 included two stories by Lester del Rey, one of which had originally been published under the pseudonym "Charles Satterfield". Moderately entertaining but not first class. The second issue featured Jack Williamson, with reprints of THE LEGION OF TIME and AFTER WORLD'S END, both from 1938 and loosely termed "classics". The third and last issue were devoted to Theodore Sturgeon, with BABY IS THREE, the novella which was enlarged to become MORE THAN HUMAN, and ...AND MY FEAR IS GREAT. The latter is forgotten today, because it was first published in the 1950s. The theme is the ability to change the world through love, and if it had been expanded into a novel in the 1960s it might well have become as famous as MORE THAN HUMAN. If Heinlein could have a best-seller among the Love Generation, Sturgeon should have been able to, since technically he was a better writer. (I liked Heinlein better, but then I'm noted for not following the crowd - any crowd.)

Perhaps the greatest of the forgotten magazines is WORLDS BEYOND, which lasted for three monthly issues in 1950 and 1951, with Damon Knight as editor. It became a joke in fandom that Knight's magazines never lasted more than three issues; he had several editorial positions at under-funded publications. On the back page of the third issue was a list of "forthcoming stories", and they all eventually forthcame; in ASTOUNDING, GALAXY, F&SF, SPACE SCIENCE FICTION, and the Poul Anderson story in SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY. If they'd all been in one issue, it would have been a blockbuster.

Like F&SF, WORLDS BEYOND included reprints as well as original stories, and the first issue included William F. Temple, Philip Wylie, Graham Greene, Franz Kafka, John D. MacDonald, and William Seabrook. Jack Vance's THE LOOM OF DARKNESS was reprinted in his classic, THE DYING EARTH, as LIANE THE WAYFARER, but the story I remember best from the issue was C. M. Kornbluth's story about a telepath and emotional vampire, THE MINDWORM.

The second issue included John Christopher, Bob Tucker, Rumer Godden, Clive Cartmill, E. B. White, Rudyard Kipling, and the most memorable of the lot, NULL-P by William Tenn. A delightful send-up of both politics and A. E. van Vogt, the story chronicles the innovation of non-Platonic politics, to join with non-Aristotelian logic. Rule by the perceived average, instead of the perceived best. Considering that this was published well before the time when TV polls influence elections, it might be considered as a valid science-fictional prognostication.

The third and final issue included Jack Vance, Lester del Rey, Lord Dunsay, Poul Anderson, Halliday Sutherland, and C. M. Kornbluth. My favorite was Harry Harrison's ROCK DIVER, which was nonsense, but impressive nonsense. The idea was a "vibratory penetrator" which allowed a human to walk down a granite slope into solid but softer rock, as a diving suit allows one to walk under water. The object, of course, is to locate mineral deposits. The science is shaky, especially the part about finding one of the pioneer divers still embedded in rock after his suit failed, with his atoms "interpenetrating" those of the rock. No explosion or anything. But it was still an impressive story, and remains unique; nobody ever picked up on the idea, even in those days when ideas were what drove stories.

My personal favorite of the short-lived magazines is FANTASY FICTION/FANTASY MAGAZINE. (the title was changed after the first issue), edited in the 1950s by Lester del Rey for four issues,

and a reasonable approximation to the celebrated UNKNOWN WORLDS. Like WORLDS BEYOND, my copies are bound into a hardcover book for permanence, and because I was working in a bookbindery at the time. From somewhere either Lester or art director Milton Berwin acquired a staff of the best illustrators who ever worked for a pulp magazine. Two of them, Henry Ebel and Joseph Eberle, I saw almost nowhere else, though they were the equals of Finlay and Lawrence. Tom Beecham went on to a career as a wildlife artist. Someone named Tyler I never heard of again, but he was very good. Roy Krenkel did some of his first professional work for the magazine. Paul Orban often illustrated the lead story, but while he was good, he was outclassed. All covers were by Hannes Bok.

The first issue features Poul Anderson's ASHTARU THE TERRIBLE, a very funny account of a small Mesopotamian statue of a

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MICHAEL MOORCOCK: THE UNEXPLORED DIMENSION

by Andrew Darlington

"So it happened that two sleek minnows slipped from the slippery side of the great ship and trailed their tiny spirits of flame across the stars... and as these tiny ships curved onto their joint course, their pilots looked down the visible wake of the comet..."

In July 1992 the Giotto Space-probe intercepts the Grigg-Skjellerup Comet. But exactly 30 years earlier - the month that Telstar beams its first juddery live TV pictures across the Atlantic, Jet-Ace Logan is already flying into the heart of a comet to discover a terrible secret that would threaten to turn the world into a green hell of poisonous alien chlorine. The story is TIMES FIVE: A JET-ACE LOGAN SPACE STORY issued as a 64 page-graphic novel in the THRILLER PICTURE LIBRARY series, #418. The highly atmospheric and technically precise art is by Ron Turner, from a story - according to Ron, by "a young Mike Moorcock".

Within the comet the two R. A. F. Space Command ships are lured into a bizarre alien spacecraft by its quintaped denizens; the earthmen "suddenly emerged into a large chamber into which machines periodically scooped great piles of litter from the scores of tunnelways that led into it. Yet it was not the rubbish that drew their attention ... it was the startling lack of it right at the centre of the floor". And there, in the huge chamber visualised by Turner's expressive line-work, is an unearthly machine; "the earthmen did not have to wait long, for a practical demonstration was forthcoming They heard the lump of piping clatter into the hopper. The machine hummed softly and glowed a gentle green, panting out quantities of greenish gas.... The machine hum died, and the mechanism coughed an abrupt cloud of fumes from its outlet, there was a rattle from the floor... and the astounded onlookers beheld five pieces of identically bent metal".

Jet-Ace Logan looks at the Matter Duplicator suspiciously, thinking "just imagine one of those things falling into the wrong hands, it would be worse than an H-Bomb in the hands of a 5-year old".

While a devious scientist attached to the crew thinks "what a machine! What a wonderful thing to own! It could create wealth, power, any man who owned that could own the world. If only I could lay my hands on it".

The dour and obdurate scientist's name, in what is perhaps a wry piece of Moorcockian in-jokery, is Aldis.

TIMES FIVE is from July 1962, priced at just one shining shilling. It is one of two Mike Moorcock scripted Jet-Ace Logan Thriller

Picture Libraries - the other, POWER FROM BEYOND (#442) comes from January 1963. But there's an unexplored dimension of other Moorcock stories published anonymously throughout the period, titles unsuspected even by devotees and completists. In all likelihood there are still more as yet unidentified or of disputed authorship, awaiting definite authentication. But it's a fascinating sub-genre of Moorcock's work rich with plots, themes and characters well worth academic investigation.

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"Motors purring, captains shouting orders, the rustle of the canvas gun-covers being drawn back, gay flags, flashing steel, flying cloaks of many hues; a Hatnorian War-Fleet rose rapidly into the sky". The typically extravagant sweep of bold scene setting from Moorcock's first published story cycle SOJAN THE SWORDSMAN conjures entrancing vistas of fantastic craft and rich costumes spiked with a bite of barbaric splendour, and although a teenage work, it's already recognisably Moorcockian. All the style elements are in place.

An intriguing interview with the real Brian Aldiss (in THE SAVOY BOOK edit Butterworth/Britton) relates how Michael Moorcock declined an invitation to contribute an autobiographical essay to Aldiss/Harry Harrison's HELLS CARTOGRAPHERS project due to an excess of modesty, so perhaps this period will remain badly documented. But in this light the snatches of self-history in two other Savoy Books provide tantalising clues; the SOJAN anthology from 1977, and the more recent volume of interviews MICHAEL MOORCOCK: DEATH IS NO OBSTACLE by Colin Greenland. James Cawthorn's illustrations embellish the Sojar edition which is a valuably revealing collection of cut-and-thrust passages from the very dawn of Moorcock's career, his first stories ever to find their way into print.

In fact Moorcock was only 16 when - in 1955, he produced the first drafts of his SOJAN THE SWORDSMAN and KLAN THE SPOILER text swashbucklers for his own fanzine. According to legend he submitted these tales to TARZAN ADVENTURES who accepted one for a June 1957 edition - and that by the following issues he'd been invited to become the magazine's editor! Alongside these two embryonic efforts many other stories appeared between August 1957 (Vol. 7 #22) and September 1958 (Vol. 8 #23) in this long-extinct juvenile publication, many of which are now preserved in the Savoy volume.

TARZAN ADVENTURES had been relaunched by "Westworld" on the 8th April 1953 as a weekly 28-page vehicle for U.S. newspaper strip reprints. Never a major title in the LION, EAGLE or TIGER league, and now difficult to find, copies nevertheless still appear at intervals in the mail-order lists of specialist dealers, or for those who scour Book Fairs they sometimes turn up incongruously on antiquarian stalls alongside well-thumbed Annuals and musty hardback fiction. They boast occasional colour photo covers from then-current movies, Lex Barker in TARZAN SAVAGE FURY or TARZAN AND THE SLAVE GIRL both from 1954, but normally there are dramatic front pages illustrating the story inside, done by artists Bunting or James Beach. The eponymous Tarzan serial is in monochrome and fills just over half of each issue, which are then padded out with such oddities as Buffalo Bill's Western adventures and "other interesting features". But increasingly, using the rationale that Tarzan's creator - Edgar Rice Burroughs - also wrote the Martian John Carter fantasies which so enflamed Moorcock's juvenile creativity, there is a growing interplanetary content. And as Moorcock had already produced a fanzine on the subject - BURROUGHSANIA, he was eminently qualified for the editorial task despite his youth.

The TWIN EARTHS picture strip serial was an American newspaper reprint written with considerable imaginative flair by Oskar Lebeck with art from Alden McWilliams. The story involves a boy from Earth carried by Flying Saucers to the Moon where he is temporarily trapped within underground caverns, only to be rescued by robot "spiders", and eventually taken to the alien's home world which - like John Norman's Gor, occupies Earth's orbit but is located on the far side of the sun and is hence undetectable. More Moorcock related is Jim Cawthorn's original PERIL PLANET strip which runs through 1957. But I also recall reading short text stories featuring spaceman Skylon Dane and his journey to a distant planet to defeat an evil scientist whose rays dissolve bone-structure leaving his victims living breathing blobs of

shapeless jelly. And another story about Earthmen visiting the ruins of the last Martian temple, only to trigger a self-destruct incendiary mechanism. Were these Moorcock stories? Probably not. He used his position as editor to publish the work of other S.F. writers, including a number of compact 1,000-word shorts from Sydney J. Bounds.

Moorcock's lay-out work for TARZAN ADVENTURES involved adapting strips from their American to their "Westworld" format, adding to and altering the narrative. But more significantly, the authenticated stories he fed into the weekly himself during the period of his regime were aimed at a juvenile audience, they are short, written in a racy no-frills style, and show few indications of Moorcock's later metaphysical preoccupations. There is an improvement in the writing more or less concurrent with the successful dates of their production, and a sophistication of the areas in which Sojar operates. But the basic prerequisites of action, simplicity, and a plot lasting no more than a handful of pages, are seldom challenged. The first exploit identifies "Sojan Shieldbearer" as a mercenary, an inhabitant of the double-sunned planet Zylor in the employ of Nornos Kad, Warlord of the Imperial Hatnorian Empire. Riding a reptilian myat, or piloting an airship, he does all the things one normally expects from a heroic barbarian sword-wielder. He rescues Il-That, princess daughter of a warrior king, he leads a counter-revolution against the tyrant usurper of the Hatnorian throne, and he puts down an unjustified rebellion against the empire.

Moorcock remains well within the stylistic restrictions of the genre, and well within his own limitations as an evolving writer. The history of Zylor is fleshed out in a story sequence SOJAN AND THE SEA OF DEMONS in which he destroys the Priesthood of Rhan who are bent on world domination. During the struggle he encounters the Lovecraftian-named Old Ones who explain that the Zylorians are survivors from Lemuria, the antediluvian continent of Earth mythology, and that the refugees have spread across the new planet devolving into rival kingdoms and tribes. In later Sojan stories caches of technological equipment and buildings left by these first Zylorians/Lemurians serve much the purpose as those left by the Yaksha in Moorcock's "Michael Kane" novel cycle of 1965, set on the planet Mars.

But as well as the Sojan mini-epics Moorcock also contributes tales featuring Dek of Noothar and his quests across ancient Mars for the Strange One's "Sword of Life"; and Rens Karto of Bersnol with his broadsword Blood-drinker. The latter was written as a result of a competition in which reader Richard W Ellingworth suggested "a plot for a story for TARZAN using Sojan as the central character, with the manuscript of SOJAN AND THE PLAIN MYSTERY as the prize". Richard received a co-writer credit for the tale, and presumably the "prize" too, the manuscript of the story which had appeared in issue Vol. 8 #9 (31st May 1958). If he still has that prize it will be worth a small fortune to a Moorcock collector now.!

The stories, and the Cawthorn or Lumley maps and illustrations, make few attempts to strive for contrived effect; but in the Sojan series lies the basic groundwork for all the Swords & Sorcery cycles to come. SOJAN AND THE SONS OF THE SNAKE GOD (in Vol. 8 #12 - 21st June '58) for example, is a complete capsule novel in less than 2,000 words in which - as the page-head blurb declares "Sojan is once again playing a lone hand against death". Sojan the mercenary prevents a war by infiltrating and destroying the Cult of Rij the Snake God.

In a way the young Moorcock's stint in the editorial chair of TARZAN ADVENTURES is a dry run for his later NEW WORLDS regime. With the same absolute conviction and missionary zeal he transmutes a modest little periodical into his own image, into a vehicle for his own energies, aspirations and enthusiasms. I acquired a trove of some hundred TARZAN issues at a Jumble Sale shortly after the event. I read those classic muscle-rippling Tarzan spreads by Burne Hogart with his trademark anatomical exaggerations, and enjoyed the fantasy element of the heroic Jungle Lord's encounter with the grotesque Ononoes, villainous creatures resembling huge severed heads propelling themselves on their hands. But I - for one, particularly read and loved the changes Moorcock had wrought, long before I learned to recognise the name responsible.

In ESCAPE FROM VENUS - one of his lesser novels, Edgar Rice Burroughs writes "when I was young I used to dream of living an

adventurous life, and it may be that those youthful dreams more or less shape one's later life". There's a demonstrable truth to Burroughs' pulp assertion in the contagion of "youthful dreams" he passed on to Moorcock which in turn were passed on to yet another generation, shaping my life - among others.

Despite - or because of his creative innovations, Mike Moorcock recalls (in an introduction to his WARRIORS OF MARS) how he left TARZAN ADVENTURES "under a cloud", and indeed the title folded soon after, in November 1959. But the Cawthorn connection was to survive into NEW WORLDS and beyond. While in the meantime there were new connections; soon "I was writing floods of hack work for Fleetway and getting sometimes 70 or 80 pounds a week ... I think it was the autumn of 1960, when I was working for the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY .. that I bumped into a colleague at Fleetway Publications, Andy Vincent, who was an old friend of Harry Harrison's (who was also freelancing for Fleetway at the time). Andy told me he was meeting Harry and Ted Carnell in the Fleetway foyer and suggested I went along. As I remember, that was where I first met Harry". The ensuing Ted Carnell connection led to Moorcock's NEW WORLDS regime. While Harry Harrison was scripting RICK RANDOM Space Stories for Fleetway's SUPER DETECTIVE LIBRARY; illustrated by Ron Turner.

Moorcock's period with the long-established monthly SEXTON BLAKE series led to his first novel, a mildly James Bond-ian non-SF romp called CARIBBEAN CRISIS published in 1962 as by "Desmond Reid". Reid was probably a house alias as there are other titles credited to the name, at least as early as the 1958 HIGH HEELS AND HOMICIDE. The confusing use of publisher-owned house names was common practice at the time, so it's highly unlikely that all material published under the Desmond Reid banner is undiscovered Moorcockiana. A similar obfuscation exists in other areas of Fleetway's labyrinthine fiction factory.

In the Colin Greenland interviews Moorcock describes in detail how he scripted KIT CARSONS PERILOUS RIDE, a Western adventure for the monthly COWBOY PICTURE LIBRARY #337 (In 1961), how he wrote sports stories - including one of the SKID SOLO motor racing serials and admits he "could have" written a picture script called GIANTS IN THE NIGHT about a Professor Lancing and an invasion from space. There is also work done for LOOK & LEARN dramatising historical events - a life of Alexander the Great, another about Constantine, both of which are illustrated by Don Lawrence. The work was done at an incredible pace. He describes how a 64-page Mounted Policeman Comic Library edition - DICK DARING AND THE HIRED GUNMAN, "was done overnight. Started Tuesday evening, delivered Wednesday morning, because Wednesday was pay-sheet day. That would have earned me about a hundred quid, which in 1959 was good money for one night's work".

Predictably details of this period remain confused and questionable. It seems he scripted for TIGER's long-running OLAC THE GLADIATOR series vividly set in ancient Rome. Early episodes are credited by Brian Leigh; but which are by Moorcock? Sometimes powerfully descriptive passages in the narrative boxes suggest his style - particularly during Atilla the Hun's barbarian incursion into the empire in a late 1959 story, but that's guess-work. Often short filler stories for annuals were done by series non-regulars, and Olac was featured in TIGER ANNUAL's through most of the 1960's. Perhaps Moorcock's contribution lies here? Then there are two - or possibly three DOGFIGHT DIXON titles confirmed as Moorcock originals published under the THRILLER PICTURE LIBRARY banner; researcher Ian Covell reveals that any tales featuring this air ace "set in World War II are *not* by Moorcock", while "those including zeppelins have a good chance of being by him". There's a further vagueness concerning titles such as MIKE BLADE & THE ATOM WRECKERS (TIGER 31st August to 14th December 1963), DANNY JONES: TIME TRAVELLER (TIGER 22nd February 1964 to 28th January 1967) and AFRICAN SAFARI. Moorcock - or not Moorcock...?.

It's tempting to read these strips now with hindsight; to see in the 18th Century inventor of the time-clock which schoolboy Danny Jones later fishes from the local pond ("it was no ordinary clock, it told the time in centuries. Whoever set its hands was transported back into the past ...") as early evidence of Moorcock's fascination with English scientific eccentricity. Through its use Danny meets Dick Turpin, visits

the Colossus of Rhodes and the Ice-Age Giants, and sails with Black Bart the Pirate. While it's not difficult to read the story with Bond clone Secret Agent SSA-B Mike Blade - in a adventure involving a mechanical dragon (DOCTOR NO ...?) and the bad guy's domed city which rises from the sea off Hong Kong (THE SPY WHO LOVED ME ...?) and imagine it to be the missing link between CARIBBEAN CRISIS and JERRY CORNELIUS. Probably - regarding the scant evidence, to do so is over-fanciful. Perhaps the full intricacies will never be resolved. Moorcock allegedly contributes to BUSTER, BIBLE STORY, EAGLE, ROBIN HOOD and VALIANT; often in complex ways - "sometimes I used to sell the outline, then pass the job on to another writer. Barry Bayley and I worked like that. I was good at doing the initial spiel that would get the idea accepted".

There were a mass of projects; in an interview published in VORTEX #1 James Cawthorn recalls "around 1958 Mike Moorcock and me tried to sell a BOEWULF strip story, with no luck", adding ruefully "Marvel have done one recently, I believe". And as Ian Covell concedes "we are 99% certain that some stuff sold to the comics was never actually drawn or used ... but they may have been!. It's great, but aggravating fun".

ZIP NOLAN, the Highway Cop created by the hugely prolific Frank S. Pepper, ran as a weekly picture series in LION for many years. But during a spell of illness when Pepper was unable to work, it's known that Moorcock stepped in to contribute one-off Nolan adventures. Working out exactly which plots come from Moorcock's furious typewriter is an impossible epic quest - despite some tantalising clues leaked to Colin Greenland. But even accepting the popularity of Zip Nolan's high-speed motorcycle exploits the themes more obviously suited to Moorcock's burgeoning talents are those with a fantastic dimension. Running simultaneously through LION are the chronicles of KARL THE VIKING. These stories from the Dark Ages are scripted by respected SF author Kenneth Bulmer, while the blonde Norse voyager is exquisitely and authentically illustrated by Don Lawrence - famous for his much-reprinted THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. Karl's world of barbarian adventures, terrible supernatural adversaries and journeys into uncharted continents is an area exactly attuned to Moorcock's preoccupations; and he and Lawrence work together to produce a single Karl picture strip for the 1965 LION ANNUAL, a highly atmospheric GHOST OF THE TIDELESS SEA. It would be intriguing to see further such collaborations, but instead Moorcock and Lawrence initiate a new character for LION.

Introducing the protagonist MAROC THE MIGHTY, the serial THE HAND OF ZAR begins 3rd October 1964 and is set in the time of the Crusades. John Maroc, an outlawed Crusader, gains superhuman strength when he acquires a magic amulet, which he finds many opportunities to use on his long trek home from Africa. The second story - THE RED KNIGHTS OF MORDA, was re-edited into a 1985 EAGLE PICTURE LIBRARY #9, recounting Maroc's Spanish conflict with armoured adversaries led by the evil wizard-like Satana from his subterranean fortress protected by a dinosaurian moat-monster. The fast-action blood-thirsty plot moves well, and the art embellishment is perfectly executed with well observed castles and tournament scenes, although the resolution of each grotesque crisis is rather predictably done by "mighty arms, possessed of giant strength gained from the magic armet on Maroc's right wrist". Maroc even supports the toppling main pillar of Satana's collapsing stronghold long enough for his allies to escape, before the entire mountain edifice is consumed by the poisonous lake. The series continued into mid-1966, pitting the Crusader against the Hawkmen, Gigantos, and the Lord of all Evil. The introductory saga is eventually reprinted from 14th November 1970, but by then Moorcock has emerged from his prolific and highly accomplished Fleetway hackdom....

Picture strips based on Moorcockiana continue. Durillet's stunning Melnibone fantasy-scapes, Mal Dean's innovative and iconoclastic International Times JERRY CORNELIUS strip, and Jim Cawthorn's epic visualisations of STORMBRINGER and JEWEL IN THE SKULL in Savoy Books volumes, are all destined to become collector's items, expanding the concept of what "comics" can achieve. But they are novel adaptations, not original scripts.

In retrospect Michael Moorcock sums up his picture strip years by admitting that "doing too much text was always a weakness of mine ...".

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Meanwhile - in TIMES FIVE, Aldis' greed has been manipulated by the quintapedes allowing him to smuggle a Matter Duplicator back onto the R. A. F. ship, but while escaping with his ill-gotten technology his inept piloting skills result in the machine being jettisoned over the Brazilian rainforest, which have apparently survived into 2062! Discovered there by a disillusioned revolutionary trio led by Antiga Guzman "it did not take the rebels many minutes of experiment to divine its function. They made guns, ammunition. They multiplied dollar bills, but unfortunately these all had the same serial number". Then they duplicate themselves into identical armies which soon besiege South American cities simultaneously, "and as more armies and arms were mass-produced, a great mass of deadly chlorine spread slowly and evilly over the landscape, choking animal life to death, rotting all vegetation, yet not harming the strange "manufactured" men".

After exploding the alien spacecraft Jet-Ace Logan descends into "a green and empty world" to locate and destroy the Matter Duplicator, and "as the machine died, so did all its products of evil". Even Aldis shakes Logan's hand in gratitude. "Slowly the Earth soaked back the chlorine that it had been called upon to produce, and the sky became clear and blue ... marred only by the scar of the receding comet ...".

- Andrew Darlington

Produced with much gratitude to Mike Butterworth & Dave Britton of SAVOY BOOKS, Steve Holland, Ian Covell, Ron Turner, Frank S Pepper and Michael Moorcock.

Books quoted in the text:-

SOJAN by Michael Moorcock 1977
(Savoy Books ISBN 0-7045-0241-0)

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: DEATH IS NO
OBSTACLE by Colin Greenland 1992
(Savoy Books ISBN 0-86130-087-4)

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A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM

1935 - 1963

by Vol Molesworth

Laura Molesworth
October, 1980

PREFACE TO THE 1ST EDITION.

Voltaire Molesworth began his career as a Sydney journalist. His father, Voltaire Molesworth, was a journalist and member of the New South Wales State Parliament. His grandfather was James Molesworth, a mariner in the days of the sailing ships. James Molesworth joined the William Lane expedition to Paraguay to found the socialist utopian colony. He put all his financial resources, as did the others of this group, into the buying of the vessel, the *Royal Tar* and, with his family, went to Paraguay. He became disillusioned with William Lane, his handling of the colony and its progress, and returned to Australia. By this time Vol's father had begun his schooling in Paraguay.

Vol Molesworth Senior in his young days was a member of the Young Socialists, and first entered the New South Wales Parliament as Labor member for the old Cumberland seat. He was also a journalist, and one of the group associated with the founding of SMITH'S WEEKLY and THE GUARDIAN. He left the Labor Party in the 1920's, and later became an M.L.C. as a member of the United Australia Party.

Vol Molesworth (the son) did his schooling at the Blue Mountains Grammar School and then at Sydney Grammar School. He left after gaining his Intermediate Certificate to become a cadet journalist with the Sydney SUN newspaper. Being a diabetic, Vol was ineligible for service in World War II, but during these years he gained his wide experience in all aspects of journalism. Before he was out of his teens Vol wrote a number of short novels which were published as paperbacks by Currawong. The most widely known of these was the science fiction novel THE STRATOSPHERE PATROL; the others were more like murder mysteries with a flavour of sf.

It is possible that Vol's interest in sf was a natural path for him, given his family's utopian interests.

After 1945 Vol's interest in writing turned to the literary novel. He wrote the unpublished novels, CRY FOR ME, SYDNEY and CONCERTO FOR TYPEWRITER.

Through literature classes at WEA he gained an Unmatriculated Adult Scholarship to Sydney University, with the intention of majoring in literature. After winning the Caird prize for topping Philosophy 1, he went on to graduate B. A., and later M. A. in philosophy. He became a part time tutor for Sydney University's Department of Tutorial Classes, and lectured in philosophy to WEA

classes. From these lectures he published two books, LOGIC FOR BEGINNERS, and LANDMARKS IN LOGIC. At the time of his death in 1964 Vol was working for a Ph.D. degree at the University of New South Wales, where he was tutor in the School of Business Administration.

Despite his interest in mainstream literature, philosophy, amateur radio (in which he gained Amateur Radio Operator's Certificate and Amateur Television Operator's Certificate), lecturing, printing and studying, Vol never lost his enthusiasm for science fiction and fandom. His HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM is his tribute to the people and events which over the years made that history.

CHAPTER ONE.

In the year 1935 three readers of science fiction met in Sydney to discuss the prospect of forming a club. They were Wallace J. J. Osland, William E. Hewitt and Thomas M. Mallett. All were members of the Science Fiction League, the international organisation fostered by Hugo Gernsback, editor of WONDER STORIES, "in the interest of science fiction and its promotion". The League had enrolled well over a thousand fans¹, and had chartered Chapters throughout the United States and the British Isles. Its Constitution provided that any three members could form a local Chapter, - why not one in Sydney?

The matter was discussed at three unofficial meetings, the third attended by a gentleman named Drury - and finally, on August 15, 1935, the club was officially formed, with Osland as Director, and Hewitt Secretary. In December it was given its Charter as Chapter # 27 of the Science Fiction League. Charles La Coste, who had written to WONDER, was contacted by Hewitt, and joined the group. Meetings were held fortnightly at members' homes, and by February, 1936, membership had increased to six.

One of the group owned a printing press, and the Sydney Chapter began circulating science fiction and League propaganda in conspicuous places and in science fiction magazines. Director Osland urged fans to attend meetings, if they had never before, "to learn for themselves what meetings of science fiction fans really mean to each other". Discussions were held on such subjects as "Science v. Religion".

In Brisbane a fan named Varow Rasche announced his wish to form a Chapter; and in the April 1936 issue of WONDER, a proposed Chapter was listed in Toowoomba (Queensland); but neither of these clubs apparently came to fruition. There are also rumours of a club organised in South Australia by John Devern, but these are not confirmed.

The Sydney Science Fiction League continued to meet until late in 1936, when general economic conditions turned members'

¹ *Calling themselves "fans" was a fundamental mistake of the science fiction movement. There was an image problem - still is - and this term has always made it hard for anyone to take it seriously. A "fan" is a creature that goes to a football game to throw beer cans or punches. No one seriously interested in something calls himself a "fan". Is a philatelist a stamp fan? Is the RSL for military service fans? Is someone who goes to church a god fan? Anyone who calls himself a "fan" is declaring 'Pay no attention to me. I'm a dickhead'. (Graham Stone),*

attention to more urgent matters. La Coste and Hewitt continued to correspond, but no more meetings were held. Later, WONDER STORIES ceased publication.

In the year 1937, four students at Randwick Intermediate High School discovered they had a common interest in science fiction. They were William D. Veney, Bert F. Castellari, Ron Brennan and Ron Lane. They produced a hand-written publication SPACEHOUNDS, which featured fan fiction, and ran for 10 weekly issues. Although no formal club was established, the group met regularly to discuss stories. A fifth student - Bob Meleski - joined them.

In 1938, Veney contacted Eric F. and Edward H. Russell. Eric thought it would be a good idea to form an official club, and the Junior Australian Science Fiction Correspondence Club was created², with Veney as General Secretary, Eric Russell as Secretary, and Castellari as Assistant Secretary, and Meleski and Ted Russell as members. The club held no meetings because they five were busy with study.

Early in 1939, however, an active programme was decided upon. Three objectives were listed, -

- (1) to contact every other fan in Australia they could find;
- (2) for form a club in Sydney and hold meetings; and
- (3) to issue a fan magazine.

The Secretariat worked hard on the first objective, and contacted fans in four States outside New South Wales, - Marshall L. MacLennan in Victoria; John Devern, and three others, in South Australia; Donald H. Tuck in Tasmania; and J. Keith Moxon and Chas. S. Mustchin in Queensland.

To John Devern goes the honour of bringing out the first Australian fan magazine. Entitled SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, it appeared in February, 1939, in a small 12 pp, hektographed format. It contained material mostly reprinted without permission from other sources. About 16 or 18 copies were printed, and although the full distribution was never traced, some did go to England and U.S.A. There was no second issue, and, "with the passing of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW came the finish of all connection with Davern for he just didn't bother to write any more."³ According to one report, he joined the Army⁴.

At the first formal meeting of the JASFCC, held on 26th February, 1939, attended by Director Veney, Secretary Eric Russell, Castellari and Ted Russell, a proposal was put forward that a fan magazine should be published. Approval was unanimous, the name chosen being AUSTRALIAN FAN NEWS. The editors were to be Veney, Eric Russell and Castellari. The next three meetings (March 26, April 16 and April 30) were largely devoted to the detailed planning of this publication, relieved by discussion of stories and quiz competitions. Two new members, Frank Flaherty and Bob Meleski, joined the club. At the first meeting (May 14) it was decided to form a club library of magazines, and at the sixth (May 28) to have a club art gallery. Neither of these schemes came to fruition. No business of importance was transacted at the seventh and eighth meetings (June 11 and 25). After this, the club ceased to meet.

Only one issue of AUSTRALIAN FAN NEWS was published. Dated May, 1939, it appeared in a duplicated 12 pp foolscap format. Some 200 copies were widely distributed⁵. When future publication

² Here appears the indecision whether to have a local or a national body that recurs throughout this history. The stated objectives are obvious, but there is a contradiction. (G.S.)

³ FUTURIAN OBSERVER, #31, 9 Mar 41.

⁴ So he did, and was heard from no more till he reappeared in the 1950s in Brisbane under his correct name, John Dauvengne Gregor. In answer to my later query about SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW he wrote that I knew more about it than he remembered. (G.S.)

⁵ I wonder at this figure. How could they find 200 prospects then? Twenty would be hard enough. Perhaps they printed 200 in hope. Eric Russell had a stack of copies when he gave me one two years later. (G.S.)

become impossible, decay set into the JASFCC. Brennan, Flaherty, Lane and Meleski dropped out, and the executive committee, who had banked so much on the success of the venture, lost heart.

During the early part of 1939, a Junior Science Club had been formed in Sydney by Vol Molesworth and Ken Jefferys. Through newspaper publicity, it enrolled thirteen members, and published three quarto-sized J.S.C. BULLETINS, two carbon-copied, the third duplicated. This was regarded as opposition to the JASFCC, especially as Molesworth and Castellari were personal enemies at the time. For more than three months the two organisations had battled silently for members, then suddenly, - for no reason apparent to its President or its foes, - the J.S.C. disintegrated. "Inside two weeks, what had been a powerful and efficient club, became a mere shell with only two or three members. After this set-back, Molesworth realised that science fans could not be introduced to science fiction, and plunged deeper into the realm of fantasy-science-fiction."⁶

Though by July, 1939, both the organisations in Sydney were defunct, much experimental work had been carried out, and the way was now open for an amalgamation of the executive in a new fan club. For this reason, as Veney wrote, "1939 can truly be tabulated as the year of Australian fan awakening. 1939 ushered in the first era of true Australian fandom".⁷

In October, 1939, Eric Russell brought out the first issue of his fan magazine, ULTRA. This was to be one of the stalwarts of prewar fan publishing. The first two issues (October and December, 1939) were in a carbon-copied, 12 pp. folded foolscap format; thereafter ULTRA was duplicated, and contained from 14 to 50 pages, featuring articles, fiction and verse. Between October, 1939, and December, 1941, fourteen issues appeared, roughly on a bimonthly basis.

In October a meeting took place between Veney, Castellari and Eric Russell. The trio decided the time was ripe for a full-scale club. They issued invitations to Molesworth, Meleski, Ted Russell, and a newcomer, Ronald B. Levy, to attend the inaugural meeting at Veney's home on November 5, 1939. Thus was born the Futurian Society of Sydney.

Throughout the year, Veney had been corresponding with two prominent American fans, Donald A. Wollheim and Frederick Pohl. To Wollheim, Veney wrote that he was forming a new Sydney club and that the name under consideration (recalling the events of 1935-6) was the "Sydney Science Fiction League". Wollheim replied immediately by air mail, protesting against any such name. Since Gernsback had left WONDER STORIES, and the magazine had been reissued by a new company with the prefix THRILLING, fans were no longer interested in the Science Fiction League. Most of the old Chapters had changed their name. Why not, Wollheim suggested, embody the term "Futurian" in the name of the new Sydney club?

The term "Futurian" had been coined early in 1938 by a fan in Yorkshire (England)⁸, who had published a magazine called THE FUTURIAN. At the time, the fan organisation in New York City had been split by fan feud, and the faction to which Wollheim belonged was trying to find a place and an organisation for itself. After several abortive attempts, a stable organisation began to coalesce late that summer, and the records show the first organisational meeting was held in August. It was decided to break with previous fan-club tradition and find a name for the new organisation that would not carry the hack term "science fiction", a new and more dignified name which nevertheless retained the science-fictional flavour. A committee comprising Wollheim and

⁶ "The Awakening", by W. Veney, LUNA #3, Feb. '40, p.5

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Michael Rosenblum of Leeds, who became a key figure in the movement in England. A religious pacifist who would not take part in the war, he was accepted as bone fide by authority and exused service. With a fixed address and status he became the main contact point, and up to 1945 he kept scientificionists in England and beyond in touch through his regular bulletin FUTURIAN WAR DIGEST. (G.S.)

John B. Michel was instructed to discover such a title. They decided to use the English innovation, and the club was named The Futurian Science-Literary Society, which almost immediately was amended to the Futurian Society of New York. At that stage, the term "Futurian" was defined no more specifically than the obvious meaning of "person's interested in the future".

Later more precise definitions were framed, but at this stage it is sufficient to note that among the New York Futurians "there was always one point upon which all were agreed, and that was that a Futurian was something more than just a fan. A Futurian always had an interest in the changing world, did not busy himself in a pile of musty magazines, but looked forward to seeing something of those magazine-dreams come true. In that sense, to be a Futurian is to be the possessor of an honoured distinction".⁹

When the inaugural meeting of the new Sydney club was held on November 5, 1939, Veney put Wollheim's suggestion to the four other foundation members, - Castellari, Molesworth, and the Russells, - and it was unanimously adopted. After reviewing past events, Veney spoke of the many fans who, if they had the chance, would join the Society, and mentioned also the possibility of evolving into an Australia-wide organisation.

His optimism was justified, for fandom now embarked upon a period of steady growth, marked by a great increase in activity. In the next ten months, eighteen Futurian Society meetings were held at approximately fortnightly intervals, and no less than twelve new members joined the club. The maximum membership, however, was never more than thirteen, as four members resigned during this period. Nevertheless, with a total membership of thirteen, most of them turned up to meetings, the Society was the largest organisation Australian fandom had yet known.

The primary function of the Society throughout this early period was to provide a forum for discussion. Meetings were largely occupied with discussion of magazines, quiz competitions, round robin stories, and ESP experiments. Later, with the appearance of several fan magazines, factions began to gather around each fan editor.

In December, 1939, Molesworth brought out the first issue of LUNA in a duplicated 12 pp. foolscap format. The second and third issues (January and February, 1940) were 8 pp. quarto. Molesworth then abandoned LUNA and produced instead an all-letter magazine, COSMOS, which continued for thirteen issues, at first every three weeks, then monthly, until January, 1941. Quarto-sized, the number of pages varied from two to twelve. Two new fans, Neville Friedlander and David R. Evans, joined the Molesworth faction.

Late in January, 1940, Veney and Castellari produced the first issue of FUTURIAN OBSERVER, a foolscap sheet, duplicated both sides. From the start it was a force to be reckoned with. Although primarily a "newspaper" it soon became known for its frank criticism and biting satire. "Obs", as it became familiarly termed, appeared regularly every fortnight throughout 1940. Ronald B. Levy joined the Veney-Castellari faction, and the trio styled themselves "the Triumvirate". Four new fans, - Keith C. Hooper, Ken Williams, Ralph A. Smith and K. Noel Dwyer, aligned themselves with the Triumvirate; and later, in August, 1940, a new general magazine, ZEUS, appeared with six of these fans as its editorial committee. The faction led by the Triumvirate was the strongest and best organised, and had the upper hand during the greater part of 1940.

Meanwhile, the Russell brothers were still publishing ULTRA, and another newcomer, Bruce M. Sawyer, joined this faction.

The other new fans - Colin Roden and Len C. Stubbs, - belonged at this stage to no particular faction.

For the first six months of the Society's life Veney held

the Chair as Director¹⁰ with Eric Russell as Secretary. The growing factionalism is evidenced in the elections at Meeting #7 (March 17, 1940), when Veney was re-elected Director, but Castellari replaced Eric Russell as Secretary. Later in the same meeting, when a proposal to establish a club library was carried by a 5 - 3 majority, Levy, the third member of the Triumvirate was elected Librarian.

The Triumvirate's success at the polls drove Molesworth and the Russells into an alliance, the basis of which was mutual non-aggression and a combined front against the Triumvirate, and COSMOS and ULTRA became associated in "Triangle Publications". It should be remembered, however, that throughout their science-fictional skirmishes, Veney and Eric Russell remained firm personal friends. Following a personal clash, Molesworth resigned from the Futurian Society on April 11, 1940. At the ninth meeting (April 28) the resignation was read out. Levy said he thought Molesworth "had resigned through a mistake, due to certain statements made by different people".¹¹¹² It was decided to invite Molesworth to attend the next meeting as a guest, and stand his chance of re-election.

Two other matters occupying the attention of this meeting were the proposed Government ban¹³ on the import of U.S. magazines, and affiliation with the Science Fictioneers.

The ban, imposed as a wartime measure, cut off Australian fans from the ready supply of science-fiction. To many fans, it meant the death of interest. To others, it meant that active steps had to be taken to obtain the magazines, primarily by correspondence and "exchange deals" with American fans. The position was to some extent alleviated by the arrival in Australia of British reprint¹⁴ editions of ASTOUNDING, UNKNOWN and one or two other titles, but these were regarded as poor substitutes for the originals, particularly as the reprints soon began to omit serials. It was suggested that the reprints would be collectors' items in U.S.A., and so could be exchanged for the originals. That British fans would undoubtedly exploit this avenue was apparently overlooked by the meeting¹⁵. Magazines for the club library were to be obtained through the British Science Fiction Service, Forest J. Ackerman (leading Los Angeles fan) and any other available channels. The club library, however, did not last. An executive

¹⁰ *This was the title given chairman of Science Fiction League branches (called Chapters) and was commonly used by SF groups. (G.S.)*

¹¹ quoted from the minutes.

¹² *On another occasion Levy commented: "If you were to look at the minutes today you would find other misstatements which are not actually misstatements but which are nevertheless really very small misstatements. (G.S.)"*

¹³ *It wasn't a ban. Due to war conditions there was desperate balance of payments problem. The government brought in close control of all foreign currency movements and of imports, meaning blanket prohibitions of classes of items not essential to keep the war and the country going. Books and magazines from the USA were almost completely stopped, and there was little change till the system was finally scrapped in 1959. To be sure, there were loopholes. All the same, though this may seem hair-splitting, not being allowed to buy something is not the same as it being banned. It was never illegal merely to own or read SF. (G.S.)*

¹⁴ *Semantic confusion appears here. Somehow the wartime British editions of American magazines were often called "reprints", though they were separate editions newly set and printed and never had the full contents of the American issue. Some were even new titles assembled from American sources. Later, in the 1950s, some magazines like AMAZING STORIES had British editions printed from imported stereotypes: but even these were generally incomplete with some rearrangement of pages. (G.S.)*

¹⁵ *It was also illegal, as some never understood. If you couldn't send money you couldn't pay indirectly either. (G.S.)*

⁹ Wollheim in a letter to Molesworth, June 17, 1948

Top left: RALPH SMITH, VENNEY, E.F. RUSSELL; Bottom L: E. A. RUSSELL, CASTELLARI, MOLESWORTH, 14.1.1940

conference decided to dissolve the library, due mainly to the poor support members had offered it.

The Science Fictioneers was a fan organisation sponsored by the U.S. magazine, SUPER SCIENCE STORIES, edited by ex-Futurian Frederick Pohl¹⁶. The meeting decided to affiliate with this body, and the addresses of those present were taken to be sent to Pohl for his records. The Society was in due course chartered as Chapter 9.

Molesworth did attend the tenth meeting (May 15) as a guest, accompanied by David R. Evans, and both were elected to membership. At this meeting the question was raised of sending a congratulatory cable to the World Science Fiction Convention being held in Chicago, and Evans suggested the money could be put to better use in publicising the Futurian Society locally. No decision was reached, but the ensuing discussion on club funds introduced the topic of an official club organ. Evans proposed that members should fold up all existing fan magazines and pool efforts in one official club publication. Fired by the idea, Molesworth immediately dissolved "Triangle Publications" despite a protest from the Russells. All present agreed to fold up their fan magazines except Eric Russell, who said he could continue ULTRA independently without clashing with the club magazine. From six suggestions, the name FUTURIAN FANTASY was chosen for the club organ, and Evans was elected to the editorship. For nearly an hour after this meeting, Evans was the centre of a group of members offering advice and help. It seemed that a common objective had been found which would remove factionalism.

During the next few days, however, several members underwent a change of heart. The fan editors realised that they were to lose their positions of prominence in the fan world, and they were dubious of Evans' willingness to share the editorial control of the club magazine. Several members approached Director Veney privately and voiced their objections. Accordingly, when the question arose at Meeting 11 (May 26) Veney said that since the tenth meeting members had been thinking over the club magazine and some now had different ideas on the subject. Evans suggested that they objected to his editorship, but "this was denied by all".¹⁷ Eric Russell now took a firm stand on ULTRA; he would definitely carry on the magazine, denied that it would clash with FUTURIAN FANTASY, and rejected Evans' counterproposal that ULTRA be made the club organ. A secret ballot resulted four in favour of a club magazine, six against, and one informal.

Upon hearing of this reversal, Friedlander resigned from the Society, "on the grounds of unanimity and ... general disagreement with

the policy of the organisation".¹⁸ This precipitated a general review of club policy at Meeting #12 (June 12). Smith claimed there should be more interest taken in scientific research, e.g. rocketry, to which Evans retorted: "Are we scientists or science-fictionists?" Evans criticised members for their inconsistency in connection with FUTURIAN FANTASY. He said that the independent fan magazines had caused this inconsistency; if there was one club magazine there would be no rivalry among fans for the best material. This was countered with the statement that jealousy would still exist with a club magazine mainly as to who did the best work for it. Levy said he had joined the Society to discuss science fiction, not write it. After lengthy debate, the meeting decided that the Society's policy in future would be the discussion of science fiction and kindred topics. Fan magazines were to remain independent and discussion on them was to be barred at meetings. The impracticability of this was quickly realised, and at Meeting #13 (June 30) Director Veney himself moved that fan magazines should be discussed at meetings, but discussion limited to one hour. This was carried.

The internal friction in the Society which had begun with the fanzine factionalism and intensified during the lobbying for and against the club magazine, now came to a head. Disorderliness was apparent at the thirteenth meeting, argument taking the place of discussion. At one stage Levy jumped to his feet, shouted "I resign", and walked out. Later he returned and apologised for his hastiness. Evans, defeated on the question of FUTURIAN FANTASY, took opportunity of the general feeling of discontent, and offered to "referee" discussions. Innocuous as the suggestion seemed at the time, - little more than the appointment of a Chairman of Debates or a Speaker in the House, - this marks the beginning of Evans' rise to power. "Director Veney gave Evans authority to maintain order in the club. No objections to his appointment were made, and Evans said if he could not manage the job, he would nominate someone else for it."¹⁹ Evans then gave the meeting an outlet for its discontent. He began asking questions about Molesworth, who was absent. Various members offered criticism of the absentee, "one even stating that all the trouble in the F.S.S. revolved around Molesworth".²⁰

Whatever the tactics employed, Evans' intervention did quieten and stabilize the next few Society meetings.

¹⁶ *Ex-Futurian? Surely not. (G.S.)*

¹⁷ Minutes

¹⁸ Quoted from a letter in the club files

¹⁹ Minutes

²⁰ *Ibid*

The main business before Meeting #14 (July 21) was the proposal to extend organised activity beyond Sydney by setting up a registry of all Australian fans, "so that all will combine and be more closely linked".²¹ Since the collapse of the JASFCC there had been no organisation aiming at Commonwealth-wide membership, the main reason being apathy among fans in other states. In Melbourne now however, Warwick Heckley had just published the first issue of AUSTRALIA-FANTASY in a carbon-copied 16 pp. 8vo format; in Brisbane, J. Keith Moxon was planning a semi-professional magazine, IMAGINATIVE STORIES; and in Hobart, Donald H. Tuck was writing regularly to the Sydney group.

Though the Futurian Society approved the idea of a new national organisation, it took no official part in its establishment. This was done at a meeting between Randwick and Bondi Junction fans during the last week in July, 1940. The organisation was tentatively named the Futurian Association of Australia; and a provisional committee comprising Veney as President and Eric Russell as Secretary was appointed. The committee immediately went to work and contacted

FIRST CONFERENCE: CUDDEN, LA CPSTE, CUDDEN Jr, LEVY, EVANS, SAWYER, VENEY, EDWARD RUSSELL, ERIC RUSSELL, STONE, RODEN.

many interstate and local fans regarding the matter. In FUTURIAN OBSERVER #16 (August 11, 1940) they announced the definite establishment of the F.A.A. with its main aim being "To compile a complete register of all active Australian fans". It was specifically stated that the Association did not intend to charter chapters. A Board of Honorary Members was announced, comprising Bert F. Castellari, Chas. La Coste, Marshall L. MacLennan, Chas. S. Mustchin and H. Pinnock.²²

The fifteenth and sixteenth meetings of the Futurian Society (August 4 and 18) proceeded without great event, some discussion being devoted to representation at the Chicago Convention, and the possibility of persuading an Australian publisher to try a science fiction magazine. Though Evans' control was effective, it began to be resented.

On August 14, Dwyer resigned from the Futurian Society, not because of any grievance, as was later suggested, but because of "another reason which has no connection whatever with the Society".²³ Dwyer emphasised that "something has risen at home" which forced him to resign.²⁴ Nevertheless, he considered himself still

a fan and wished to remain on the staff of ZEUS. Levy and Castellari, however, refused to allow Dwyer to remain on the staff, and a gilbertian situation developed, Levy and Castellari publishing "official" issues of ZEUS, Dwyer publishing a rival or "pseudo-" ZEUS. A year later, Dwyer contributed several abusive articles to FUTURIAN OBSERVER, claiming that science fiction was a disease, but it is wrong to read back into his resignation in August, 1940, his attitude of mind a year afterwards.

At Meeting #17 of the Futurian Society (September 1) elections fell due. Veney said he could not carry on as Director, and nominated Evans in his stead. He also suggested that Molesworth should replace Castellari as Secretary. The Triumvirate were

dissatisfied with the state into which the club had fallen, and were willing to relinquish their control if a new executive committee could restore order.

Evans made his position clear from the start. He wanted a free hand to run the club as he saw fit. Levy asked whether the members were to do whatever Evans told them, or vote on everything in democratic fashion. Smith replied that before it had been pseudo-democracy, and "the methods of mild dictatorial power

explained by Evans was just what was needed". Evans said he was not a Dictator, nor out to glorify himself at all, but merely run the club in a more adult fashion. "We were too democratic in the past," he declared. Smith asked whether the vote would be for Evans, or both Evans and Molesworth. Veney said both, but Evans interrupted: "Only vote for the Directorship. I'll choose my own Secretary". He explained that his policy would enable the Director to choose at will his own Secretary, and dismiss him if he so desired at a moment's notice. The vote was taken by secret ballot, and the decision was unanimous. Evans was elected Director, whereupon he appointed Molesworth Secretary.

Not surprisingly, Evans' first act was to revive the idea of publishing a club organ. After Eric Russell, Molesworth and Castellari had each in turn refused to have his magazine taken over for this purpose, Evans said, "All right, we won't interfere with present fanmags, - I'll start a new one. I'll think of a name and a suitable format when enough material is at hand." The discussion was then closed. Clearly, it was to be a one-man show.

Later in the meeting, Williams objected that the new regime was no better than the old. "We are not Futurians, but just fans," he declared. "We don't care about science fiction, but mostly fans. Fanmags are interesting, but I think it would be easier to resign and just read the fanmags." Veney and Levy ironically agreed. The question then arose, - what is a Futurian? Molesworth said he thought it meant any person who takes an interest in the *actual construction* of the future, with a view to making the world a better place.²⁵ Evans said the club organ would create something the Society could plan for, - it

rival issues of ZEUS and contributions to Hockley's publications. (G.S.)

²⁵ FUTURIAN OBSERVER #18, September 3, 1940.

²¹ Ibid

²² La Coste had resurfaced from SF League days and Pinnock may also have known that group. MacLennan corresponded from Melbourne and Mustchin from Coolangatta, Qld. (G.S.)

²³ Quoted from letter in the club files.

²⁴ His family were antiscientific dingalings, the kind now called Creationists. Yet he managed to keep up some activity with his two

DAVID R. EVANS - 1941

would attract new fans. "We might progress to two hundred members, and have junior and senior sections." He went on to say, "And I must start it off, - if I can't do it with the F.S.S. I'll start a new club myself.

After this meeting it was clear that a break-up was coming. The Triumvirate had handed over executive control of the Society to a person whom, rightly or wrongly, they now considered not to have Futurian principles at heart. Molesworth, who had supported Evans, now found himself thrust into the background. The faction around ULTRA felt themselves under rebuke for their continued refusal to allow their magazine to be taken over by the Society.

The break-up came at the eighteenth meeting, held on September 22. No official records exist, but a report appears in FUTURIAN OBSERVER #19. There was tension in the air from the start. Halfway through the meeting, Molesworth showed he was fed up by walking out of the position of Secretary. Castellari proposed that the Society should be dissolved, Veney promptly stated that dissolution was not necessary, and suggested instead that the club be suspended for a short period. The amendment was carried.

Walking home from the meeting, Veney, Castellari, Levy, Molesworth and the Russells talked over the formation of a new club. They decided to limit membership to a small active number, and to make it a co-operative effort by issuing a six-page magazine, with each of the six members contributing one page. The club was to be known as the Fantasy Club, with Molesworth as Director and Levy Secretary.

A few days afterwards, however, Molesworth became gravely ill, and was admitted to hospital, where he was to remain until the end of the year²⁶. Plans for the Fantasy Club were shelved because of this, and in fact never revived. For a time, the Sydney group lost heart. Veney and Smith resigned from the staff of ZEUS, and Levy and Castellari announced they would "probably but not definitely" carry on publication. The second issue did appear, in December, 1940, in a duplicated 16 pp. quarto format. In Melbourne, Hockley kept up quarterly publication of AUSTRA-FANTASY, a 30 pp. hektographed issue appearing in September, 1940, and a 14 pp. duplicated one in December. In Brisbane, however, Moxon went down with pneumonia and abandoned the projected publication of IMAGINATIVE STORIES. This was to be the finish of Moxon as an active fan²⁷. Back in Sydney, Veney resigned from his position as President of F.A.A., due to pressure of work. Australian fandom, to use OBSERVER'S words, was now leaderless, no meetings were being held, and organisation was, to all intents and purposes, non-existent²⁸.

When the Futurian Society completed its first year of existence on November 5, 1940, there were no celebrations to commemorate the event - not even a general fan rally, with the possible

²⁶ Vol does not mention it again, but his health was precarious and relapses often put him out of action. (G.S.)

²⁷ Moxon caught another disease, evangelical ratbagery, and was last heard of being indoctrinated as a missionary raver. (G.S.)

²⁸ FUTURIAN OBSERVER #22, November 3, 1940.

exception of a gathering at the Mater Hospital, where Veney and Castellari sat beside Molesworth's bed and "chewed the rag" over the past year's activities. "Only apathy, disinterestedness and personal feuding marked the date of Australia's oldest and best-known fan organisation's birthday."²⁹

Things could not be left in this state. Veney and Castellari decided to call a Sydney Conference of fans to determine what action should be taken. Late in October they visited Evans to find his attitude. "I have no further interest in the Futurian Society," Evans told them; "I want nothing more to do with it".³⁰

But the idea was supported in other quarters, particularly by two new fans, Alan Corder and Graham Stone³¹. It was decided to stage the Conference, and Veney went to work on a draft constitution which he considered would be best for the Society, if revived, to adopt.

The First Sydney Science Fiction Conference was held early in December, 1940, with Charles La Coste, veteran of the old S.S.F.L. in the chair. Others attending were Castellari, Corder, Levy, Roden, Sawyer, Stone, the Russells, and Veney. (Molesworth was still in hospital). Discussion centred on the re-establishment of the Futurian Society on a "workable basis". Veney read an eight-point plan which he had prepared and asked for criticism. It came from all sides and in wondrous abundance. For over an hour the matter was hotly and evenly debated. "There were," Veney wrote afterwards,³² "no definite sides or cliques in operation. Each fan spoke his mind irrespective of who he was attacking."

One by one, the points were changed and reworded to suit the majority until finally seven of the eight points - now greatly modified in several cases - were passed and accepted as part of the Constitution. The most important question was - would the FSS close its doors to new members, except those of exceptional merit, or remain open to all? Veney stood his stand on the former, Corder and Levy on the latter. After long argument, the vote was 9-1 in favour of an "open" club.

The Conference recognised that the fanzine³³ factionalism of mid-1940 must be eliminated. It laid down that independent fan editors were to be admitted into the Society providing they refrained from printing damaging material about the activities of other members. To allow the Society to defend itself against any outside attack, an irregular club organ would be issued "which would be easily converted into a defensive barrier." Intelligent controversy would continue, as usual, in independent fanzines, but personality damning would be stopped³⁴.

The next meeting of the reconstituted Futurian Society was set down for January, 1941. "There was to be stricter control on the entry of new members, and these, along with old members, desiring to remain within, must come up to a standard in regard to the basic essentials required for an active participation in club affairs."³⁵

Fans went home from the First Sydney Conference feeling that the factors that had disrupted the first period of organised fandom

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ FUTURIAN OBSERVER #21, October 20, 1940.

³¹ *Ah, the most beautiful sight in the world, my name in print. First mentioned in FUTURIAN OBSERVER EXTRA, undated but early November 1940. (G.S.)*

³² MELBOURNE BULLETIN #16.

³³ *Actually this horrible neologism had not yet been introduced. The marginally better term fanmag was then used. My view is that any publication should be judged on its own merits: it was a mistake to invent a special category in which normal standards were ignored. G.S.*

³⁴ *Notice how the group discussed such problems as if no one had ever had them before. Later it worked out its own rules of debate. G.S.*

³⁵ FUTURIAN OBSERVER #22

had been pin-pointed, and that adequate provision had been made against their recurrence. "We have entered," declared THE FUTURIAN OBSERVER, "a new era - an era which some non-cooperatives will attempt to invade, but who *will, and must be kept out.*"³⁶ Australian fandom is being reborn, and in its rebirth there can only be progress for science fiction in Australia. The real fandom is uniting with this common aim. We shall build a new and better future."³⁷

Brave words! - but as the year 1940 drew to a close, the majority of active Australian fandom were in sympathy with them. Optimism was running high for the revival of the Futurian Society and the development of its activities during the coming year.

- Continued next issue -

³⁶ *A credentials committee would consider all applications for membership. This was mean as a polite way of excluding Evans, I think. G.S.*

³⁷ FUTURIAN OBSERVER #23, November 17, 1940.

IN DEPTH #9

by Bill Congreve

Terry Dowling recently asked me to speak at the launch of his latest Rynosseros collection, TWILIGHT BEACH, at Galaxy Bookshop. The following is an edited (Rewritten to include a few new thoughts and to take out the umms and ahhs!) transcript of what I had to say on the occasion.

#

First up, lets mention the boring statistics. Terry Dowling has won 9 Ditmars for fiction of varying lengths, the German Prix Wolkenstein for RYNOSSEROS, and the US Readercon Award for WORMWOOD. He's also won the Australian William Atheling Jr Award for criticism. Now that's out of the way, lets look at the more interesting stuff.

Why choose September 23rd as a launch date for a book? It's the spring equinox - or the fall equinox in the northern hemisphere - one of two days in the year in which the sun is in the sky for half the day. Today's society pays little attention to this kind of detail but we still remember faint reverberations of what these dates have meant to past cultures. Happy astronomical coincidences such as these have meaning for Terry, and they have meaning in his work. These dates give a clue to the weight of history and myth Terry draws upon in his writing. So what if the Olympic Committee choose the same day to vote on which city will hold the millennial Olympics? This is just another happy coincidence in Terry's mythmaking.

I feel honored that Terry asked me to speak tonight. I've only known Terry a couple of years; the connection was originally professional. I submitted a story for DOWN DEEP which Terry rejected for sound reasons. I then asked him for a story for INTIMATE ARMAGEDDONS which I was happy to publish and which was subsequently listed by Ellen Datlow in her YEAR'S BEST FANTASY & HORROR recommended reading list.

At about the same time I read and enjoyed RYNOSSEROS. I jumped at the chance to read WORMWOOD. When BLUE TYSON appeared and I began doing these columns for Ron, it became obvious that Terry's work deserved a column of its own.

So perhaps it's my association with Terry's work as critic which has led him to ask me to speak tonight.

All four of Terry's books are linked collections. WORMWOOD stands on its own. RYNOSSEROS, BLUE TYSON and now TWILIGHT BEACH form part of the chronicles of Tom Tyson, captain of the charvolant, Rynosseros.

While each of the three books is a collection, a continuing narrative is obvious. Tom Tyson's story moves from his first adventure as captain of Rynosseros, on through the mythic, altered landscape of a future Outback, through a period of soul-searching and personal growth which, in Tom's case takes the form of both life experience and a detective like ferreting out of his unknown past, until he becomes the seasoned campaigner of 'Ship's Eye', the pivotal final story of TWILIGHT BEACH. Readers of EIDOLON will know what 'Ship's Eye' is about, and what it heralds for Tom's future. Others will have to read the book.

Terry tells Tom Tyson's story in snippets; in glimpses of a wider narrative. If you want a military, or historical analogy, Terry gives the tactics of individual encounters in his stories and provides the clues so that a reader of the entire saga will then be shown the grand strategy of the political conflicts gripping Tom Tyson's world. In the meantime, each story, as it must for the device to work, stands on its own and provides honest entertainment.

Tom Tyson lives in a marvellous place. Australia, and indeed much of the world, is dominated technologically and financially by Ab'O tribes. There's a hint of genetic manipulation to provide enhanced mental and psychic powers. With their reverence for life, the tribes have created myriad artificial intelligences, among them the bell-trees, to guard over the mythic landscape they've created. Now, with the indifference and political expedience of later times, the tribes are coming into conflict with their own creation.

The landscape has been reformed, the weather modified, a regime of science and technology has transformed the country. Interior transport is by charvolant, great landships powered by solar power and sail which roll along the manicured dirt roads of Outback Australia.

In TWILIGHT BEACH, Tom Tyson searches for answers, some of which he finds. Other stories prepare the ground for future conflict. The tribes have become powerful, lazy, and yet jealous of their wealth and position. A movement within the tribes is betraying the artificial intelligences that Tom Tyson champions. Ab'O arrogance is sitting uncomfortably alongside the ambitious coastal nation.

Within this beautiful, imagined landscape, anything is possible. Readers of earlier volumes know this already.

In TWILIGHT BEACH, Tom returns to the madhouse, he searches for answers to the images of the ship, the girl, and the star that have been left to him of his Bedlam time dreams. And within it all there are allusions to other works that have influenced Terry. I could almost hear the gentle waves of the Aegean Sea while reading 'Nights at Totem Rule' and it is only fitting that Terry has replaced that seascape with the desert sands of Australia. This is a tribute whose meaning you'll have to discover for yourselves. (Look within the pages of THE MAGUS, by John Fowles.)

In TWILIGHT BEACH, some of Tom's enemies are named. His greatest enemy, and I'm not giving anything away for this is obvious from the earlier books, is an attitude held by an entire culture. This is fitting given what we know of history - when we bother to learn its lessons.

There you have it: an introduction to TWILIGHT BEACH, the next chapter in the story of Tom Tyson.

A brief word about the books before I go. (I then held all three up together.) I'll show you all three at once. Quite pretty, aren't they? (Then I introduced Nick Stathoploulos, the cover artist.

#

TWILIGHT BEACH; Terry Dowling; collection; 1993; 270 + x pp; Aphelion, tpb; \$ 12.95.

TWILIGHT BEACH opens with 'Shatterwreck at Breaklight', previously published in Omega and F&SF. Tom Tyson falls in love with a holographic image of an Ab'O woman who resembles an image of a woman's face he remembers from the Madhouse.

The next story, 'The Babel Ships' concerns another of Tom's images from the dreamtime - the Ship. He finds out what the image is, and he finds that others who have been in the Madhouse have been given the same image to remember, but he doesn't find out why. The reader is drawn a step deeper into Tom's search for his past.

'Sailors Along the Soul' has Rynosseros searching for the ghostly Red Fleet in a curiously impossible isobaric vortex. 'Roadsong' is a key story which re-establishes aristocratic Ab'O indifference and arrogance. 'Larrikin Wind' takes us away from Tom Tyson for a moment as a Rynosseros crewmember discovers for himself why the township of Twilight Beach has importance for his captain.

I was a little disappointed with 'Nights At Totem Rule', the above mentioned tribute to John Fowles, simply because it promised so much. Here Tom delves deeper for the mysteries surrounding his past. 'The Final Voyage of Captain Gelise' both brings back the magic and directs Tom's attention towards another episode in his past - 'The Leopard', which is the story of Tom's emergence from the Madhouse. Curiously, there is nothing here of Tom's mistrust of artificial intelligence which featured in Rynosseros.

The remainder of the book I'll leave you to discover for yourselves.

So the things that could only be inferred from the text at the end of Blue Tyson have now been explicitly stated. Tom has searched for his past, and the answers he has found there have led to new questions which can only be solved in his future. At the same time, the

political conflicts in the Ab'O world have worked their effects on Tom. More so than the previous books, *Twilight Beach* is Tom's story, the story of how his reality has been shaped by the powers surrounding him. Now that this story has been told, the stage is set for the story of how Tom will react and begin shaping the world he lives in. Recommended.

#

GALAX ARENA; Gillian Rubenstein; novel; 1992; 138 + vi pp; Hyland House, hc; no price listed.

Why is it almost impossible to buy a hardcover children's book from an Australian publisher that has the price printed on it? (The same goes for a number of other books from Australian publishers.)

Good news. This is the third printing of the hardcover. Good to see somebody doing so well.

In the first instance the plot is a hoary old device from fifties SF: a bunch of people are kidnapped by aliens for unknown, but presumably nefarious purposes. The idea that those being kidnapped are children advances the concept a little, but what saves *Galax-Arena* from being yet another boringly routine b-grade treatment of an old idea, is the obvious use of the kidnap and following treatment of the children as a metaphor for our wider society's treatment of, and expectations from, schoolchildren. The astute reader will then notice that not everything is as it seems, and the original hoary old plot device is fascinatingly subverted to a new purpose. The real plot twists begin.

Joella (the narrator), Peter and Liane are a family of children whose father put them on a train in Sydney to go north to their Aunt Jill's property in Casino. They're met at the railway station by the charming and persuasive Hythe, who appears to know the children. Hythe charms Peter and Liane with a plausible story and they're quite happy to jump in the back of Hythe's Landcruiser. Joella suspects something but decides to go along with the others simply because it's obvious to her Hythe doesn't want her along.

The children are taken to a mysterious base in the bush where they are hustled on board a rocket bound for Vexak, in the Cygni system, to perform in the *Galax-Arena*.

Peter and Liane are natural athletes, and Peter soon advances in the tribal power structure Hythe uses to control the children. Liane also forces her way into the strange new society of children. Only Joella, no athlete, doesn't fit in, and Hythe plays on her fears and lack of physical prowess to further ostracize her from the group.

My only complaint with *Galax-Arena* is that Rubenstein describes too much of the story, rather than showing her characters in action. Otherwise, the characters are real, the story is marvellous, and the strange human culture of the children is totally convincing. Recommended.

#

CASTLE OF EYES; Penelope Love; novel; 1993; 236 pp; Chaosium, tpb; US \$14.95.

Expect to pay between \$19.95 and \$29.95 in Australia, depending on who you buy this from. *Galaxy* has it on sale for \$12.95, but I don't know how long that will last.

A number of recent novels have featured life within grand, larger-than life, gothic edifices. There's the cathedral of *The Vicar of Morbing Vyle*, there's *Castle Banat*, the gathering place of the vampire clans of Lucius Shepard's *The Golden*, and there's the empty, dark, claustrophobic vistas of Penelope Love's *Castle of Eyes*. The 'time' for novels featuring Martian colonisation arrived a couple of years ago. The above mentioned novels, all published independently of each other at approximately the same time, make me wonder if now is the time for dark fantasy novels featuring paranoid gothic metaphors of the future of Western technological culture.

Castle of Eyes is a leisurely work rich in characterization and imaginative detail. Allilole's origins are always mysterious, both to her and her keepers and carers, the aristocratic Family who abide in the Castle. She wakes with amnesia and with severe damage to her hands. Vague tales are told of how she was found in the fields.

Allilole soon falls prey to the political infighting of the incestuous and inbred Family, most of whom see her as second class - little more than a serf.

At the top of the Family's Totem Pole are Alse, the Parrar, and Elspeth, the Neve. Also important is the witch, Marre. Allilole is haunted by a Voice that whispers terrified questions to her in her nightmares. The Family offer to remove the Voice from her mind, and pay her for it with a demon who will become her hands. Slangash reads Allilole's commands directly from her mind and rapidly becomes uncontrollable. Another faction of the Family begins a surreptitious program of exploration throughout the vast, mostly forgotten Castle, and Allilole becomes involved in this. There is another faction - an unregarded and uncontrolled group of Family members with birth defects, led by the unrepentant Caerre, who have been exiled from the Family proper. Allilole is also influenced by this group, especially when, for their own purposes, they cover Allilole's tracks after a murder.

Castle of Eyes has a straightforward structure relieved only by having a later episode, where Slangash murders Reven, a Family son, moved to the beginning as a prologue to provide spice to draw the reader into the novel. However necessary, this device feels a little artificial. More was possible in the plotting.

Castle of Eyes is a slow read, yet it is one which is dense with imagery and style. The ending satisfies on several levels. The novel stands alone, yet there is room for a sequel which would be a completely new story. At the same time it inverts traditional fantasy epics. The action takes place almost entirely within the one, vast building. The conflict is between members of one extended Family and yet still has meaning in terms of the past and future of the Family. Penelope Love shows a great influence from her mother, Rosaleen, yet this is a rich heritage to draw from and the daughter has lived up to the challenge and created her own, very original, vision.

#

THE DESTINY MAKERS; George Turner; novel; 1993; 321 + x pp; Avonova, hc; US \$20.

Expect to pay between \$29.95 and \$42.95 in Australia, depending on who you choose to deal with. The US paperback edition is around for between \$9.95 and \$12.

Let's take a quick look at today's world. Some nations still take the point of view that a large population is the key to international economic competitiveness. (Australia - but our increase is as much by immigration as by natural growth.) Other nations are encouraging some segments of their population to outbreed others in an attempt to maintain an ethnic balance. (Singapore) In others still, welfare services are maintained at a level where parents are best able to guarantee their future by having a lot of kids - some of whom will survive to take care of Mum and Dad in their old age. These same communities also have poor usage levels of, and desire to use, contraceptives, and have little in the way of entertainment so that the best way Mum and Dad can have an interesting night is by fucking.

Yes, the old reasons for the world's population increase are still with us, and nobody is doing much about it.

Let's look at the economy. At a level of full employment of all resources - including new technology - we will produce more than we consume. This is true of every nation in the world. There is currently a trend for efficiency throughout the world's economies, and one important way the owners of the means of production can economise is by increasing productivity, employing new technology, and sacking workers. It then becomes obvious that the only way full employment of human resources is possible within any one economy is if exports massively outweigh imports. (Japan) It is also obvious that not every economy in the world is able to do this. The world economy taken as a single phenomenon is in a bind. Therefore, the world is suffering massive unemployment. Add to this the fact that consumer/commodity led markets are encountering a backlash as consumers look for value - every time you catch a train instead of driving, wash the dishes instead of buying a dishwasher, conserve water while brushing teeth, turn out unused lights and save electricity, make the old car last an extra year before buying a new one, etc, you are adding, in a commonsense manner, to our economic 'recession'. Advertising is becoming less effective due to saturation and the added sophistication of the audience. The bubble of everlasting economic growth based on consumerism is bursting.

Demographics show us that the population is becoming increasingly old and reliant on welfare. So, what is happening? The

unemployed masses are being added to the aged to create a new class of welfare recipients. Our economy is becoming streamlined into three compartments. The producers, both owners and workers, are being taxed by the public service to support the welfare class. The silly thing is that the gross domestic product of this new economy is LESS than that of the state of less than efficient but full employment of human resources chaos that preceded it. Our present recession is being created and maintained by bean counters who are actually reducing the net worth of their masters in the name of efficiency, competitiveness, and economic growth. This blatant contradiction leads me to suspect there is something fundamentally wrong with our economic goals and definitions. There is no escape from the road we are choosing. It is contradictory and based on quite false assumptions of human needs.

This is happening now. We all know it, yet we all like to pretend otherwise. We choose our destiny through blissful ignorance.

George Turner is quite aware of the above. The *Destiny Makers* deals with consequences. Turner has provided sufficient clues for the interested reader to puzzle out the origins of his imagined twenty-first century.

The *Destiny Makers* is NOT a novel of our economic extrapolation. Fine upstanding copper, Harry Ostrov, is seconded to a special project where he is answerable only to Victorian Premier Beltane, an inspid politician who wishes to resurrect his father from senility to act as his advisor in an increasingly hostile world. There are laws against this kind of thing. Population pressure, and the demands of the aged on the public purse, have combined to ensure that the aged aren't taken care of very well. There are too many people in the world, and the sooner the old die off... Beltane's actions are quite illegal. Detective-sergeant Ostrov has hangups which make him just a little too honest for his own good. When he is blackmailed into becoming the old man's bodyguard, there is little he can do but accept.

Meanwhile, Beltane's daughter has gone slumming amongst the Wardie masses (the welfare class) and produced a pregnancy with which to blackmail Daddie. Birth out of wedlock is also illegal, and Beltane's daughter has no interest in the flunky who provided the sperm.

Obviously, Premier Beltane is ripe for blackmail. Meanwhile, the world's political leaders are in the process of legislating for a mysterious but supposedly benevolent future the nature of which is kept under the tightest security. Beltane is the key to this decision making.

The *Destiny Makers* is a very cleverly extrapolated SF novel that reduces vast and horrendously important political decision making processes to an immediate and personal level of blackmail, corruption, infighting and family bickering. Does our world really rest on such shaky foundations? We all knew before the book began that Turner is one of our world's great cynics. Yet the novel's construction is not always convincing - perhaps because the challenge of developing the themes (in which Turner succeeded splendidly) was much greater than that of merely presenting them. My biggest problem, and really its only a quibble, is with the role of Harry Ostrov. Here is an ordinary man thrown into an unconvincing role where he is allowed to act far above the station in life he has earned through his own actions. He is too much the playmate of the plot.

Despite this, *The Destiny Makers* is a thrilling and well-paced read of an only too real future. Turner's greatest gifts are his skills for lateral thinking and extrapolation. This novel is quite able to inspire the kind of thinking with which I filled the beginning of this review. This is sense of wonder stuff to me, and just as valid as any other kind of sense of wonder. I enjoyed the novel immensely.

#

Addendum. A couple of weeks after the last *Mentor* was mailed out, I heard from Terry Dowling that the final paragraph of Cherry Wilder's story in *TERROR AUSTRALIS*, 'Anzac Day', had been dropped off in a regrettable typographical error. About a week later I received a letter from Yvonne Rousseau conveying the same information. Even though I have a copy of *SKIN OF THE SOUL* (ed Lisa Tuttle), in which 'Anzac Day' was first published, I haven't yet read it, so I missed the error as well. If I'd known about this in time, I would have included the missing paragraph in last issue's review of *TERROR AUSTRALIS*. In the interests of completeness, here is the missing paragraph:

In my dreams I go hunting for Uncle Len with my trusty 303.22, a newer weapon. Beryl is there too and even Aunt Madge. We are like furies, wild and blood-stained, stalking our helpless prey through the green twilight. I know this is an evil dream. In the gentle forests of New Zealand there are no harmful creatures, no snakes, no predators.

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER (cont. from p.10)

household god which comes to life and begins performing miracles - minor miracles, as he doesn't have much power, but unsettling ones. The other novelette was Steve Frazee's *DRAGON FIRES*, a humorous story about dragons surviving into modern times which I thought hilarious at the time but looks a little dead now. Still funny in spots, though.

The second issue included a Harold Shea story by de Camp and Pratt, Philip K. Dick's *THE COOKIE LADY*, who is a very non-traditional vampire, Poul Anderson's story of a demon who falls in love with the man she's supposed to seduce, and John Wyndham's tale of a man who collected spiders and acquired one too many. Some ideas are constantly reused, but I don't recall any other stories quite like Wyndham's.

The third issue brought David Alexander's *THE OTHER ONES*. This concerns a sort of special purgatory; the inhabitants are dead, but the popular belief is that they're still alive and that belief keeps them waiting, in a drab landscape. Jack the Ripper, Jesse James, John Wilkes Booth, and the other ones. The story couldn't be written today, but in the 1950s there was still a belief among a fair section of the population that Booth had escaped the burning barn, men turned up who claimed they had met Jesse, and some men do live to be over 100 years old. The Ripper, of course, was never identified and many who thought about him at all considered that he was still lurking somewhere. (Robert Bloch's popular, *YOURS TRULY, JACK THE RIPPER* was based on this belief.) Alexander didn't see fit to include Butch Cassidy, probably because he was less well known at that period. It was an excellent, grim story; the shades are in a limbo perhaps worse than death.

There was also a Philip K. Dick story and a John Wyndham story about a meeting between a Chinese and a Welsh dragon. Bruce Elliott's novella about a stage magician who gets mixed up in real magic might still win a few accolades.

The final issue wasn't up to the first three, but the separate stories of de Camp and Pratt were good, and the novella by Harry Harrison and Katherine MacLean got quite a bit of favorable comment at the time. Bill Brown's *MEDICINE DANCER* was one of the first stories about American Indian magic (the Indians weren't yet called Native Americans).

With all of today's trilogies and endless series about swordsmen, priestesses, and unicorns, all of which seem remarkably alike, it's nice to have some issues of a real fantasy magazine to re-read.

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Contributions, if over 5 pages, preferred to be on an IBM 51/4" or 31/2" disc (DD or HD) in both ASCII *and* your word processor file (this does *not* apply to LoCs) or typed, single or double spaced, preferably a good photocopy (and if you want it returned, please *type* your name and address) and include an SSAE anyway, for my comments. Contributions are not paid; however they receive a free copy of the issue their contribution is in, and any future issues containing comments on their contribution.

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JOHN J. ALDERSON, Havelock, VIC 2465.

I have just returned from my wintering in India and nearby parts to find the October issue of THE MENTOR awaiting me. These things can be a worry. Another worry is the fact that all sf females appear to be so terribly savage in appearance, have all sf artists read Kipling....

The hunter meets the husband and each confirms the tale
That the female of the species is more dangerous than the male.

I am amused to read Buck Coulson's comments re trees in space colonies in the R&R DEPT, which certainly stamps him as not being a peraculturist. With perhaps a very little help from mosses and lichens in the beginning, trees are the only *makers* of soil we have. Ergo, rain forests grow on either sterile beds of gravel, or equally sterile beds of clay and build up impressive masses of "soil" which is virtually pure humus. Remove the trees and farm it for a few years and you're back to sterile gravel or clay. Normally soils have a lot of "inert" minerals incorporated in them from wind and water erosion and are so more enduring than the rain forest humus. Presumably trees will grow in "pulverised asteroids or Moon dust", though a tiny amount of soil may be necessary to supply the initial cultivars, usually some form of fungus, which helps the tree roots break down and absorb the required minerals. Most of a tree is carbon and water, and they soon provide themselves a layer of humus which swarm with little beasties that benefit the tree.

I had trees growing in a space colony in a story I am presently writing. But an interesting point does crop up. Calcium is needed in quite reasonable quantities by all plants and normally comes from limestone deposited long ago by ancient seas. But where amongst the asteroids will one find limestone. I appreciate that calcium is a fairly common element but what form does it have out there?

Coulson's reference to northern Africa supplying the Romans with bread is interesting ... not that it is anything new I feel to any of us. They also farmed, or we modern farmers would say "mined" what is now England and by the third century it was badly eroded and gone back to trees, and has since recovered. Africa without trees never recovered. I mention all this, not because of its importance to the space program if there is one left, but because of its vital importance to us all now. (28.9.93)

LLOYD PENNY, 412-4 Lisa St., Brampton, ON, CANADA 16T 4B6.

B. J. Stevens' PRAY FOR THE PREY has a smattering of sf content, but seems more like episodic horror, and not a full story in itself. There needs to be more to fill out the story, with a little more background on each of the characters.

THE BIG BOOM by Don Boyd ... The Kondratieff financial cycle is in the news here, as one explanation why unemployment is still high while inflation is at all-time lows, and why there's still tough times while economists say the recession is over. This is something that may yet endanger the Space Station Freedom programme ... the current US Congress passed the reduced programme by a vote of two, so support

is low. Congress fails to remember or care that the US invited other countries to participate, like Canada and Australia, and those countries have spent lots of money on this project, too. Right now, the future of the Canadian space programme and associated aerospace companies is riding on Freedom.

THE BROOKLYN BLUES by Brent Lillie reads like a TWILIGHT ZONE episode, with the usual (or unusual) gathering at a bar. Again, I think the idea needs fleshing out, in terms of idea, but not wordage ... if the boy is clinically dead for five minutes, you must be quick. Then again, time is subjective ... a lot could happen in that five minutes.

The work in sf that Pavel Viaznikov does is much the same as that which Boris Sidyuk and Alexander Vasilkovski is involved in. They are members of the Zoryany Shlyah SF Club in Kiev, Ukraine. (By the way, this is the club that Vladimir Saliy refers to in his letter of comment in this issue.) With the new freedoms available in the former USSR countries, some SF fans are now able to become SF pros in the agenting and translation fields.

I have a copy of Andrei Tolstoy's AELITA sitting on my bookshelf, waiting to be read. Given the descriptions of the book in Andrei Lubenski's article, I am eager to get started on it. I have several Russian paperbacks, which means I have purchased books produced by Raduga Publishers of Moscow. They produce extremely high-quality paperbacks in English.

THE INITIATE COMIC ... I haven't seen previous episodes, but while the art is good, I'm not impressed with the premise. It looks like an excuse to demean women, and to display hanging breasts. The human male characters only reinforce this expressed low opinion of women, looking for a quick lay on the hoof. If this is the end of the series, perhaps something that everyone can enjoy could replace it.

Sean Williams flogs a dead horse in his article on defining sf. Seeing that sf can deal with just about any subject, many authors say that sf is what they point to when they want to point to sf, and I'd have to agree. These days, readers seem to want 100% factuality in their science fiction, and will not stand any magic, contrived pseudoscience or anything that does not match the laws of physics as we know them. I don't mind some fictional science in my science fiction, but I seem to be in a minority.

I agree with Leigh Blackmore ... many publishers slap the type on the page without any regard to spelling, grammar, vocabulary, etc. As a professional editor and proof-reader, I can't even read a book or newspaper for pleasure any more without spotting the typos. I'd gladly offer my services, but many of these books are produced in New York and Canadian publishers have left sf publishing to their American counterparts. Many Canadian publishers have their head offices in Toronto, but home-grown sf in this country comes from small presses only. (27.8.93)

BRIAN EARL BROWN, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 4822, USA.

Steve Carter has an attractive art style that more than makes up for the ghoulish subject of most of his work. The cartoon series, FERAL KILLERS and THE INITIATE had their provocative moments, though tending to be rather cynical - all men are beasts, all beasts are beasts; kill *and* be eaten, etc. As much as I like Carter's work, I get the impression from the letters in THE MENTOR 78 that he's about outlived his welcome. Either steer him into more traditional SF imagery or put him on sabbatical for an issue or two.

Very useful article by James Verran on the sky charts for the budding and not so budding SF author. Andrew Darlington also writes a nice summing up of Isaac Asimov. I don't know who gave him the idea that all - or at least a lot of his stories should be tied together into some kind of grand mosaic. Trying to bring THE END OF ETERNITY into the universe of Foundation won't wash because ETERNITY was pretty much the refutation of everything Asimov was proposing in FOUNDATION; it was a debunking of the earlier series. In FOUNDATION Hari Seldon argued that through science and math one could manage human history in order to avoid misery and maximise the good. But what Asimov kept hammering away after in ETERNITY is that once someone starts to manage civilization they will always steer it on a middle course that - while avoiding the valleys, also avoids the Peaks of history. By making ETERNITY a piece of Secret History which has spurred the Robots into running their own Foundation Asimov has

repudiated his own repudiation of FOUNDATION without showing how Psycho-History can avoid stifling history.

[The possibility of the Galactic Empire is mentioned in ETERNITY somewhere, and with (I think) arguments as to why it should not be allowed to happen - Ron.]

I remember "Dennis More" the name Keith Taylor used for those early stories in FANTASTIC. Never knew why he used it, or what's become of him following publication of THE CAULDRON OF PLENTY. I thought he was a good, solid writer with a pleasant, readable style. I would have expected him to continue to sell books. I read he wrote at least three Bard Books, unimaginatively titled BARD I, BARD II and BARD III, and think there may have been an IV but can't be sure. I confess I haven't read any of the books - they came out about the time I was swearing off sword and sorcery.

Harry Andruschak wonders why the recent Stephen Hawking's biography has no mention of Carl Sagan even tho Sagan had written the Foreword to Hawking's A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME. That Sagan wrote a foreword says nothing about their association professionally or personally. Having Sagan to write a foreword insured greater readership than if there were no foreword at all. It was all just business. There's no reason to assume they'd even meet or like each other. Thus if Hawking's biography fails to mention Sagan - and unless Andruschak knows [a] reason to assume otherwise - it is because Sagan plays no part in Hawking's life.

On to issue number 79. I enjoyed reading about how you put together and print an issue of THE MENTOR. I envy the speed of your plate maker. I use mimeograph electrostencils when I'm not stealing xeroxing from work and at best can only cut maybe 12 stencils on hour using a low resolution setting. But the mimeo was cheap, is simple to use and does a good enough job. (Actually mine's pretty well worn out.)

I was fascinated by Pavel Viaznikov's comment about bootleg translations of SF under communism. I'm not surprised that people - fans - who attempt translations on their own, but I was taken by surprise when he said those translations circulated on magnetic disks, when someone[s] whole personal library's made from bound computer print-outs. Over here I still don't think there's much traffic in stories, articles, books or magazines loaded on disk. It remains far easier, convenient and comfortable feeling, to hand around hardcopy, making Xeroxes when needed. But the Soviets kept their copiers under tight scrutiny, didn't they, so it would be hard to pass around Xerox copies. But a computer disk Supervisors over there like supervisors over here probably had no idea what their employees did with those computers and didn't think anything of a 200 page printout. What a strangely high tech way of self publication.

I also enjoyed A. Lubenski's History of Russian fantasy. I look forward to his next instalment.

[Actually, something that I haven't mentioned, and I should have is that the word "Fantastica" covers both fantasy and science fiction. - Ron.]

Nice look at Edgar Rice Burroughs Venus books. They don't stand up to his earlier works - Barsoom, Pellucidar, but where good fun adventure. I recall hating all his heavy handed political satire, whether of communist or of Nazi's. Its a bit hard to get into the mood of an adventure story when the author is wielding "allegory" with a heavy hand. It completely destroyed that willing suspension of disbelief.

I wonder, but lack any proof, whether ERB actually wrote the novelettes for ESCAPE ON VENUS which appeared in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, also WIZARD OF VENUS and SKELETON MEN OF JUPITER. Why would Burroughs decide to write for FANT. AD. when he had been so successful for so long? I wonder if his son might have had something to do with those last stories or may a ghost from Ray Palmer's stable of hacks? I don't know and have no proof. I'm just curious. (27.8.93)

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

Censorshit is an abomination. Fucked if I'm going to let some government arsehole tell me what I can and can't watch or read. I'm quite capable of making up my own mind thank you. In essence what censorshit accomplishes is the imposition of a "set of rules" by which creativity and expression must comply, which in the end standardises art and expression to a common denominator ... the level of the common herd. When an artist, writer, musician, film-maker, or whatever, is

forced to consider if his/her work will offend some loud-mouthed minority the creative process is stifled - forced to conform to the standard imposed by government (Who the fuck would want government approved art?). Anything that questions, threatens, ridicules, challenges, or tears down our taboos, authoritative bodies, God, or whatever, is deemed inappropriate. Horror, some of the extreme forms of music (such as death metal and rap), and to a smaller extent science fiction, will always challenge and break taboos, and therefore will always be targeted by pro-censorship groups, and the so-called "moral majority". (A recent example was the Gestapo (err ... Customs) raids on record shops carrying CDs by Austrian death-metal band Pungent Stench. The irony of all this was that, due to some loophole in the legislation, Pungent Stench, who were touring Australia at the time, were still able to perform the same "offensive" material onstage. Hinch and other assorted fuckwits were disgusted, the sheeple carried on in their suburban stupor oblivious, and the metal heads went to the shows and enjoyed these "blasphemous" songs.)

Luckily, due to its anarchic nature, the small press will always be relatively free from the grubby hands and mind-control of the censors.

As an aside, it will be interesting to see the reaction of these groups when virtual reality games become affordable (over the next ten years) and sickos will be able to create their own virtual reality world where they can mutilate, kill and rape at will.

Now onto that little old lady in Argentina whom I seem to have upset: Mae, did you write strongly to me? I did get a rather mixed up letter where you couldn't seem to make up your mind whether you wanted to castigate me, insult me, be nice to me, praise me, or invite me to come and live in Argentina. What a mess! The letter made no sense at all and read like it was written by someone who had forgotten to take their lithium pills. (I did send you a rather curt reply asking you not to write to me again.)

Mae, I'm afraid that somewhere in that cranial cavity you call a brain is a serious short. I suggest you stick a screwdriver (or even a sharper implement) into it to remedy the situation. Or at least go back on your medication ... you really need it.

I don't know why you wrote to me to criticise Steve Carter's artwork. What Steve chooses to create or draw is strictly his business, and has nothing to do with me. If you want to comment on his work, write to him about it not me, and I'm sure he'll also tell you where to stick your silly comments. Then again, the fact that you found his work disturbing, even horrifying, and were thoroughly offended is probably the best compliment you could give the guy. (If only one of my stories were to offend and horrify someone so much!) Again, you couldn't make up that whirling mess of confusion you call a mind whether you liked or hated his graphic story ... most likely you were offended and repulsed but also attracted to it all at the same time, which only serves to prove the quality of the work. (Steve, if you're reading this I suggest you send her a copy of CHARNEL HOUSE if you have any left.)

Why the fact that I publish horror offends you I don't know. You've never even seen any of my mags. And no one is forcing you to read the fucking things either. I suppose that while having a cup of tea with the local vicar and flipping through an issue of THE MENTOR you came across one of my locs or some of Steve's grisly drawings and were thoroughly offended (no doubt the vicar almost choked on his sponge-cake as well). Then again, the fact that twits like you are offended by what I'm doing, only goes to show that I must be doing something right. If you don't like horror, don't read it! We horrorfiles don't give a shit about your snotty ill-informed opinions on a genre you have no knowledge or appreciation of. Stick to teas with the vicar, making sponge-cakes and pruning your daffodils.

Your beliefs - you claim to be a "New-Age-Psychic-Christian-White-Light-whatever" - obviously reflect the total confusion in your demented mind. Go back to your medication ... please!

Satanism: you obviously know nothing about the subject. The person you mention is an obvious idiot, not a satanist ... probably a Christian rebelling the only way his limited mind is capable of doing, and who has merely substituted the Xtian god for another idol. And no I don't get on my knees and worship some horned god (or any other kind of god) ... that I'll leave to self-effacing guilt-ridden Xians. "No god or devil, so why play at satanism" you ask? Who's playing? Obviously

you've missed the entire point of it all. Good and evil are subjective. Satan/Set/Cthulhu/"Bob" are all symbolic representations of a philosophical leaning, not a deity you worship. This is something Xtians, pinks/sheeple can just never comprehend. And you believe in all sorts of things do you? Well believe this: you're a loony! (29.8.93)

BRENT LILLIE, 10 Cherub St, Togun, QLD 4224.

"Life is more fantastical than any fantastic novel". I wonder if any readers recognise the quote? It's from Andrew Lubenski's history of Russian SF in TM 80. Of course, it's just another way of saying that truth is stranger than fiction, but it summed up my feelings about Mae Strelkov's contribution to the LOC's perfectly.

What a lady, and what a life! So different than mine. I loved her description of the Jesus-fearing neonazi, the "special" pig, and I found her views on reincarnation fascinating. Perhaps the fact that my son was struck by a car last year and almost died came into play as I read her letter. It affected me deeply. Mae sounds so brave, so full of vitality, so intelligent. Her words touched me.

Keep writing, keep writing. Real flow of consciousness stuff, this, but I've got to press on, otherwise my letter will end up shorter than my stories, and that's too bloody short. Ron will take me off his mailing list.

Some observations on the contents of TM 80 would not go astray. Not much fiction, but what I read I enjoyed, if a touch self-consciously. FROM HUDDERSFIELD TO THE STARS was enlightening. "Proto-SF", eh? I couldn't help thinking that there was a good fiction piece buried somewhere in Steve Sneyd's subject matter. That goes for just about everything, though, doesn't it? You can find a story almost anywhere, even in the dustballs under your bed. I've found a lot of stories under my bed. I enjoy the centrefolds as well.

I made a commitment to struggle through A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIAN FANTASTIKA in one sitting, and I'm glad I did. An excellent article, especially if you pause to get the pronunciations of the Russian surnames right. It adds a certain flavour.

Incidentally, I read Dean Koontz's THE DOOR TO DECEMBER recently. To me, it seemed like a blatant rip-off of ALTERED STATES and FORBIDDEN PLANET. Does anyone agree. (Does anyone admit to reading Dean Koontz?)

James Verran's article was informative, but I tend to use the spell-checker and thesaurus on the computer, and if that fails, a couple of dog-eared, sorry-looking volumes lying in the top drawer of the desk suffice. I know he's right, though. I really should get some decent reference books. Once I checked the spelling of bizaare, and do you know what my dictionary said? It told me it was "an offbeat Oriental market-place". I think it's a bit too user-friendly.

Look, I've got to point this out. It's slightly out of genre, but does anyone think that the man in the glasses on the fifty-dollar note bears an uncanny resemblance to Paul Drake, the private detective in the old black and white series of "Perry Mason"? If you don't, please send me your fifty-dollar notes so that I can make sure they're genuine.

Andrew Darlington's dreams obviously reached fruition upon the publication of JET ACE LOGAN. What an achievement! The artwork was superb and the storyline was well-paced and entertaining. I'd like to see more, if possible. A real professional effort.

For me though, TM 80 will always remain a milestone, for the simple reason that it contained Mae Strelkov's letter. (7.9.93)

MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy, Argentina.

TM 79 arrived. Oh, what a boring cop-off of an ending to Steve Carter's story! Just everybody getting eaten. Oh, well, true horror - which I have enjoyed in books I've read, isn't a *nois*thing. Underplaying horror is more powerful than thumping a drum and making phallic gestures while drooling over live and eatable flesh.

It isn't that I'm *shocked*. (Oh dear, did my vicar choke on his sponge-cake? Who cooked it? Not !!)

He [Chris Masters] sure was mad when he answered [*in his letter above*] my one page letter dashed off impulsively. Actually I was impressed by his reply, for his comments on my brain hit home. I *am* muddle-headed, and studying Chinese daily for 30 years didn't improve my linear approaches to trying to say things succinctly, the Western way.

I really got a kick out of his mental image of me having tea with "the vicar". Also my lithium pills. What are they? For old age, I suppose.

As for "the vicar", sometimes the Catholic Bishop comes this way on some Saint's Day. He always buys a nice fat young pig from us. (But he doesn't even get off the car. Only his priestly underling risks standing at the gate and ordering the pig for having it clean and ready-first slaughtered, of course - at such-and-such an hour). The rumour was spread that we're "dangerous Masons", but after living here for 10 years, the simple natives don't believe it.

Hmm - yes, yes! But I too *am* against censorship! But what's wrong with good taste? Have you ever smelled rotting flesh? Who'd want to have sex with a rotting cadaver? What C. M. sent me - a page of photos - reassured me that I needn't take him to heart, as "cute". Poor dear!

I wish I *had* a vicar who spoke English so I could have a laugh with him over all the sound and fury I stirred up. Already it was coming to the fore, all this disapproval as per earlier locs in THE MENTOR from those who felt that "little (?) old ladies" (I'm 5'10") don't belong in THE MENTOR.

I tend to agree! I want to talk about my language findings - very exciting to me, but to who else? Is it archaic Chinese that puts folks off? Or my way of viewing the prehistoric patterns? Never mind. It doesn't matter.

[*Actually, Mae, I'm sure part of it would be laziness on the part of some of the readers of TM - not bothered enough to concentrate enough to read through it. I'm still holding the remainder of your arrow article/s, which I am still intending to publish. - Ron.*]

I don't go to church. Even if there were one reachable - organised services bore me. There's no church anywhere nearer than 120 kms away (I do believe an Evangelical chapel or two may exist in Palma Sola, but know no details - I don't go to Palma Sola. It's just 20 km away, but it's mostly scattered little farms).

On Saint's Days here, our simple neighbours dance till they drop, drink till they topple, but our own young-uns (son, son-in-law) as the most literate of our local citizens are voted as President and Vice-President of the gauchos, and our daughter dresses up to ride w/ the gauchos at processions when San Rogue and his doggie are taken out for display. We find it touching and quaint. We are much loved here in consequence, for people count on us for help, always.

Daffodils? Wouldn't it be lovely if some grew! We have chickens too all over the place. (If you lock them up they go on strike). So it's eggs or flowers. We made our choice for eggs temporarily.

You guess wrong, Chris. I'm no New Ager. No Psychic. Never hear of "White Light" - what's it? As for "Christian"? Christians bore me. I frighten them on the rare occasion we've met. But they do agree that I suffer from "total confusion of a demented mind". As for "a screwdriver" into my brain? I'll just quietly fade away and stop making noises. It's time! I am now 76. High time! I agree! Why do I bother w/ little squirts? Well I lack vicars! And talking in Spanish alone out here gets dull, occasionally!

As for being "a loony"! Sure, I am. I always knew it!

(28.9.93)

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

Editorial [of TM 80], well, on censorship despite all argument, we all censor our speech, actions and writings to some degree, either to protect our own image or to avoid offending others. So, why quibble when the same rules are applied to books, films etc? The real answer is that "their" standards aren't the ones "we" agree with. I wouldn't want to defecate, urinate or indulge in sexual activities in public - and by the same token, I don't want to read about or view other people indulging in them - but some (perverted) people do. Should such activities be censored or not?

THE JAM JAR was an excellent bit of fiction, I was well afraid it might be a cop out ending, but no, it was done well. Full marks to Brent Lillie. YANKEE PRIVATEER also entertaining. I was appalled that a bus station should be sited 5 miles out of town for the convenience of bus drivers. Shows what a car-based society can get around to. As for bunging the car in for repair and walking 7 miles home - no way.

Best item in the issue was without doubt, Andy Darlington and JET ACE LOGAN. The story was a bit trite, but the artwork had life and the whole shebang a welcome change from FERAL KILLERS. Both lots of reviews looked OK, but as I hadn't met any of the titles in IN DEPTH 7, I couldn't comment on those. I had come across one or two of the titles

mentioned in REVIEWS and generally agreed with them. A point about FOUNTAINS OF PARADISE, Clarke wasn't the first author to use the skyhook idea. I can't recall title or magazine, but I do remember reading a story where-in it referred to various tries (from the Moon, no less) and how the Lunar surface was littered with umpteen coils of cable. What such yarns never explain is the problem of the angular momentum difference between a car leaving the bottom of the loop at earth's rotational speed of approx 100 mph and then rising to orbit where it must have acquired a speed of some 20,000 mph during its ascent. The reverse applies to descending cars.

LOC column also excellent and I see I'm not the only one to dislike FERAL KILLERS and "poetry". Oh well, takes all sort. I feel a poem coming on...

I wandered lonely as a kipper
in early years when just a nipper
But I was caught by a day tripper
Who wacked me soundly with a slipper.

Well, my poem rhymes! (7.9.93)

J. C. HARTLEY, 14 Rosebank, Rawtenstall, Rossendale BB5 7Rd, UK.

THE MENTOR 78. Andy's appreciation of Asimov suffered rather in that he himself says "Not one of my favourite authors". Nor one of mine, and yet I read NIGHTFALL once about 29 yrs ago without noting title or authorship but the shock of the premise has stayed with me enough for me to recognise it again about 5 yrs ago when I returned to SF and read references to "The best short story of all time". I must have read I ROBOT a bit later and can still remember some of the plots: the mind-reading robot; the presidential candidate robot; the robot who refuses to believe humans could be smart enough to invent/buid him.

COLDMACE - really enjoyed this. The correspondent in #79 who couldn't understand why the necromancer kidnapped the kid is a charming innocent but it is a credit to Evans that the more sordid aspects of the tale were left to the imagination (all writers take note).

Loved CORPSE. Very funny, drawing heavily on the Oz stereotypes that have kept globe-trotting Paul Hogan look-alikes in free drink for years.

As usual enjoyed all the non-fiction.

#79. THE INITIATE ended predictably. No one who saw FERAL KILLERS was in doubt as to Daisy's fate. Good to see Joe Stalin finding alternative world employment as Galen or was this Ditko's Kraven the Hunter? I'm as PC and right-on as any concerned male who lived through the 70's/80's with their liberal ideals intact, but I've figured why this strip had us all wacked - its a sequence of caricatures of heavily breasted women doing terrible things to each other. I don't think it will have given anyone a hard-on but there is a definite fluttering in the back-brain. I shudder at the admission but I enjoyed it.

THE BIG BOOM scenario is an amiable fiction because there is no political/economic will to achieve it and we're all going to hell in a handcart.

WHAT IS SF FOR? I think the answers were to different questions.

Andy's critique of Burroughs was right back to form after the Asimov's "blip". I almost want to look at the John Carter stuff as a taster but only almost.

Russian stuff: fascinating as ever to get some stuff about SF elsewhere.

Fiction: PREY. Sean Williams in #80 said the end didn't really synch with what had preceded it and I agree but I liked being kept in the dark about the narrator's gender. However, there was a sort of inevitability about the whole thing which the author hinted at and which gave the story strength.

BROOKLYN BLUES: thought, "Oh shit, how trite", and then the "feel good" melancholy of the piece won me over.

Don't want to nit-pick but did anyone else get an upside-down arse-ways-about #78 or is mine a collector's item? Also just discovered the page-numbering in #79. It is the slight flaw that highlighted the beauty.

THE MENTOR #80. Just read a bit of this. I'd be interested to know when Dan Dare was in decline, Andy? I think I was still reading in '68. I see MARCH OF THE ANTS and FIRE IN THE SKY in the 65 Annual. Not great examples I admit. I can remember a story where a giant metallic mushroom grew up in London (?) housing the Mekan; also a

rather strange alien with a set of digits instead of a name, X-11 (?), from much earlier.

Synchronicity clicking away again in Steve Sneyd's piece. My wife and I have only recently discovered Heptonstall, while Hebden Bridge's hippy entrepreneurs are familiar to us. Sylvia Palth is supposed to be buried in Heptonstall churchyard. We took our 3 yr old on a tortuous 4 mile trek starting from up there and I sent Steve a postcard featuring the re-laying of Heptonstall's cobble setts. What a fascinating insight into the life of these two poets. The one an international respected writer and broadcaster, the other a barely adequate postman. Nice article Steve.

S. J. Bounds. Thanks for liking the Haiku. An easy thing for you to say but it means a lot to me. Didn't understand the first para of Liz Garrott's letter.

In my letter: "enjoy Lewis (not SF)" should have read "enjoy Lewis (not DF)", a cheap swipe at the popular Surrey and England all-rounder, author of World's Best Fantasy Headline: "H. P. Lovecraft stole my Mythos".

Another letter from John Alderson. I feel bad about my ill-considered attack but John you're a man who likes to be precise, lighten up, have you never flung your corked hat over Ayers Rock just for the sheer hell of it? You're from good convict stock exiled by a vindictive monarchy, I'd have thought you'd have wanted a "republic" just to cock snoots. The Queen a Scot?!? 'scept we were led to believe she was German! My people were all sheep-stealers. (8.9.93)

CATHERINE MINTZ, 1810 South Riddenhouse Square, 1708, Philadelphia, PA 19103-5837, USA.

Being a Burroughs Bibliophile - that's a club, with several publications, administered from the Burroughs Memorial Collection at the University of Louisville, which is in Louisville, Kentucky - I was particularly interested in Andrew Darlington's article on the Venus series. The club is working through ERB's various works in order of publication, and so hasn't gotten these books yet.

The Amtor stories reveal a great deal about how Burroughs went about building his worlds. It is a sad comment that ERB's later creations are less interesting than his earliest. This cannot be attributed solely to his growing out of step with the times. Tarzan still yodels across the TV screen, and there is an on-again-off-again production of PRINCESS OF MARS, that may finally have been killed because the vital special effects would be too expensive. The Venus series has a distinct feel of someone going through the usual motions without the old passion and vitality. "Take one exotic alien princess..."

Burroughs actually did write other types of fiction, but with considerably less success. At one point he tried to make package deals combining westerns and/or adventure stories with the more fantastic stuff. However, editors and readers knew what they wanted from him, and it was more of the same. Given he was unable to renew himself by finding new fields to conquer, and that he didn't grow much, if any, as a stylist, he was pretty much trapped. I think that's what shows in the Venus series.

ERB's still a pretty good read, and simplicity may have practical virtue: it sells. Star Wars is simple too, and it has made its creator very rich. I wonder what will be said about Lucas' universe in another forty or fifty years? "The dream of manned space flight temporarily abandoned, popular culture began to treat the theme in the frankly mythic and fantasy-orientated fashion typical of the late twentieth century. Chief among our examples is the Star War movie series, precursor to virtually an entire industry of books and games..."

(9.9.93)

ROD MARSDEN, 21 Cusack St, Merrylands, NSW 2160

To begin with [TM 81], a truly inspired Steve Carter cover. Since dinosaurs are in right now it should go down well with a lot of your readers. Of course the fine cross-hatching probably won't hurt. Nice illo on page 39 by Steve Fox. I suppose I do have a thing for beautiful women and handsome skulls. I wouldn't mind highjacking this artist for either PROHIBITED MATTER or my new project, SOCIOPATHETIC TIMES.

I see one Steve Jeffery of Great Britain can't handle Steve Carter's comic stories. Well, he'll be relieved to notice that the dinosaurs on the cover of THE MENTOR 81 don't have any discernible female body parts. Question, though. Does he like them carrying around clubs and

spears or is that a bit much, What!? Steve Sneyd, also of Great Britain, is a bit more on the ball. He seems to be into new experiences and has reserved his final judgement on THE INITIATE until he's read the story in its entirety. I found Steve Sneyd's views on THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE similar to my own. The story does bog down far often to where the reader does feel like giving up on it.

Terry Walker, in reviewing Steve Carter's comic panels, makes it known that Science Fiction/Horror stories in this format simply are not for him. He would much prefer the superheroes he grew up with and he certainly earns some respect for saying so. After all, Science Fiction/Horror isn't for everyone. Why should it be? I think of all your readers Duncan Evans understands THE INITIATE best. Good on you, Duncan.

I read A NEW ORDER by Robert Frew and was impressed. Who is this guy? Never heard of him but I probably will. Damn good Science Fiction with a bit of enjoyable nastiness.

Now for the news on censorship. In the September issue of QUADRANT, a literary magazine, you will find an article titled A CASE FOR CENSORSHIP. It was written by the editor of QUADRANT and may have a crippling effect on our growing horror industry. Just as people like L. Blackmore are starting to take Australian horror fiction places it's never been before (see TERROR AUSTRALIS - the paperback) we have to hear from the conservatives who would like to ban everything in sight that either doesn't look pretty or have a moral lesson attached to it. So what does all this have to do with Science Fiction? Well, it's still impossible to get the full version on video of A CLOCKWORK ORANGE - one of the best Science Fiction/Crime/ Horror movies ever made. TOTAL RECALL almost didn't make it because of the violence therein.

The argument put forward by QUADRANT is that the world would be less nasty if we were simply extract the nastiness out of books, films and other areas of the arts. What nonsense! Art reflects life. Times are tough because of unemployment, a chronic housing shortage, high rents, low wage jobs, weakened unions, the government dipping into people's savings every chance they can get (taxing your bank accounts, your superannuation, your long service leave), and growing pollution. If crime is on the increase maybe it has something to do with the things I've just mentioned. I don't think reducing the arts to doing nice and friendly things only will help.

(14.9.93)

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

First, a reaction to Andy Darlington's JET ACE LOGAN piece and strip - the strip a lovely "affectionate irony" tribute, with the elegiac edge that even space super-heroes do get old and out of touch and set in their ways - and the pleasure he got of working with the original artist glows off the page of both article and strip. Set me thinking, had I such a treat .. a near equivalent for me was, when years ago BACK BRAIN RECLUSE here did a special of Jerry Cornelius pastiches, and sent them to Moorcock himself for appro because of the copyright thing before printing, mine being one of those he let through the net - but the *real* all-time highlight for me was when a poem I did tributing Bugs Bunny and the Roadrunner got (I daren't say earned) a letter from their "onlie begetter" Chuck Jones saying he liked the poem and including a personally signed still from my all-time favourite BUGS BUNNY AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT; can't think of anything in n years trying to be a writer that matched opening *that* envelope!

Anyway, back to a more linear approach to #80. The cover lady is going to get a lot of fan-letters from future-minded masochists, I suspect. (Couldn't resist this tribute myself - For a skin-covered girl-thing: "Cold hands warm heart" they say while her steel digits pluck eager fles h from groin).

Brent Lillie's JAM JAR is a curiously beautifully artefact - mood fiction at its most coolly-controlled best. I would call it a prose-poem, but suspect that this would doubtless reduce the author's chances of getting it republished commercially! A real gem, anyhow (as ditto, just to cast back, since I think various multiversal snails ate my previous loc, COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS - very glad I wasn't alone in being a non-fantasy-fan sucked in by that one, roll on the expanded novelisation).

Lubenski's article was fascinating - particularly in clarifying the real publishing situation of the Strugatsky brothers under the old USSR - I'd naively assumed that SF was ignored by the censors, clearly there was a more complex process at work, and it's very valuable to

have it at least partly on record. Maybe now we can have a piece by him on the real situation of Soviet SF film - ie what went on behind the scenes over THE ZONE, etc?

The reviews, both your and Congreve's, again feasts of clarity and (to someone who doesn't know the books) ostensible balance and good sense. I was particularly interested to know BURLESQUE OF FRANKENSTEIN is back in print, as had heard of this as a "lost treasure" - how do I go about getting Oz currency to buy it is another question, but

I had begun to suspect that John Alderson was on another strand of the multiverse; his loc confirms it. Where did the Stuarts win in 1745, John, did they move on south from Derby and take London, or did Culloden go the Highlanders' way against all the odds? Anyway, either way, Prince Rupert Von Kaltenberg can close his pils brewery, since in your universe he's not the hapless current Jacobite claimant but King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; she is *also* Queen Elizabeth II of England (she c'dn't be the Second E of GB, it *didn't* even exist when EI was about), she's Queen Elizabeth I of Scotland (why do you think the Scot Nats blew up so many EII post boxes way back when around coronation time till the point was conceded - there never was an earlier EI of Scotland) .. the problem with not doing the homework on pedantic grunge like that is it undermines all the conclusions flowing therefrom .. in the Aldersonian multiverse strand facts are one thing, perhaps, but in this strand they are, sadly or not, otherwise; we currently have a *German* dynasty posing under the Brit aka of Windsor, in total defiance of the convention of using your *genuine* "Stammsitz" as dynastic name, and no amount of kilt-flashing will change that fact .. so it goes. (9.9.93)

SHERYL BIRKHEAD, 23629 Woodfield Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20882, USA.

PREY FOR THE PREY - so far, pretty good although I find it a bit (but not much) difficult to accept that kind of aberrant behaviour slipping through psychological (etc) screening. I also, for some nebulous reason, find it hard to believe a prisoner would be helpful in quite the degree as Garten is in setting the scene for the local flora/fauna. Note on paralysis and the type, apparently described, the muscles of respiration are no different and suffocation is "fairly" rapid.

Thank you for continuing the fanhistory pieces - hmm - a prison camp train.

On the carnofemmes - perhaps drawing the mammae is fun, but such glandular enlargement is not a survival characteristic in that type of animal - especially one supposedly built for speed - if nothing else, not aerodynamically sound. Artistic licence - yup - but maybe just a bit more attention to "reality"?

I see that the VAT was voted out. I presumed it generated a good deal of income - is there something in its place to bring in the same/more money? (16.9.93)

[*The (published) reason for the VAT was that there would be a single tax, and various wholesale Sales Taxes, Excise taxes, etc could be dropped when it came in. - Ron.]*

JOHN ALDERSON, address as above.

Your editorial [in TM 81] on Education interested me. An incredible amount has been written about education in Australia, to no real response. No one seems to have any clear idea why we bother educating the kids, except that it seems to be the correct thing to do, that is, its always been done.

As part of my historical work I had to go through the reports of the various Education Departments of Victoria, a pile one wouldn't want to jump over, and in addition I read pretty well every book on the historical aspect of education. There is not one single line in any of that mass of material as to why we accepted the Irish National School System, nor any examination of why that system was developed and what its aims and purposes were. It was an Irishman P. H. Pearse who wrote such a critique of the Irish National System of Education in an essay called, rightly enough, THE MURDER MACHINE. He pointed out that the System was designed by the English to reduce a proud, aristocratic and highly cultured nation to a race of morons. Discussing this once with Beverly Lane, herself Irish she pointed out that it was the most successful education system in the world. That is, more than any, it did what it was designed to do, produce morons.

I don't profess to know what system the other states introduced, but usually in Australia when one punter puts his shirt on a donkey, so does everyone else, which may be why bookies don't go bankrupt so often. But what I say certainly goes for Victoria.

So when I was writing a local history I went through the Inspector's Reports, which of course give the subjects taught. Only two could be regarded as in any way practical, singing, and needle-work. The boys did that too and my dad often criticised modern needlework for the needle being taken right through the fabric instead of splitting it. When he went into the army he could at least mend his uniform, and when he married helped mum design and make dresses. The first might have been part of the design but surely the latter was an oversight on the part of the Education Department. For myself, I learnt to make baskets, a very practical talent these days. When eventually I went through the Technical School and then started work at an engineering factory the Work's Manager said, Forget everything you've learnt at school.

Consider the education given to a youngster of our tribal aborigines. That youngster learns three basic subjects...

1. How to live in a very hostile world.
2. How to express his tribal culture and history in song and dance and art.
3. How to be a part of his society.

On all counts our education falls down, it does not do any one of these things. The result, for kids between fifteen and twenty four, the highest suicide rate in the world.

Nor does it end with that awful statistic. The four main causes of death in Australia are all self-inflicted, over-eating, over-drinking and over-driving. Suicide is almost epidemic, recently we had eight men suicide in our area in one week and our local paper finally broke the silence insisted upon by the authorities on suicide and spoke out. The product of our education system is a premature trip to the cemetery. (23.9.93)

SYDNEY J. BOUNDS, 27 Borough Rd, Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 8BD, UK.

Thanks for TM 80. Yes, I agree with your editorial, there is a swing back in favour of censorship. Which is not surprising; the situation has always been one of a swing to either extreme, and this easy-going period has lasted since the sixties.

Brent Lillie's JAM JAR is possibly the best story you've published. Buck Coulson was more than usually interesting because he included more personal detail that helps to visualise the American scene.

Interesting to read Steve Sneyd's piece; I hadn't heard of either poet before. Fascinating what turns up in TM. Like SF under Stalin; I wonder what sf will come out of Russia under the new regime?

REFERENCE LIBRARY was useful; but even allowing for James Verran's "the bare essentials", a bit too restricted. A lot of dictionaries can be picked up cheap in second-hand shops, and old ones are useful to a writer writing a period story; a modern dictionary holds snags for anyone writing a story set in the thirties. And don't overlook the specialised dictionaries; of science, geography, psychology, etc.

Andrew has come up trumps again - and how nice to see Ron Turner back in action. He illustrated one of mine (script by Phil Harbottle) a while back. A superior picture story artist.

Bill Congreve was interesting as usual. I agree that the publishing process has an effect on writers, and so the books we read. It's unfortunate, but a fact of life. And this applies even more today when editors are largely copy editors and big decisions are taken by accountants and sales staff.

Have read few of the books you reviewed, but I did enjoy Colin Wilson's MAGICIAN.

Like the new heading for reviews - but when I turned to the contents page, I found the credits for the illustrations doesn't match up. So who...?

[The illos for R&R and REVIEWS are by Kurt Stone; the computer didn't save the corrected Contents page. - Ron.]

If you are into historical fiction, I can recommend a new writer: Lindsey David, writing about ancient Rome, a series starting with THE SILVER PIGS. And, in this case, yes, it is worth startling with the

first book, because she follows a time sequence in which the characters age and grow. (21.9.93)

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

Received THE MENTOR 81 today, and don't seem to have as many comment hooks as usual. Anyway.... One safe prediction about the effect of technology on school curriculums (curricula?) is that school technology will lag behind industrial technology, and teaching methods will lag even farther behind. Incidentally, it's common to use "schooling" and "education" as synonyms - school authorities do it all the time - but it's also incorrect. Workers in any field learn while they earn, or they don't stay employed. Books, magazines, fanzines - even TV - all contribute to education, and the individual who stops learning when he or she quit school will be an ignoramus by the time of death, university degree or not.

Enjoyed the article about NEBULA, though when did Silverberg become a "cult" author? One of my all-time favourite covers is Gerard Quinn's for #37, of the human hand extending a chesspiece and the alien hand extending some sort of game piece. I really lusted after the original painting, but by an odd coincidence the Quinn cover I eventually bought was from NEW WORLDS #37. Darlington failed to mention artist Kenneth Barr - well, one can't mention everyone, but I always considered Barr's covers among the best among British artists. I thought Tubb was one of the top authors in the field when he was writing for NEBULA and the Nova magazines and confining his pot-boilers to Milestone and Scion paperbacks and pseudonyms like "Charles Grey". When Dumarest began, I quit reading Tubb - but I expect he made more from it than from anything else he did.

For Steve Sneyd; atheism is a belief, not a theory, so it's no more scientific than Methodist or Catholic beliefs. People are scientists *and* atheists, or scientists *and* Baptists, or whatever. Two different systems. (Even the fundamentalists in this country refer to "Godless science", as though there might possibly be "God-inspired science". Which is why "Creation science" is a clanger, despite the fact that fundamentalists use it a lot; nobody expects them to be consistent.)

Sneyd is correct that back copies of MILLION have been advertised for sale in INTERZONE.

Full agreement with Lorraine Cormack on responsibility, but her ideas are much too logical to ever become law.

On the reviews, you make THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY sound very interesting, but not for A\$32.95. Maybe I'll run across a used copy someday. And why would anyone "who met Hubbard in BATTLEFIELD EARTH" want to read more? Hubbard wrote some excellent books while he was alive, but the quality of his posthumous production has been miserable. (24.9.93)

JIM VERRAN, 12 Ellis St, Port Noarlunga, S. A. 5167.

The content of TM #81, as expected, was informative and varied. THE EDITORIAL SLANT; albeit, a popular lament of our generation, hit home - keep 'em coming, Steve Carter's cover gave more than a hint of his competence. The right shoulder of his dominant saurian seemed in need of orthopaedic manipulation, so how about drawing in a battle scar to justify the minor aberration, Steve? Andrew Darlington's excellently presented article stirred some sad memories: guess whose mother used to destroy "those dreadful magazines" with a vengeance? She never suspected that her efforts only enhanced the potential value of the surviving copies' as future collectables.

The fiction blew hot and cold: I enjoyed the cruel twist to Blair Hunt's AIDE-MEMOIRE. Andrew Sullivan's PANDORA'S BOX contained some good stuff, but needs more work to avoid the change of viewpoint at the end. Although appropriate, the title was a bit hackneyed. The overuse of the "F" expletive did nothing to enhance the Barnes character's already adequate vocabulary. Robots were miscast in Robert Frew's A NEW ORDER. Surely androids would have been better suited the human-like emotions and reasoning allotted his automations. Humanoid robots aren't all that flash these days, anyhow. The story felt too much like another day at the office.

Peter Brodie's 40,000 A. D. AND ALL THAT provided a perspective on "Barbarella" that I'd naively overlooked - guess I was too steamed up on the gorgeous Jane Fonda way back then. I'm somewhat older these days, so might just look out for a video copy - could be what I need to recharge my testosterone.

Thanks for the comments on A PERSONAL REFERENCE LIBRARY ON A BUDGET. Atlases are presently in limbo, thanks to Russia, Bosnia and the Republic of Oz ... would make a good follow up. As would various encyclopedias (multi-volume and compendiums) and assorted, specialised publications and magazines. Fowlers MODERN ENGLISH USAGE and others of its ilk also deserve attention. Got in one, Mr. Jeffery! However, as sf hacks (and others) use incredibly varied reference sources I'll have to beg our Ron's indulgence there. After all, THE MENTOR is *about, for and by* sf writers, readers and artists. Alternatively, a series of articles, written for a stir, might be fun, but TM already has the R&R DEPARTMENT.

In her subtle promotion, Ms. Paice of NEW ERA overlooked the recent success of Shaun Tan. Shaun is not only a successful (first Aussie) entrant in WOTF's equally prestigious sibling, ILLUSTRATOR'S OF THE FUTURE, but also a promising writer. Way to go Shaun: congratulations!

Buck Coulson's Indiana Home is his castle, so get off his case. In his country, to live unmolested and sleep easy, a double-edged hobby is mandatory. If he wrote about breeding canaries, some people would still complain. Colonial Australians hardly ever needed to defend themselves or their property: Her Majesty's Troopers (Victoria R., that was) administered the iron glove of British Imperialism and its laws. Apart from over-zealous troopers, our forefathers had little to fear: the native people were mainly passive (to their detriment) and few bushrangers survived to a ripe old age. Had we succeeded at Eureka, our society might also have developed a penchant for administering summary justice. Nuff said! (5.10.93)

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

Censorship is alive and well in the USA, but there are ways around it. Child pornography has always been a no-no, and lately some feminists want to censor stuff that is supposed to be "anti-women", with the feminists defining just what that is. On the other hand, I keep getting these video catalogs in the mail for x-rated films.

Now *why* I get these catalogs I am not quite sure, since I do not have a TV set or video system, so never order them. But if I did and wanted to, at about \$30 for a half hour tape I can get raw sex from "come shots" to "kinky lesbians" to "solo women" to "group grop[e]" etc etc etc and *somebody* has to [be] buying the stuff.

Of course, this is for viewing in the privacy of your house. For films and books from major publishers, there is quite a lot of censorship. To say that it is self-imposed overlooks why it is self-imposed ... to avoid fights with various censor boards and rating commissions. Every now and then the newspapers carry a story about some film that battles to be re-classified from "X" to "R". This is a matter of money, not morality.

"X" = Adults Only, you are supposed to be 18 years and older to see the film. "R" = Restricted, and if you are 17 years or younger you must have an adult along with you, presumably a parent or guardian or other responsible adult. Given the amount of money these teenagers have, you can understand why film makers go for "R" rather the "X".

(Ok, so "X" has now been renamed "NC-17". No Children 17 or under allowed to see it. Hardy-har-har. Guess how strictly those age limits are enforced at most theatres. Turn away a paying customer? Not if they can help it!)

As far as books and magazines go, there is a whole world of "underground".

Of course, none of the censorship in the USA can match what Andrew Lubenski describes in his article. As always, I wonder if any of those books will be published in good English translations accessible to fans at a reasonable price? My local library carries things like the Niven/Pournelle THE GRIPPING HAND, and whatever Piers Anthony publishes, but not much of non-american SF and Fantasy. But I have to read what the library stocks, since I am short of money and have no space to pile up books.

Reading my letter on page 38 reminds me that I am still reading library books, and not all of it SF. I have chugged through the books of Mary Renault, since it might be argued that the Classical Greece she writes about is as much a fantasy to 20th Century readers as the latest saudage trilogy quest fantasy. I read most of the science-fact books that arrive, and indeed sent off a review of two of them to a USA

fanzine. I am not sure if they would be available in Australia, but just in case they are, I recommend:

CRANKS, QUARKS AND THE COSMOS by Jeremy Bernstein, from Basic Books, a division of HarperCollins. All books by Bernstein are worth reading, since he is a trained physicist who can explain physics to non-scientists in his biographical essays.

PI IN THE SKY by John D. Barrow comes from Oxford University Press, and is a history of the foundations of mathematics, from early counting to modern formal systems. No background in math required beyond what most people get in high school. Well, high schools here in the USA, not sure what that would be in Australia, nowadays.

I received the news that Sydney has won the rights to the 2000 Olympics. Naturally this will set off a boom in new hotels and facilities and I wonder if this will be a boost to the Australia in 1999 Worldcon bid if they choose Sydney as the host city. The site bidding will be at the 1996 Worldcon here in "Los Angeles" ... actually in Anaheim ... and Anaheim is in Orange Country ... anyway, things look good for the Australian bid. (9.10.93)

SHOLA PAICE, Level 3, Ballarat House, 68-72 Wentworth Ave., Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

HOLLYWOOD - Sean Williams of South Australia has just returned from an all expenses paid trip to Hollywood, California where he was honored at the ninth annual L. Ron Hubbard Awards ceremony held 25 September. He said upon receiving his award, "If he (L. Ron Hubbard) was here, I would thank you very much for this beginning of my career."

Williams competed in the 1992 L. Ron Hubbard Writers of The Future Contest, winning Third place (\$500) in the first quarter. His short story, GHOSTS OF THE FALL, is a masterful futuristic piece, set in Adelaide after a catastrophe has wiped out most of the planet's population and left it virtually uninhabitable, is published in L. RON HUBBARD PRESENTS WRITERS OF THE FUTURE, Volume IX, which was released at the ceremony held at Author Services Inc, attended by the winning writers.

Williams is one of the increasing Australian winners, who have been awarded and recognised through this internationally famous competition, which has served as a launching pad for many writing careers.

Winners are chosen by a panel of judges who are top names in the Science Fiction and Fantasy field. Williams also attended a Writing Workshop, another benefit of his winning at Contest expense.

A dynamic force in post modern literature, master story-teller L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986) published hundreds of novels and short stories in a fifty-six year career that culminated in his two massive international best sellers: BATTLEFIELD EARTH and the MISSION EARTH dekalogy.

Mr Hubbard also wrote a large number of articles and essays on the art and technique of writing, underscoring a lifelong commitment to help novice writers grow and flourish in their craft. As part of his legacy, he established and sponsored the Writers of the Future Contest in 1983. The Illustrators of the Future Contest was launched as a companion to the Writer's Contest in 1988.

The contest, now moving into the 10th year of its history, has been the vehicle which has brought many of the winners and finalists to professional acceptance as well as a source of encouragement for those who haven't made it yet, to continue with determination.

Williams, now 26, wrote his first Science Fiction story when he was 11 and grew up keeping his friends entertained with his stories. In 1987 he turned to writing seriously after moving out of home and deciding his life needed a change. He changed majors at University from Economics to Arts and is now studying for his Bachelor of Arts in music, working part time in a compact disc shop.

Williams has always been an avid reader and says that since he started writing seriously, he can only read a book a week, whereas before he was reading one a day. He has had several stories published in Science Fiction magazines and is currently co-writing a Science Fiction novel.

Being flown to the contest and meeting writers from around the world was an experience Williams will never forget and he made some lasting friends, including a romantic involvement with another

winning author's sister, which enabled him to see more of the U.S. than he originally planned.

Williams encourages other writers to enter the competition and with Australian authors moving to the fore-front of the competition, it is clear there is a lot of talented writers out there who need recognition and the competition gives that and some vital introductions to the professionals in this field. It certainly has for Sean Williams.

(-10.93)

BRENT LILLIE, address above.

I read your editorial with interest, Ron. The school system is changing. Computers are making a hell of a difference. The old bully problem still remains, however, and I think it always will. Two of my kids have had problems along that line and they bring it home with them: kids problems are just as big as ours are to us and we grown-ups should always remember that.

I was most impressed with Robert Frew's amusing tale, A NEW ORDER. Robert, my advice, for what it's worth, is to expand the story into a novella, or even a novel. It's not a short story - it's the first chapter in a book about a pair of likable robots who find themselves in possession of the only child left on Earth after a mysterious force has kidnapped the rest of humanity. Take it from there. You write with a fluid, pleasant style that could easily sustain a lengthier work.

PANDORA'S BOX - it lacked a "good guy". I couldn't feel any sympathy for the main character. The hard science aspect was well-handled but the "ants" reminded me too much of the crab-like machines in Issue 80's TERROR FROM MOON 33. I didn't think the "court case" bit at the end was necessary, either. Perhaps a more pleasant main character would have provided a greater sense of conflict? Someone we could all feel sorry for.

AIDE-MEMOIRE I liked. An interesting and well-penned tale of revenge. It took me a while to latch onto what was actually going on, though. Either the story was a little too vague, or I'm just a meat and potatoes man when it comes to my SF. Probably the latter, but I found the first paragraph confusing. Why would Karl project a holo of his mother on the ground when a simple, faded snapshot would have sufficed? To me, that would be somehow more poignant - a counterbalance to all the high-tech gadgetry. Just a thought.

Andrew Darlington's article was informative and well-researched. Lately, I've been borrowing a few SF titles from the local library - mainly anthologies of stories from magazines like ASTOUNDING. Some of that Golden Age stuff is great. Basic. Sometimes bloody corny, but the ideas are brilliant. I read one story called LETTER TO A PHOENIX, by Frederic Brown that put forward the idea that the human race is the only immortal organism in the universe. Just one of those gems you stumble across now and then, the kind of story you'll know you'll never forget, even as you're reading it. Worth searching for.

Andrew Lubenski's contribution seemed even more heady than his past offerings. I'll sit down one night with 43 beans and a biscuit and try to fathom it out - it will be good for me. All those supplements to the Chapter IV and I can't remember where Chapter IV is; struth.

Skimming TM 80 as I write I come across A NEW ORDER again. Gee, it's a good story. I want to pinch it and write the book myself.

Onto 40,000 AD AND ALL THAT. I enjoyed Peter Brodie's article about the BARBARELLA more than I enjoyed the movie itself. I was quite young and impressionable when I saw Jane Fonda running around with hardly any clothes on. She was the "ultimate liberated female", all right.

And J. C. Hartley. Thanks for the postcard. And the kind word. (11.10.93)

LORRAINE CORMACK, PO Box 983, Woden, ACT 2606.

Your editorial was interesting - one of the ongoing problems with all these changes is the persistent attempt to regard each system as comparable with another. I'm thinking particularly about the HSC, where they changed the system half a dozen times in as many years, with the result that a score of 400 one year might mean the same as a score of 285 another year. Most people suffer in those situations because it takes away a form of measurement - however artificial - which at least gave a starting point for things like university admissions and employment.

And things are changing in Government Departments again too - it's back to "you must do this". Maybe it hasn't seeped into the Department you work in, but here in Canberra (the start of all good things, of course), competency based training is being introduced. One of the controversial aspects of this is the de facto pressure that's being put on people to take part. If you participate, you're fast tracked through one or even two grades; if you don't, not only do you have to compete for an increasingly small number of promotions, but you're at risk getting stuck in a grade which may not exist in a few years except as a training grade. Too bad if you like what you're doing and just want to stick with it.

I agree with the major goals of the National Training Agenda - increasing mobility, providing common denominators that will actually mean the same thing to people across different fields, making it easier for good people to get ahead. But I also see a risk of it getting stuck at the lowest common denominator, and of leaving no room for the kind of creativity that sets *really* good people apart from the crowd. And of course, there's the factor you pointed out, that telling people to do something doesn't always work. Not to mention that the way competencies are being developed (by hundreds of different groups) means it'll be quite a while before they'll be reconciled into a common framework.

Does it show that I've written publicity material for a Department on this subject? What it boils down to, anyway, is that it's a system which sounds better than previous ones, but which may not be any better executed.

Of the fiction in TM 81, I liked PANDORA'S BOX best. It was a good and original jab at the idea of scientists amok. However, the transition of Barnes from normal to crazed could have been handled a little more smoothly - I know there were time jumps between the entries, but still, the switch basically happened between "18 February" and "2 July", and it seemed a bit jerky. I actually missed the "continued page 22" note - don't ask me how - and initially thought the story ended here. It worked perfectly well, although of course it was a very different story. When I found the end of the story, I ended up wondering how the diary had survived the general destruction.

AIDE-MEMOIRE - well, I didn't enjoy this as much as I usually do Blair's pieces. I saw the relationship between Karl and his mother before the halfway mark, and the attempt to "hide" it didn't come off. And although the end was a nice idea, it just doesn't sit well with the reality of domestic violence.

A NEW ORDER was well written, although a few awkward expressions jarred - like "glimpsed into the mirror", or "scanned the sky questionably" I quite liked the idea of the helpless baby having such power over all the robots. The problem was, I didn't feel that the story actually said much or went anywhere. It had possibilities.

I've never seen NEBULA, but quite enjoyed Andrew Darlington's article. It's always interesting to hear about the way familiar names got started. 40,000 AD AND ALL THAT I also found reasonably interesting, though I couldn't see the need for quite such a detailed recounting of plot and course of the movie itself. It wasn't necessary to the rest of the article and only spoiled it for anyone who might ever want to watch the movie.

I found Bill Congreve's review of GOD: THE INTERVIEW a bit scrambled. Even on rereading I feel that it doesn't quite make sense - the rest of the column does, so maybe it's just me? Interesting to see a positive review of THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY. I've read a couple of others, both quite negative. Liked the way Bill reviewed TERROR AUSTRALIS. I've never seen much point in reviews that simply list all the stories - three minutes in a bookshop will give you that information. Having a comment on the quality and content of each story, while making for a longish review, is to my mind a much better way of doing things.

As far as the detail of science in science fiction goes, I vote for as little as possible. I have no head for science, and am quite prepared to believe something works, without being told how and why it works. In fact, detailed science (and probably not so detailed to some people's minds) is the only thing I skip when reading a book. So far I haven't noticed it detracting from my enjoyment of novels.

Didn't like the cover this issue. Nothing wrong with it, just not to my taste. Meatloaf's BACK INTO HELL CD es Michael Whelan fantasy illustrations in the slick - I recognised the cover of THE DRAGON

PRINCE. Lovely paintings, and remarkably appropriate to the quotes from the songs that have been allocated to them.

(23.10.93)

SHANE DIX, 7 McGilp Ave, Glengowrie, S. A. 5044.

Everywhere I go these days I'm seeing dinosaurs. They're on display in newsagents, bookshops and supermarkets. You can find them on anything from sweet wrappers to bread bags, and you can collect all sort of toys, cards and books on the subject. And what do I find on the cover of TM #81. More *fucking* gondolas!

But on to the contents proper: Andrew Darlington's piece was of interest. Got me thinking about how in 20-30 years from now people might be reflecting upon the past by looking upon *these* every pages. Just the thought of it makes me go all kind of gooey, yeah? If anyone does happen upon this LoC in the future, then please look me up. I'll be keen to see what has happened to me. Peter Brodie's article was a good one, too. Always had a soft spot for BARBARELLA (and you take that ambiguity any way you like). The film has a certain ... *je ne sais quoi*. One point: the Earth Scientist was called Durand Durand, as opposed to Duran Duran. Typo on author's part or Ron's? (Or could it be - shock, horror - a mistake on my part?)

PANDORA'S BOX was a quaint little fucking story, eh? Didn't mind this fucking one at all. Thought it developed fucking nicely. The fucking ending spoiled it for me, though. Nevertheless, the best of the fucking batch, I thought. However, I did find the use of the word "arse" to be unnecessarily vulgar. Should have been censored, for sure.

Sheryl Birkhead's illo on "page 49" was a bit ordinary, I felt. Call me uneducated but, I really thought it looked like a straight line. Other stuff in the R&R pages: Duncan - God, I *hate* these theological brain teasers; Terry - a mission to pervert that area of reality which TM's pages occupies with a simple game of word association football (either that or some very good drugs). As for the "Forest" people - these buggers can't see the woods for the trees, so to speak (straight into the back of the net, and the Forest Defoliation supporters go wild).

(25.10.93)

BEN SCHILLING, 2615 Madrid, Apt 1, Madison, WI 53713, USA.

My new address is as above. This area is part of the Town of Madison as opposed to the City of Madison. This is the area that the city didn't want when it was incorporated about 1850. Among other things the population of the city is just over 190,000 while the town has only about 6000 people. There will be a town meeting in November to approve the local budget. Madison has a major problem with parking. There is a reasonable bus system which makes commuting a bit easier.

I've finally managed to get another job. It only took about twenty two months. I started at the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance on August second. This is a State job, at one of the smaller agencies of the state of Wisconsin. So far, things are going reasonably well, but I've only managed to survive a month of the six month probation period required to become a permanent state employee. I hope that I can make it until February third so that I get the various civil service protections. That would also mean that the state would pay almost all of my HMO membership fees.

I suspect that you don't know what I do. I'm not really that sure myself. The state of Wisconsin offers four varieties of insurance to various people. Any resident may buy either life insurance or health insurance from the state. Very few people wish to buy the health as it is designed for people who have been turned down by almost every insurance company first. Local governments may insure their assets with the state. Every doctor licensed to practice in the state must either pay into the Patients Compensation Fund (PCF) or provide us with a valid exemption every year until s/he retires. I've been hired to work on the PCF, which is a real zoo. Wausau Insurance Company (WIC) is the contractor with the computer, but we are planning on moving it to Madison in the next few years. I've even made my first road trip, a quick two day visit to WIC. If all goes according to plan, I could be here for many years. We also make sure that doctors have the required malpractice insurance in force.

(17.10.93)

ROBERT FREW, 1 Funda Pl, Brookvale, NSW 2100.

... finally, I took a gander at TM.

I normally read the editorial first, followed by all the fiction, go back and read the articles, and finish with the R&R DEPT. (Some of your readers babble on...).

I enjoyed the fiction. PANDORA'S BOX was interesting, but I couldn't help feeling that the narrator's paranoid delusions developed suddenly midway through the story. There was also a lack of flow from the discovery of GARF and the invention that derived from it. Excellent ending though - I loved the court case. How many Aussie dollars in a Drakk?

Blair Hunt's AIDE-MEMOIRE was short but powerful. I had to read it twice before I realised it was his mother in the holo, and not his wife. Unfortunately, I'm a logical thinker - and therein lies the main fault of the story for me. Building a separate prison for each individual offender would cost a packet!

I'm looking forward to feedback on my story - the first I've had published, but I live in hope. Just hope the typo in the first line didn't throw people off. Why the hell would a Postal Aid robot be a mechanic? (Mechanical!)

Looking forward to the next issue, and I hope to see a few pages of those perverse cartoons!
(30.10.93)

BILL DONAHO, 626 58th St, Oakland, CA 94609, USA.

You said something to the effect that THE MENTOR was like a sixties fanzine and that sixties fanzines published fan fiction. I don't know about Australian fanzines, but I can't think of a well-recognised sixties American or British fanzine that did. Star trek zines did of course and I believe NFF zines did, but not the main stream ones. Of course you like fan fiction, it's your privilege to publish it. It's your zine.

[Actually, THE MENTOR is a sixties fanzine (genzine), as it was first published in 1964, and its contents mix has been much the same throughout its life. - Ron.]

Apart from references to Australian politics the only thing I recall reading recently about Australia is the statement about Australia is by far the most male chauvinist of all the Anglo Saxon countries. I wonder what you Australians think about that? To your perceptions, is it true? (I was born and raised in Texas which is probably the most chauvinist part of the US.)

[I think, as Australians are one of the more conservative of the Anglo Saxon countries, and one of the most urbanised, some of the "advantages" of feminism haven't really penetrated the event horizons of the working class. On the other hand, with our small population, changes disseminate more quickly through the population once they are seen as beneficial to the majority. - Ron.]

And a few issues back Buck Coulson said something about not liking H. Rider Haggard or Edgar Rice Burroughs. I like a lot of Haggard a great deal. However, I must admit that some 30 years ago at a sale I bought several of his books that I hadn't read. I still haven't read them.

But Edgar Rice Burroughs ... I probably would not be a science fiction reader were it not for him. He lead me to hunt for similar things. I note though that most fans who like and/or read him when young speak of the Mars books. As far as I am concerned the Mars books and the Venus books definitely take a back seat to the Tarzan books and the Earth's Core books and the non series ones like THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT. I wish that I could be moved by *anything* as much as I was by Edgar Rice Burroughs when I was ten years old. Of course I am no longer ten years old. (Apart from Burroughs my favorite childhood books were THE SECRET GARDEN and SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON.)

And John Alderson says that he thinks that "there may be some scientific justification for the Tarzan stories...." I wish there were, but I'm sorry to say there isn't.

Edgar Rice Burroughs refused to visit Africa. He said he was afraid that the reality would spoil his conception of the place. He was wise. Just a few points: his Great Apes are clearly not gorillas, chimpanzees or baboons, and there are no other great apes in Africa, so Burroughs's are completely fictitious. Perhaps more important, if a baby doesn't learn to speak a language before the age of two or so, he can never learn; the brain shuts down that area. (Phillip Jose Farmer had a book, LORD TYGER, on how a rich madman came a cropper for that reason when he tried to recreate the conditions for Tarzan.)

But what really amused me: did you ever notice that all of the other African animals had only one noun to describe them, regardless of their sex, Sheeta the leopard, Pisah the fish and so on? But with lions we have Numa the lion and Sibor the lioness. Well, it seems that Edgar Rice Burroughs thought that there were tigers in Africa and Sabor the lioness started out as Sabor the tiger. Some editor corrected it, and ever since we have had two names for lions, but only one for all the other species. And no-one seems to notice.

Nevertheless no writer has ever stirred me as Edgar Rice Burroughs did.

In your discussion about censorship you said that the pendulum of censorship was slow to slip back in Australia "probably due to two reasons - there was no powerful "moral majority" and Australia is not lumbered with a Bill of Rights."

Now lumbered is not a U. S. word. But in the context here it seems to mean "burdened". But that makes no sense. Australia not burdened with a Bill of Rights? In the US the Freedom of Speech part of the Bill of Rights is the principal barrier to the Religious Right having it's way about censorship. It protects us from having the religious right and others impose censorship. It doesn't give them powers. It protects us from them. Court case after court case has shown that. In fact, I find it difficult to imagine how having rights guaranteed can be a burden to anyone. Just what did you mean?

[Having laws and rights preserved in pieces of legislation straight-jackets such rights. In Australia (and Britain also with no Bill of Rights) citizens rights are based in Common Law. As society evolves, so does the laws, so it is easier to evoke such change this way, rather than a referendum which usually has little chance of success. Democracies need change wanted by the majority of society, rather than politicians with a Bill of Rights concreting rules with morals set in a certain period of time. About the only way the Oz version of the "Moral Majority" have to have input is to get into State Parliament themselves - as the Rev. Fred Nile and his wife have as Independents. - Ron]

Buck Coulson, Steve Sneyd and Andrew Lubenski were interesting. But in Steve's article he says "Kirkless Priory, incidentally, is where Robin Hood died." That threw me. I have never seen any account of Robin Hood that didn't say he was a mythical character, possibly loosely based on some unknown real figures. And no part of the myth I have ever come across said anything about Robin's dying??

In James Verran's PERSONAL REFERENCE LIBRARY he mention's ROGET'S THESAURUS and its equivalents. I have seen several reviews of J. I. Rodale's THE SYNONYM FINDER. All said that it was without question the #1 Thesaurus, that there was no other even close. It's 1361 pages with over 1,000,000 synonyms, simple alphabetical arrangements - no separate index, minimum cross references, and inclusion of idiomatic and slang expressions, and rare, archaic and specialized terms. Available from The Rodale Press in Emmaus, Pennsylvania.

I also recommend Webster's instant word guide. No definitions or synonyms, but 35,000 words spelled and divided into syllables.

I liked JET-ACE LOGAN and wished it were longer.

Your letter column is always one of the high spots. But I missed Peter Booth. He added a dash of spice. Angry Young Men usually come across as somewhat dense. But he didn't. And he also seemed like someone that one would like in person.

Harry Andruschak mentions that he couldn't finish DAHLGREN. I couldn't either though I tried it three times. From the reviews I kept thinking it was something I would like and perhaps it was my mood that I hadn't before. But I didn't. And Lester del Rey was so infuriated by it, he not only didn't finish it, he hurled it against the wall.

I agree with Walt Willis about Blish's SURFACE TENSION. I think it is one of the greatest sf stories. I'm also extremely fond of Van Vogt. It's odd, before Van Vogt went off into Dianetics and stopped writing for a few years, he was mentioned in the same breath as Heinlein. But he was only out a few years and when he came back he was ignored completely. And his writing hasn't really changed. But after his return I don't recall any magazine appearances and damn few reviews of his books.

Mae Strelkov is a fascinating character. I always like to see her letters. She mentions Satanists. I once met Anton La Vey who is

the foremost Satanist in the U. S. He has even forced the recognition of the Church of Satan as a legitimate religion. August Derleth was in town and attended a meeting of the Golden Gate Futurians. So did Anton La Vey. That was the only meeting he ever attended, so perhaps he knew August was coming. Anton looked Italian. And he was then a good looking man who seemed about thirty years old. He didn't mention Satanism or the occult, but talked fantasy and sf with the rest of us.

Then the next morning, there he was on the front page of the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE. It seemed he kept an adult pet lion in his house who created such a disturbance in his absence that the authorities stepped in. And Anton had to donate the lion to the zoo. I was surprised they took it since most zoos seem to have a surplus of lions. Perhaps Anton cast a spell or two. (2.11.93)

SHORTIES:

NED BROOKS, Newport News, USA: Stevens' PREY FOR THE PREY - or PRAY FOR THE PREY as you also give the title - is fairly well written but seems to me to have a very weak plot, as if it were only an incident in a longer work. The comic strip has about as much plot as one of the old TALES FROM THE CRYPT comics stories - the art is a bit better, but not in color. You know in these things that whatever characters remain will come to a bad end. Interesting reports from the Russian fans. (25.8.93)

R. LAURRAINE TUTIHASI, Los Angeles, USA: I was a bit disappointed with this issue [TM 77]. The fiction all seemed very unoriginal. The articles could easily have been better written. The only thing I appreciated was Susan Clarke's review of THE FOREVER KING by Molly Cockran and Warren Murphy. This particular variation on the King Arthur legend sounds interesting. I must see if I can borrow or buy a copy. My thanks to Susan for bringing it to my attention. (22.9.93)

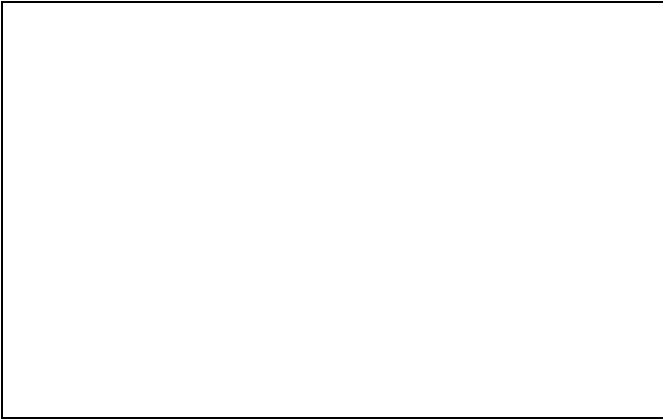
WAHF: BRADLEY ROW, ANDREW LUBENSKI, RAY SCHAFFER, LINDA TANNOS, PAVEL VIEZNIKOV, MUSTAFA ZAHIROVIC, M. L. STEPHENS, PAMELA BOALT. JOHNATHON BROOK & THE OFIR SF CLUB, VOLGOGRAD.

Several things: There are still people sending mail to the Faulconbridge and Revesby addresses. These addresses are no longer valid and mail sent to them may find itself Returned To Sender. THE MENTOR'S ADDRESS is PO Box K940, Haymarket, NSW 2000, AUSTRALIA. Please use it. When I get my flat, I will still retain the PO box as it is the same building I work in, and the mail is safer. I will give out my home phone number when I get the flat. My work phone number is (02) 213-2918.

I'd like to thank those readers who sent donations/subs to me. You know who you are - they are much appreciated, and have helped defray publishing costs. TM is now available for subscription - see front page for the rates. Later I will be winnowing my sf collection; readers may find some volumes they want - lists will be available for an SSAE.

Because of my broken left hand, this issue of TM will be late - but, all being well, TM 83 should be out on time. I've tried to lower the page count, with much the same word count as before - I've just got to get a five pages more off.... As I've said elsewhere, overseas fans won't be getting my Reviews, as they are Oz book releases. Bill Congreve's reviews will, however, remain. - Ron





THE STONE WITHIN by David Wingrove. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1992. 627 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

The best new SF series. Set 200 years in the future with the population of Earth at about 10 billion people, the Han are in charge and have rewritten history to show they always have been....

THE STONE WITHIN takes up the story with the last of the Seven - the "old" Tang group - dying. That leaves the younger generation in charge. The action also goes over to North America, where the Young Men of that continent are having hassles with *their* fathers - most of the sons had been captured by the Chinese and given a taste of what it was to really know fear. This had changed them and their fathers didn't appreciate this. (The women aren't much in this world - except for two - and they are Caucasian). There are sub-plots running concurrently - one is that of DeVore's lieutenant, Lehmann, who has worked to get in on the action of one of the Triads, and is working his way up the ladder, till at last he makes an all-out effort to destroy the other Triads and take all the Lowers for himself.

This series is really one gigantic novel - this is Book three, of some eight books... - and so far is keeping itself together well. The books are about Change - and how bloody it can be. This book, as are the previous ones in this series, are "Highly Recommended"

CRISIS ON DOONA by Anne McCaffrey & Jody Lynn Nye. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1992. 476 pp. A\$13.95. On sale now.

Over twenty five years before there was the DECISION AT DOONA - and now the System treaty has come up for renewal.

On the planet Doona and also now the System are the cat-like Hrrubans who had first colonised the planet but were overlooked by the human probe ship. Later human colonists had arrived and found to their surprise that the planet already had a settlement. The treaty drummed out there had lasted the 25 years with some minor violations, but now it was up for renewal, and there were some bodies that were trying to change it to suit themselves. Many of McCaffrey's worlds have their own fans - and Doona certainly has.

Jody Lynn Nye has a good grasp of McCaffrey's style and an understanding for her characters - most readers know who does most of the work with these collaborations. Jody Lynne Nye has certainly done a good job with the characterisation and I think that this new "Doona" novel will find its home in reader's libraries. CRISIS ON DOONA is a job well done; McCaffrey fans will enjoy it and find it an enjoyable read.

A MILLION OPEN DOORS by John Barnes. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1992. 314 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

It took me about a third of the novel to really "get into" A MILLION OPEN DOORS, but when I did I really enjoyed it.

Set firstly on the planet Occitan, which is a part of the Thousand Cultures (humanity split up after the first great interstellar exodus) Barnes shows the group of friends as they fight duels and play around with their girls. The protagonist, Giraut Leones, together with two others, goes to the planet Nansen, to the country of Caledony, whose Charter is run by a religious group which the two natives from Occitan find really strange. Needless to say the natives of Caledony say the same of the two. The third member of the trio, Aemic, is the son of one of the ministers of the governing council; he had previously

left because he could not stand any more of the repression of the people. At the same time the Ambassador of the Thousand Cultures was telling the government that they must accept change, or their Charter might be taken away.

Barnes has created very interesting cultures and the interaction between them is fascinating. The deeper into the story one reads the more the reader finds that the characters react the way people do - the way they were brought up and trained. It also shows, though, that people can exceed their limitations and grow greater. An excellent buy if you like great SF.

CATWOMAN by Robert Asprin & Lynn Abbey. Millennium pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1992. 196 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Robert Asprin and his wife, Lynn Abbey, have gotten together and come up with a delightful novel about batman and catwoman. Catwoman is the protagonist in this one and the action follows her as she fights her way through drug barons and other crooks as well as other assorted nasties. This novel is where both she and batman co-operate - up to a point and up to the end of the novel. Fans of them both will be sure to enjoy the action.

Being a novel, and being written by two writers who have both written books that other readers have reacted to with appreciation, this work is much more "in depth" than comics, or even movies, of the "Batman" series. The two have given real depth to the two main characters and the situations they find themselves in.

There are some things that remain the same though - the action and the gangsters. The action is set in the present day - with modern assault rifles, etc, and thus younger fans will find that action right on.

QUESTION QUEST by Piers Anthony. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1991. A\$12.95. One sale now.

QUESTION QUEST is another Xanth novel. For those who haven't read them, they are almost impossible to describe. You'd just have to read them. They have to do with a strange world called Xanth, and the even stranger inhabitants of same.

Lacuana had a twin sister called Haitus, and for the former, things seemed to go along swimmingly. At least Lacuana thought they did, till she woke up to the fact that she was in a blue funk, and that she was thirty-four and life was a mess. In the world of Xanth the characters don't go and pull themselves out of such a mess, or have friends that could, help them - she had to go to Magician Humfrey with her Question and get him to answer it. Trouble was, he was in the anteroom to Hell, waiting. Lacuana had to thus go to Hell in a handbasket to ask him, and of course had numerous adventures along the way, and also after she got there.

Magician Humfrey also had a problem - his wife Rose was in inner Hell and he was hoping to rescue her. Now he had an assistant.... Really weird fantasy.

THE WHITE MISTS OF POWER by Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Millennium pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1992. 286 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

K. K. Rusch is the editor of THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, which I haven't read for years; certainly none of the ones she had edited. Ms Rusch writes powerfully and the characters she creates are believable and live while the book's pages pass through the reader's fingers.

THE WHITE MISTS OF POWER is about a kingdom that is beyond most of what we know - a magical land that is not as a fantastical land as far as the people who live and fight in it are concerned. Rusch has an ability to create characters that the readers believe in and thus want to follow their careers. The young prince who was abandoned and the people who wanted him out of action are believable - as are the events that follow.

I have found that the author's writing ability is first rate and am beginning to look forward to more of her novels being published and distributed here. Kristine Rusch is definitely an author that this reader would look forward to seeing more of in output of her novels.

TRAITORS by Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Millennium h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 358 pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

I'm glad that Kristine Rusch writes novels, rather than trilogies - you know when you finish the novel that it *is* finished.

TRAITORS is set on a planet that had been lost to the main stream of galactic civilization for hundreds of years. The various societies that grew up on the planet were bound by the countries they developed in - there was Golga, which was a dismal place and where there was fighting and a terrible government - at least this was what the people of the Kingdom were told. The Kingdom was settled from Golga by artists of several stripes. Over the years that regime became more repressive and the Talents that came up - rare people with abilities that verged on ESP powers - were the elite, but an elite that was kept under strict control. Diate ran away from the Kingdom when his family was murdered - and wound up in Golga, where he was befriended by the Golgoth - the leader of Golga, whom those of the Kingdom were taught was a tyrant.

If all of Rusch's fantasy are like TRAITORS, she is an author to seek out. I found this a novel almost impossible to put down. Excellent SF.

LUCKY STAR & THE MOONS OF JUPITER/LUCKY STARR AND THE RINGS OF SATURN by Paul French (Isaac Asimov). Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1957/1958. 306 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Book 3 of the series being reprinted.

This volume contains the two novels listed above. They both star Lucky Starr as the protagonist. Lucky is a really bright lad, and those of Earth's ruling elite use him as best they can. Because of his age he is oftimes able to get into places that others would not be able to enter. Each novel is set in a different part of the solar system; what part that is is obvious from the titles.

... THE MOONS OF JUPITER is set there - whereupon one such moon Earth has a secret base working on an invention that would enable it to get one step ahead of its then enemy, the Sirian empire. But as with such research laboratories, there are always those who are out to make money any way they can, or who work for the opposite side, or who *are* the opposite side.

THE RINGS OF SATURN commences a bit later on, when Sirius has invaded part of the solar system and has formed a base on Titan, a moon of Saturn. Lucky Starr has a daring plan, which he hopes will allow him to infiltrate the base and gain some advantage for Earth. Adventure sf for those young at heart.

GHOST LEGION by Margaret Weis, Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1993. 534 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

I think that the backcover blurb this time says it all: "Young Dion Starfire is the ruler of a galaxy that is finally at peace after years of strife and bloodshed. Yet the peace is an uneasy one. Dion has fallen desperately in love with a woman who is not his queen, and suddenly the fragile alliances that rest on his marriage are threatened...."

There is a lot in this small type-face, 534 page novel, and it is not as bad as the blurb indicates. The cover's selling points are obviously aimed at the adolescent - there are two men fighting with laser swords on the front cover, while on the back cover is a long-haired blonde wearing what looks like a Roman legionnaire's metal greaves, together with boot overlays that would cut her legs to pieces if she walked fast. Margaret Weis knows better than to do this type of thing with her novel - it is adventurous but I think any reader of any age would like it. It is easy to read and worth getting to while away a free four hours or so. Adventurous science fantasy.

THE NEW NATURE OF THE CATASTROPHE edited by Michael Moorcock & Langdon Jones. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1969-93. 436 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

This is Vol. 9 of The Tale of the Eternal Champion. Rather than being all by Michael Moorcock, it is a compendium of tales about Jerry Cornelius by a multitude of authors, and included short stories and even comic strips.

The contents are two Introductions by Moorcock and Jones, THE PEKING JUNCTION, THE DELHI DIVISION, THE TANK TRAPEZE, THE DODGEM DECISION; THE NATURE OF THE CATASTROPHE; THE SUNSET PERSPECTIVE; SEA WOLVES; VOORTREKKER; DEAD SINGERS; THE SWASTIKA SETUP; THE LANGFORD CUP; THE ENTROPY CIRCUIT; THE MURDERER'S SONG; THE GANGRENE COLLECTION; THE ROUMANIAN QUESTION by Michael Moorcock; THE ASH CIRCUS by M. John Harrison; THE FIRMAMENT THEOREM by Brian Aldiss; THE ADVENTURES OF

JERRY CORNELIUS script by Mike Moorcock, drawings by Mal Dean; THE LAST HURRAH OF THE GOLDEN HORDE by Norman Spinrad; THE NASH CIRCUIT by M. John Harrison; LINES OF WHITE ON A SULLEN SEA by Maxim Jukubowki; THE ANXIETY IN THE EYES OF THE CRICKET by James Sallis; THE END OF THE CYCLE by Langdon Jones; THE FLESH CIRCLE by M. John Harrison; A PRAYER TO MEN by Alex Krislov; INTERLUDE: MIS BRUNNER AND JERRY; THE REPOSSESSION OF JERRY CORNELIUS by John Clute; NIKI HOEKY by Charles Partington; EVERYTHING BLOWING UP by Hilary Bailey; THE ENTROPY TANGO by Moorcock and Pete Pavli. BRUISED TIME by Simon Ings and two epilogues by Langdon Jones and John Davey.

Those who love Jerry Cornelius will be sure to get these trade paperbacks - I don't think they'll be released in small-size paperback.

DOOMSDAY BOOK by Connie Willis. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1992. 650 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

The other story I've read by Connie Willis was FIRE WATCH, which was the story that brought her to the wider sf world's attention.

DOOMSDAY BOOK is a time travel story - it follows the trials and tribulations of Kivrin as she goes back to the 14th Century to do some historical research. The Net is aimed at the year 1320, which was a fairly quiet year. Just after she went through the technician came down sick, and all he could say was "something's wrong". Dunworthy, the person in charge of the young woman, tries to find out what *is* wrong, but all of a sudden he finds himself in the middle of a pandemic - a virus that no-one can find a cure for.... In the meanwhile Kivrin finds herself near Oxford and all seems to be well until she comes down sick. She has had all her medical enhancements and hopes that she will be able to pull through, since the 14th Century is not well known for its medical knowledge.

During the course of the novel she gets to know quite well the manor, church and village she finds herself in, and finds that the people haven't changed in ways that matter. There is a race to find and retrieve Kivrin before the net closes and the pandemic back home takes its toll. And then Dunworthy finds out what was "wrong". This novel won the Hugo in 1993. *Highly Recommended*.

BEAUTY by Sheri S. Tepper. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1991. 476 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

BEAUTY is another novel set in the 15th Century, but it is a fantasy, and is really at the other end of the spectrum because of this.

The plot takes up as Beauty and her look-alike half-sister, Beloved, are growing up in their village and castle. As the time comes to celebrate Beauty's sixteenth birthday, Beauty and Beloved take each others place - and Beloved and the rest of the castle fall under the spell cast by Beauty's aunt. Beauty escapes from the castle before it is completely covered by the thorn hedge and comes across a TV team from the 21st Century, who take her with them when they return. Beauty is grossed out by the conditions there and she persuades two of the camera team to take her back to the 20th Century. Many others have escaped the 21st C to go back to the 20th C - that is one of the reasons there are so many unemployed there.... and it is there that Beauty is beaten and raped. She escapes back to the 15th Century and then back to Faerie. She has the baby and leaves it with a husband who thinks it was his.

There are many points Tepper makes in this novel - one of the more powerful is that hate and pornography are overwhelming beauty and that they are the more powerful. Engrossing reading.

THE STRESS OF HER REGARD by Tim Powers. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1989. 605 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

I haven't read any of Tim Powers' novels since DINNER AT DEVIANT'S PALACE, so was looking forward to this novel.

THE STRESS OF HER REGARD is the stress that is inflicted on the victim of the race of beings living alongside mankind, but preying off them. Some of these took the form of winged flying serpents, which could also change their form and take the shape of men or women, though in this guise they were still finely scaled. They were jealous, though, and if the human, male or female, took other (human) lovers, or had children of them, their mates or children invariably ended up dead, often gruesomely. The novel is set in the 1820's and the protagonist, Crawford, a doctor, ends up in the

household of Byron and Shelley, in Italy. Much of the action takes place in Venice.

As with Powers' other novels, this is well researched and the background reads authentic. However, I found the reading hard going. This is a long novel, and is not to be tackled without some concentration. In the end, though, it is worth while obtaining for some first rate fantasy.

BLOOD OF HEROES by Andrew Keith. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 339 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

BLOOD OF HEROES is a Battletech novel; in other words it features the human controlled augmented fighters that wage war in the year 3056.

Many things have changed - but apparently humans have not learned much about living and leaving others alone. The Federal Commonwealth is an entity in that millenium that is on the verge of being wracked by a series of rebellions. Some of the rebels have the idea that to seal the way to Terra they could take over the world where Death Grey Legion has its headquarters. Melissa Steiner's assassination is the first step in a plan of the rebels to secede from the Commonwealth. They attack the planet while the commander of the Grey Legion, Grayson Death Carlyle and his wife, Lori, are visiting Prince Davion. However things don't go all the way that the rebels hope, as some of the Legion make it to their machines and commence a counter-attack. Racy adventure for the younger readers.

VAMPIRE WORLD 2: THE LAST AERIE by Brian Lumley. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 747 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

The second volume of the Necroscope trilogy; Nathan is the new Necroscope.

Ben Trask, head of EBranch in London, always kept good contact with the espers of that organisation and it was thus that he was found and was contacted by Nathan, from the world of the Gate, the Vampire World. It had been eighteen years since anything of import had happened, but now things were heating up and events promised to keep heating up until they exploded into flame. Nathan manages to win through to Earth; his problem after that is how to get back to his world?

The evil one in this novel is Lord Nestor Lichloathe, a member of the Wamphyri - and Nathan's brother. Needless to say neither Nathan nor his brother is too happy about the things that happen, but even with his new helpers of the E-branch he finds himself in trouble trying to get back. And then there is Harry Keogh....

Lumley is one of the new breed of horror writers who is mixing some science fantasy with horror, and thus hoping to enhance the telling of it.

STRANGE DREAMS selected by Stephen Donaldson. HarperCollins tpb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1993. 529 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Donaldson likes his fantasy - in his Introduction he says why he selected these stories - *he* liked them. Whether his taste is yours can be easily seen by reading the titles that follow and you can make your own mind up.

The stories included are: THE ALEPH by Jorge Luis Borges; LADY OF THE SKULLS by Patricia McKillip; AS ABOVE, SO BELOW by John M. Ford; EUMENIDES IN THE FOURTH-FLOOR LAVATORY by Orson Scott Card; NARROW VALLEY by R. A. Lafferty, THE DREAMSTONE by C. J. Cherryh; THE STORMING OF ANNIE KINSALE by Lucius Shepard; GREEN MAGIC by Jack Vance; THE MARK OF THE BEAST by Rudyard Kipling; THE BIG DREAM by John Kessel; THE HOUSE OF COMPASSIONATE SHARERS by Michael Bishop; THE FALLEN COUNTRY by Somtow Sucharitkul, STRATA by Edward Bryant; AND NOW THE NEWS by Theodore Sturgeon; THE WHITE HORSE CHILD by Greg Bear; PRINCE SHADOWBOW by Sheri S. Tepper; THE GIRL WHO WENT TO THE RICH NEIGHBORHOOD by Rachel Pollack; CONSEQUENCES by Walter Joh Williams; THE STONE FEY by Robin McKinley; CLOSE OF NIGHT by Daphne Castell; HOGFOOT RIGHT AND BIRD-HANDS by Garry Kilworth; LONGTOOTH by Edgar Pangborn; MY ROSE AND MY GLOVE by Harvey Jacobs; WITH THE ORIGINAL CAST by Nancy Kress; IN THE PENAL COLONY by Franz Kafka; JEFFTY IS FIVE by Harlan Ellison; AIR RAID by John Varley and THE DANCER FROM THE DANCE by M. John Harrison.

As you can see this is a good bunch of stories - if you don't have the majority of them, then this large volume is a good buy.

STONE ANGELS by Mike Jefferies. HarperCollins tpb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1993. 301 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

The cathedral is the scene of many of the climaxes in STONE ANGELS. In ancient times it had been a pagan altar, washed by the blood of human sacrifice. Then it lay hidden for centuries, its perfect whiteness darkened by age, until it was possessed by a spirit. Spirit and stone fused together, taking on a shape - the shape of an angel.

So the blurb goes. This time the backcover blurb is accurate - the story goes on to bring in the Bishop of Norwich, who finds the angel and installs it in the new cathedral. The angel, however, wasn't one that should have been in the cathedral - it was Abaddon, the Angel of the Pit (Hell) and the evil now lived on in the statue. Over time its power built up until it was ready to strike out....

The book is very easy to read and would be good to have on a long train or car trip. Engrossing and captivating fantasy.

THE NIGHT SKY - ASTRONOMY FOR AUSTRALIANS by Vicki Hyde. Hodder & Stoughton tpb, dist in Aust by HodderHeadline. (C) 1992/3. 80 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This is a very good book - and a must to have if you are at all interested in Astronomy or have children who are.

The book has twelve chapters, a glossary, a list of astronomical societies, and a further reading list. The chapters are headed ASTRONOMY IN THE DREAMTIME; SAILING INTO STRANGE SKIES; EARTH: A PLANET OF OUR OWN; THE MOON: OUR NEAREST NEIGHBOUR; THE SUN: A STAR OF OUR OWN; THE OTHER PLANETS (Mercury to Pluto); COMETS AND METEORS; STARS: THEIR BIRTH, LIFE AND DEATH; THE MILKY WAY: OUR GALAXY; THE CREATION AND OTHER SPECULATIONS; LOOKING INTO THE SKIES: TELESCOPES AND OTHER AIDS; AND SKY-WATCHING THE YEAR ROUND: A PRACTICAL GUIDE. There are pages chock-full of black and white and coloured photos - most of them from the deep space probes, so this edition is a good buy for this also; and you get Australian information.

The coloured photos are well worth the money for the book itself, and it is a good buy for those with any interest in Australian Astronomy.

THE WESTERN WIZARD by Mickey Zucker Reichert. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1992. 486 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

THE WESTERN WIZARD is Volume 2 of The Last of the Renshai.

This volume tells of the Eastern Wizard as she calls on a Demon to try to find out what happened to the Western Wizard who she had not heard from for fifty years. What she finds out does not help her all that well - though she does find out that the Southern Wizard is planning to use his champion to try to wrest control. The man the Wizard takes as champion will be a matchless swordsman and it is to try to counter this that the Eastern Wizard calls up on of the three Swords of power. The other physical Sword is still on a plane of magic - the third Sword has not been created.

Reichert is a skilful writer of adventure and he keeps track of the various strands of his tales. For both sexes of reader there is a main male and a female character, and for those into EEO the female can wield a mean sword. Engrossing fantasy of the Sword & Sorcery genre - this looks like it will end up being an excellent new series and one that is sure to bring an influx of his readers and should prove that he is an emerging new talent.

THE HOLLOWING by Robert Holdstock. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1993. 314 pp. A\$35. On sale now.

Another tale of the deep woods and set in the type of landscape that MYTHAGO WOOD was. If you haven't read any of Holdstock's works about this strange part of the English psyche, then you will find this of immense interest. It gives some insight in to some of the peculiarities in their makeup.

A young brain-damaged kid had wandered into the wood and the wood has taken some of his dreams and imaginings and made them into mythagos - as these woods tend to do. Unfortunately these mythagos are also damaged and as heroes tend to do things that are not quite *right*. The boy's father, Richard, goes into the wood looking for his missing son and has to deal with these warped creatures and men. Ultimately, he knows, the creatures will bend the mind, if you can

call it that, of the wood and ultimately destroy it. *Different* fantasy fiction.

THE GOLDEN by Lucius Shepard, Millennium h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 216 pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

The new novel from Lucius Shepard. It is full of dark emotions, hot sex and vampires with deadly fangs that like ripping into ripe flesh.

The Golden are specially bred humans who have that "something extra" in their blood that the vampires that bred them for loved. When the vampires drank of that blood, sharing it, they knew ecstasy. It was at the gathering in the 19th Century, the gathering that had been 300 years in the planning that the Golden had been taken from her room by someone and savaged, and her drained, mutilated body had been left to be found in the day. A newly inherited vampire, Beheim, is given the task of finding the one who did the deed. And the Patriarch of the vampires was overseeing the search. Shepard has done a good job is showing the bloodlust and dark dealings in the vampires' warped world - the casual killings of ordinary humans, both children and adults, and the heightened sexual tensions and release that the vampires partake as they leave the sweaty bodies of their partners drained. A well-written novel showing the darkness beneath the day.

VIRTUAL LIGHT by William Gibson. Viking h/c, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 296 pp. h/c A\$30, tpb A\$19.95. On sale now.

VIRTUAL LIGHT is William Gibson's latest cyberpunk novel. It is set in Los Angeles and San Francisco in the next century. Urban decay has really set in - much of the action takes place on and in the Golden Gate Bridge, which has been taken over by squatters.

Berry Rydell has done some training at the police academy and is trying to help people by joining a private protection company. Chevette is a bicycle messenger - one who takes messages and small packages through the packed streets and hands them direct to the recipient. With data flowing freely in computers and telephone networks, the only sure way to keep things private is by courier - that way, hackers can't get into it. Chevette is at a party and steals a packet from an obnoxious creep who turns up later dead. Later on in the novel the Berry and Chevette meet, but not in the best of circumstances for a good relationship. If you like cyberpunk, or novels that are set in what could be *the* future, then this latest of Gibson's is absorbing - I thought so.

ANGEL by Garry D. Kilworth. Gollancz horror h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1993. 286 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

All over the world the rate of arsons are increasing and the police forces are wondering what is going on. Dave Peters, in San Francisco, meets one of those who are starting the fires but can't believe his eyes - a man walks out of the flames, his body and clothes unharmed.

Dave had a buddy, Danny, and they both had problems with their women. Dave because his wife and child died in one of the fires, and Danny because his girl ended up having sex with Dave. She also had very serious emotional problems. Dave eventually met the being starting the fires - but he was overcome with the fierceness of the fire and when he came to himself the person was gone. Later it comes to their attention that there are two superhuman beings in the city - one good, one bad. They are actually angels that have brought the war from heaven to earth and the fires are one of the consequences.

This is the second novel reviewed that has angels as a plot element. I hope it isn't starting a trend. Interesting horror.

A TUPOLEV TOO FAR by Brian Aldiss. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1967-92. 200 pp. A\$35. On sale now.

This collection of Aldiss's short stories has a good range of fiction in it; but it is primarily from his later period of writing.

The stories are: A TUPOLEV TOO FAR; RATBIRD; FOAM; SUMMERTIME WAS NEARLY OVER; BETTER MORPHOSIS; THREE DEGREES OVER; A LIFE OF MATTER AND DEATH; A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GALACTIC EMPIRE; CONFLUENCE; CONFLUENCE REVISITED; NORTH OF THE ABYSS and ALPHABET OF AMELIORATING HOPE. I think the best story in the collection is A TUPOLEV TOO FAR, the second best being THREE DEGREES OVER.

Aldiss has been getting more "literary" as he ages, and several of these stories are included in this volume - CONFLUENCE and CONFLUENCE REVISITED. These two were those I skipped through; I didn't think much of them, they appeared to be too much an "intellectual exercise", than something entertaining.

THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER, narrative by Shirley Harrison. Smith Gryphon h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 299 pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

This is a really interesting book. The first 204 pages gives an account of the discovery of the diary, the investigation by the publisher into the background, and the authentication of the document. Said document was given to the publisher by a Mike Barrett, who had been given the diary by a friend in 1991, who had died soon after. He had spent a year checking the background details of the Ripper, then handing it on.

The majority of the pages of the book goes into the life of the person who supposedly wrote the diary and who was the Ripper. The research seems to be very in-depth and since there has been quite a bit of previous research into the person (from Liverpool) who wrote the diary, there is quite a lot to discuss. The last portion of the book is a facsimile of the diary, and lastly a printed version to make it easier to read. There are also many photos, and one of the pages in the hospital register showing the two photos of the corpse of Mary Kelly, one of which hasn't been published before.

If you are a crime or horror fan you'll definitely have to get this book.

STEEL BEACH by John Varley. HarperCollins tpb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1992. 479 pp. A\$22.95. On sale now.

This is one *large* book, and it took me about a week to read through it (not reading anything else in the meanwhile).

If you have wondered what happened to John Varley; here is the answer: he's been writing this volume. STEEL BEACH is about the human colony on Luna. There are colonies on most of the eight planets - when the aliens took over Earth and killed all of the human race that still resided there, that left only those colonies. Those on those outposts had managed to survive for two hundred years after the aliens landed on Earth - they had their Central Computers to look after them, after all. Hildy is a newspaper hound who finds out, after several attempts to commit suicide, that the CC is also in a bad situation. There is a lot in the novel - from the various enclaves and the DisneyWorlds scattered through the cities on the Moon, to the derelict starship *Robert A. Heinlein* and the Heinleiners who are some of those who are "doing their own thing". Hildy has her own adventures to go through, as well as covering some of the stories for the Nipple - her newspad. I thought this novel is good, hard SF.

MAGIC'S PROMISE by Mercedes Lackey. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 320 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Mercedes Lackey has a writing style that is both easy to read and which gives information without resorting to artificial devices or bludgeoning the reader over the head with facts.

As with much of the fantasy published today, MAGIC'S PROMISE is part of a continuing series - in this case it is book 2 of The Last Herald-Mage. Vanyel is a Herald-Mage and he is finding it hard going trying to keep his country from sliding into being a disaster area through the influences of both Wild Magic and war. Then his Companion, Yfandes goes to a nearby Kingdom to help *them*, Vanyel naturally goes along to help.

For those who like a bit of romance in their fantasy, there is a leavening of this also - Savil and others provide the interest some say lubricates the world. Well written fantasy.

TIMEFRAME: The Illustrated History by David Howe. Dr Who Books h/c, dist in Aust by HodderHeadline. (C) 1993. 122 pp, illust, 240x305 mm. A\$29.95. On sale now.

TIMEFRAME celebrates the 30th anniversary of DOCTOR WHO, the well-known TV series. I don't think there are many English language sf fans who have not seen at least one episode of this series. The book is full of full-colour and B&W photos from the TV series, and of pb cover paintings.

The book is *very* nice looking, with a dull black dust jacket, with the seven Doctors' portraits embossed in shiny black around the

edges. It is a very impressive volume and is more than worthy of the coffee table. For those who lived through the series from the beginning, as I did (I still think the first Doctor, William Hartnell, was the better, capturing the spirit of the Doctor best). The volume is split up into four sections - the Sixties, the Seventies, the Eighties and the Nineties. The text and photos cover the seven Doctors, and also gives details of his Companions. There are cuttings from newspapers and magazines and glossaries of plots. There is even a colour photo of a nude Kate Manning (one of the Companions) as she tried to change her image as a Doctor Who Companion. This is well worth buying for nostalgia - and because it is also good value. 122 pages of colour photos is very good value for money, especially since the UK price is 15.99 pounds and the US price is US\$24.95. *Recommended*.

THE MIND OF GOD by Paul Davies. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1992. 232 pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

I was nearly through this book when I tripped and broke a Metacarpal bone in my left hand; so now I am typing this with my right hand's fingers only, and this issue is put back a month at least.

It took me about a week to read through this discussion of cosmology, baby universes and the reason *why* the Laws of physics are the way they are. The reader has to concentrate as s/he reads through, for if you lose track of what the author is explaining, you have to go back and re-read what he said. To quote the back-cover: "He [the author] claims that the success of mathematics in describing nature points to a deep and significant link between the human mind and the organisation of the physical world". Davies is wide ranging in his information and really gives the feel of being a scientist (He is Professor of Mathematical Physics at Adelaide University). The book is crammed with various precis of up-to-date theories of the "creation" of the universe and other linking branches of science. Though THE MIND OF GOD required reading in small doses to assimilate the information/reasoning, I found it fascinating reading.

ISAAC ASIMOV'S CALIBAN by Roger Macbride Allen. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 312 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Roger Allen is a major find. If his future novels are as good as this one he will be well worth searching out.

As far as I can see the only link with Asimov in the writing is that Allen uses the Three Laws and works within Asimov's Spacer/Settler universe. CALIBAN is the name given a robot who, it appears, has attempted to murder his Robotics mistress. Alvar Kresh and his robot assistant, Donald, must sift through all the clues to find out what happened and to bring the murderer to justice.

Allen has done a great job with this novel and has captured well the *angst* of Asimov's early 1950s robot novels. Both plot and characterisation hold together well, and the new Laws are well thought out. CALIBAN stands up there as a companion volume to THE NAKED SUN and THE CAVES OF STEEL. *Recommended*.

GREEN MARS by Kim Stanley Robinson. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1993. 571 pp. A\$35. On Sale now.

GREEN MARS is the second part of one novel that is being published in three parts. The first part was RED MARS, the third part is to be BLUE MARS.

GREEN MARS takes up nearly thirty years after the failed Martian revolution of 2061. Those remaining of the First Hundred colonists of Mars are mostly scattered among the refuges in the outback of Mars. One of the metanationals, Praxis, sends one of its best men to Mars to try to contact the underground and by thus doing, gain some support for the corporation amongst those from Earth and also the new native born Martians. Nirgal was one of those born on Mars - he and his brothers and sisters, though, were decanted, rather than being of women born - though this had not effected them unduly.

Events were moving towards what looked to be another event like the '61 failure for an independent Mars - and those working in the underground wanted to ensure that this didn't happen. Excellent hard sf - it feels like this is an actual account of what will happen *Recommended*.

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM by David Wingrove. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1989. 718 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. The first volume of Chung Kuo, reissued. This novel sets up the details of the

world of the Han - the 3,000 year old empire that had ruled the Earth from the early 21st century. The main characters are introduced - the older Han and the many people, some of whom would die and some live to fight on. Change had been apart from this world for the 3,000 years, but that could soon change.

THE BROKEN WHEEL by David Wingrove. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1990. 611 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. The second volume. In volume 1 a civil war had raged, mostly about Change. Though they had won, the Seven rulers of the Earth were weaker - some of their sons had to be brought into positions of power and there was always politics to sharpen their taste for it. Devore, the security officer who had ambitions to bring down the dynasty, was just getting into his stride and was sowing dissent among the Levels.

THE WHITE MOUNTAIN by David Wingrove, NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1991. 670 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. The third volume of Chung Kuo. The Seven are determined to make sure that their long reign will continue and they use their forces to ensure this. They have caucasians helping them - and have had for generations; these believe that the Han rule is good and just. The Earth is a giant city of about 10 billion people and they believe that Change could destroy the delicate balance that keeps the city going. As I have said this is *the* best SF series being published for a long time, and this is your best chance to get all volumes and read them concurrently. *Recommended*. Get them!!

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