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RON'S

ROOST

THE ISSUE AT HAND...

There are several things I would like to talk about this issue, both of which actually concern The Mentor itself. You may have noticed over the last few issues that there is a sameness in that the same contributors keep turning up. This is not that I only like their work - I do like it; however the reason they are there and no-one else is, is that I am totally out of contributions for the next few issues except from these fans. I would like a mixed bag of contributors in The Mentor. One of the criteria I have is that the contributors be from Australia or New Zealand. If any fan wants to read foreign contributors they only have to read the US or UK zines. Also many overseas correspondents write articles for Aussie zines. There are many young Aussie fans who would love to break into fan writing (and I have published them..) but the Aussie fanzine who keeps publishing a majority of their issues with overseas fan taking up the space that could be devoted to Australian and New Zealand writers is not doing those fan any service - but a disservice.

I do publish overseas fan - mainly in the poetry section, since I don't receive any Aussie poetry. There used to be Aussie fan poets, but they seem to have gafiated. And I don't much like blank verse - it tends to leave that type of look in my eyes.

The second thing I would like to mention is that in any fanzine, the editor has the last word. This applies to which sections of letters to edit out (because they may have repeated comments someone else said, or continue a 'conversation that the editor wants to terminate, or talk about a subject that the editor does not want to discuss). This is the nature of the faned. It also applies to the editor's comments to loc writers. If the editor makes a comment, than he/she does not have to print the reply to his/her comment. Writers may request that certain of their comments be published, but it is up to the editor whether they actually reach print. After all, he is the one paying to print them. - Ron.

THE TRAVELS OF THE SOLAR GIPSY.

BELOVED ALIEN

BY GAIL NEVILLE

"Mankind would have no more chance of mating with
an extra-terrestrial than with a petunia..."

- Carl Sagan

Lalique awoke and found the Solar Gipsy coasting toward the satellite of a large white star, its hazy swirling blue and green globe filled one of the viewports that bubbled out of the ship's hull like the eye of a fish, only occasionally obscured by drifts of white cloud. Lalique set the Gipsy into orbital mode, and sat down at the console to study the computer's information on the approaching planet. 60% ocean. Verdant, abundant plantlife. No discernable animal life on land or in the seas. Interesting.

After a further moments collation, the computer supplied all known historical data on the planet. One survey team, sent out five years before, lost in space after quitting the planet. Never heard from again. The planet certified non-viable by the Mining Company who sponsored the survey. Even more interesting.

Lalizue bade the computer take the ship into landing mode, and made his way into the small Observation dome over the control cabin. The golden hull sheered away from him, the solar sails streaming out like silvery veils. It had often been remarked that the Solar Gipsy resembled an angel fish.

From the dome he had a clear view of the planet below as the Gipsy glided gently down toward the surface. Milky veils of cloud enveloped them, then were swiftly swept away like drifts of smoke, revealing the panorama below. The seas were broad sapphire bands dissecting the continents, which were lush and patchworked with many shades of green, lavender and rose. Following the coordinates of the previous survey team, the Gipsy skimmed the surface, passing over tall trees whose boughs waved like fern fronds in a breeze. The plant life was truly abundant. Even the trees were covered in mosses and vines that clung parasitically to their trunks like gowns. In patches of open ground he could see great banks of velvety moss, vying for the space.

The sails of the Gipsy spread out, forming a parachute that, with the small rockets in her underbelly, eased her descent onto the surface. She settled gently onto a mossy bank, in sight of the ocean, and at least a day's walk from the trees they had passed over. The computer assured him that the atmosphere was breathable, if a little light, and that there were no discernable dangers to surface exploration. Eagerly, he prepared to venture out.

He was an eccentric sight as he descended from the hatch, knee-high leather boots, a comfortable old jacket flapping with pockets, and a broad-brimmed hat to protect his balding head from the sun. Stepping carefully over the slippery moss, clutching a waterproof case full of small items of test equipment, he made his way towards the ocean.

At the water's edge, he rested for a moment and drank in the scene. There was an uncanny silence about it, something an animal world would never know. The air was light as champagne, and redolent with the sweet scent of blossom, and below him the sea lay calm and undisturbed like a sheet of glass. Purposely Lalique broke the surface, plunging a small tube into the clear blue water, and bringing it back up, brimming full.

The test proved the water sweet and clean, and devoid of animal life. He tasted it, since it showed no known toxins, putting a little to his tongue. It had no taste, but felt refreshing. He poured the liquid back into the sea and stowed the tube away in his bag. This was how he spent the rest of the planet's short day, quietly productive and completely content, measuring, testing, and carefully taking samples, but leaving everything as he had found it. As night fell he made his way back to the Gipsy. Tomorrow he would explore the region to the west, where the trees were - a day's walk or so he estimated. Perhaps it was a trick of the fading light, but it looked closer than it had. It might only be half a day's walk, after all.

Glancing down, he saw that the moss on which he stood was now clinging to the toes of his boots. Bending down, he attempted to brush it away, then watched with fascination as it crawled over his hand. A faint prickling sensation, like millions of tiny feet or sensors exploring his skin, made him shake his hand quickly, and the moss fell away. Where it had clung to his skin was a faint red rash.

Thoughtfully Lalique climbed back into the Gipsy, making sure he took none of the alien moss with him. Within the hatch was an automatic purifier which destroyed any spores his might still have attached to his clothes. Within the body of the ship again, he stowed away the samples in their hermetically sealed containers, and settled down to make notes before taking supper and retiring for the night. He made notes in the old fashioned way, painstakingly filling in the blank pages of a bound book with ideas, ruminations and observations as quaint and unpredictable as himself. This task completed, he had a simple supper of vitamin and protein supplement mixed to a milky form with water from the solar distiller, and then retired to one of the bunks in the sleeping quarters. At a single softly spoken command, all the lights on board were quickly extinguished.

He was awoken again, not by the sunlight pouring in through the viewports, but by a loud persistent banging on the hull of the ship. For a time he lay mesmerised and bewildered by the sound, unable to fathom its source.

Gradually, it was impinged upon his consciousness that the knocking was coming from outside. Someone wanted to get in.

Lalique leapt from the bunk forgetting to order light, and crashed into a low cabinet near the door. He rapped out a command, and the interior of the Gipsy, and a large area of the surrounding terrain, was instantly illuminated. Lalique ordered the computer to give him a video view of the source of the noise. After some confusion and blurred images, a man's face appeared on the screen, occasionally obscured by an arm that raised and fell, beating on the ship's golden hull. His garments appeared tattered and faded, but on one sleeve Lalique could clearly see the insignia of the moon-based mining company that had sent out the ill-fated survey team.

Lalique considered the wisdom of opening the hatch. The man might be the last survivor of the team. He was probably demented, and might even be armed. Alone and abandoned on a world without sentient life, who knew what he might do now, faced with another human being for the first time in five years. It could be extremely dangerous to open the hatch. When his scientific curiosity was not aroused, Lalique was a cautious man. There was too much of interest in the universe to throw one's life away on a moment's compassion. On the other hand, the man might be still rational, and to abandon him when he had rescue within his reach would be to abandon him to madness indeed. Lalique shuddered at such a fate. To lose one's mind... to be forever stranded in the realms of unreason.

While Lalique pondered his dilemma, the drumming on the hull grew weaker. Finally it ceased altogether, and the man's face slid out of view as he slumped to the ground. Lalique stared impassively at the blank screen. Then a new sound broke the silence. A low, hopeless sobbing.

Sighing, Lalique ordered the computer to open the hatch. The night was oppressively silent, the perfume of the plants even stronger and muskily seductive. The planet had no moon, and beyond the perimeter of light cast by the ship, it was also oppressively dark. The castaway lay on the mossy ground outside the hatch. The moss had crawled over his arm, obscuring the company insignia. Lalique brushed it away impatiently and hauled the man up into the area of the purifier. He had no difficulty doing this for like so many small stocky men, his strength belied his size.

In the comfort of the Gipsy's sleeping quarters, the castaway soon recovered consciousness. Lalique had taken the precaution of sedating him while he lay supine, so he was quieter than before, and quite rational. Relief flooded his face as he looked about, and Lalique studied him carefully. He looked much less as he might have been expected to look, after five years exile from civilisation. Haggard in appearance, with a bushy beard and long hair. But he was clean, and apparently well-nourished - Lalique guessed that some of the plantlife must be edible, unless the man had discovered some other source of food. He had tried to take care of his few remaining items of clothing, but his standard issue uniform was pitifully threadbare, though clean, as were his bare feet and ragged hair. He had tried to maintain his standards of decency in spite of being castaway, and with it, obviously, his sanity. Lalique liked that. It showed this was a man of character, a true survivor.

Finally, the castaway^{way} looked directly at his rescuer, and after a moment's hesitation, recognition and delight showed in his eyes.

"Professor Lalique!" He cried. "Gustav Maximilian Lalique!" He sprang from the bunk, and started pumping the startled Lalique's hand. The little scientist was certain he had never seen this person before, and he was generally acknowledged to have a photographic memory. Everything he had ever seen,

heard or experienced could be recalled in an instant - of course, this man had undoubtedly changed in appearance. That must be it.

"I was one of your students at Sydtech University," the castaway said, wringing the life from Lalique's hand. "To be rescued at all is a miracle, but to be rescued by you.. my old master, my idol - forgive me," he added, seeing the confusion in Lalique's face, "After the life you have lead, you may not even remember your term at Sydtech."

"Young man, I remember everything " Lalique said sternly. Especially Sydtech, a rambling university city with a splendid view of the sea, the last of the great Greek-style universities that had flourished on the continent of Oceania, once known as Australia. It had been one of the happiest times of his life. What a great people those southerners were, so unlike the dour Northern cities he had known in his youth. But that was so long ago, one of his first teaching jobs after he had left the grim stronghold of Eurussia.

"Yes, I remember Sydtech," he added more kindly, "But there were many enthusiastic young students. Which one were you?"

"I was always sitting at your feet when we had 'Socrates sessions' on the green overlooking the harbour. My name is Jacob Carey."

Lalique had a clear mental picture of the scene - the brilliant blue sky, the shimmering sea below, the high cliffs towering over the harbour, the ruins of the old city on the far shore. Behind, the white walls of Sydtech, the cloister-like peace of the gardens. Around him, golden young men and women with fearless eyes and questing minds. Lalique's memory pin-pointed the one who always sat at his feet. Jacob - the country boy.

"So," Lalique murmured, "All your dreams of glory and conquest ended here."

"I joined the Amerasian Mining Corps after I left Sydtech. It was the only way to get into space. You know how much I wanted to do that."

"And here you are. If you don't mind my saying so, Jacob, you didn't get very far. But how on earth - or whatever this planet is called - did you manage to get yourself left behind when the others took off?"

Jacob stared at him. "Left behind? I wasn't left behind. Is that what they told you? Did they think no-one could have survived this long, to tell the truth?"

"I don't understand," Lalique said. "Who are they? The Mining Company?"

"I knew they wouldn't send a rescue ship," Jacob said bitterly, his shoulders sagging. "We were expendible, you see. I tried to raise them before we lost communications, but they ignored my signals."

"It's on record that your expedition was lost in space after certifying this planet non-viable."

"It was a lie. We crashed onto the surface. Only I survived the impact."

Lalique nodded slowly. None of this surprised him. He had had his own dealings with the powerful Amerasian Mining Corps.

"But why are you here?" Jacob asked. "Is this another expedition?"

"In a way - a private one. You need rest now, more than you need explanations." Lalique glanced towards the viewport. "The sun is coming up. I have a few things to attend to on the surface before we leave. You rest here, and

we'll talk later." He rose to his feet.

"You are not going outside?"

"Of course," Lalique said brusquely. "That's what I'm here for -- to collate, learn, understand. When you are stronger you must tell me everything you know about this place. What you ate, for example, what effects you noted."

Jacob laughed, and Lalique noted with concern that there was a slightly hysterical sound to it.

"Oh yes, what I ate. How I survived. Don't go out there, Professor. There are things you must know, but not now. We must leave right away. This very minute, or we never will. They won't let me -- she won't let me."

"She?" Lalique quizzed. "There is life on this planet?"

"Yes, there is life. Look outside. Don't go outside, just look. They should be here by now."

Burning with curiosity, Lalique climbed up into the Observation Dome. The light outside seemed strangely dimmed, although the sun had now climbed well above the horizon of the sea.

"Do you see them?" Jacob called up. "Are they here yet?"

Lalique frowned. "Yes, Jacob, they are here."

The trees were no longer a day or even a half day away. Now they crowded around the ship, their palm fronds shading the dome, obscuring the sunlight. Lalique gazed at them, astonished by their alien beauty. The parasitic plants clung to the sinuous swaying trunks and they moved their lean forms like harem dancers.

"They are sentient," Lalique whispered raptuously. "And so beautiful -- they are like lovely women -- sylphs -- dancers --"

"Stop it," Jacob said, climbing into the dome beside him. "That's what happens to you. They seduce you, draw you in. You drown in their softness and their beauty and their perfume --"

"That is foolish" Lalique said crisply. "They are plants, sentient or not. There can be no emotional attachment between beings so completely dissimilar." But as he spoke, he seemed to see the loneliness of five years' exile from human company spiralling away from him like a long dark tunnel. He had condemned himself to such an existence, after all.

One of the trees had drawn closer and hovered over the dome, long ferny leaves pressed against the iron-hard, indestructable plastiglas.

"She is the one who saved me," Jacob said. "She fed me on the lower life forms, the sea plants, the rock mosses. She sheltered me when the rain came and protected me from the predatory moss that engulfed the others. At first it was just because neither she nor the others wanted me to die. The bodies of the crew disturbed the ecology here, and the stench and decay appalled them. They had no use for the bodies as organic material, so they let the scavengers, the moss, absorb it into their systems. It can tolerate almost anything. Below us is the remains of my ship. The moss covered it as part of the rock formation here. But it got a taste for flesh, for blood. It isn't like the trees, it has no feelings, no reasoning power. It just lives to eat and absorb and grow. Most of the time the trees could control it, but sometimes, when they were off guard, .

it would come after me. I had to be very careful not to cut myself - not to bleed."

"Last night - I saw it creeping over you - " Lalique shuddered. Mon Dieu, if I had not gone to the hatch -"

"There would have been no trace of me this morning. That's why you must not go outside, Professor. In time, it's sensors will tell it what you are."

"I think they already have," Lalique murmured, remembering the rash on his hand.

The filmy ferns brushed the dome, as if caressing it.

"She wants me to go back to her."

"You speak as if she were a woman," Lalique remarked.

"In a way she is. They are all female, the trees. The males are tiny floating creatures who drift in on the wind every spring and fertilise the buds. But their lives are very short. After mating, they drift out to sea and die. Sometimes the trees try to hold one, but they never last long. After a time, she came to sublimate all her frustrated emotions onto me. For these past five years I have been treated as tenderly as a lover by a creature I could not possibly satisfy - nor could she satisfy me." He added with a wry grin.

"Yet she wants you back."

"Part of me wants to go back. Few men are loved that way by a woman. But I cannot spend the rest of my life dodging between the love of a plant, and the bloodlust of a mountain of moss."

"You're right," Lalique said. "This is no place for us. We shall leave at once." But his heart gave a wrench as he turned away from the trees. What a wonder lay out there. So much to know.

Down in the body of the ship, Lalique ordered the computer to take the ship into departure mode. The deck began to hum softly beneath their feet. Jacob fell to his knees and pressed his palms against the cold metal floor.

"I never thought I would feel the vibration of a ship again," he said, "Where are we going, Professor?"

"That depends on you. I could drop you off at an outpost near the Terran systems, if you like. I cannot go back."

"Why not?"

"Well, I too ran afoul of the Amerasian Mining Corps. Some years ago they commissioned me to develop a new Solar craft, a three-personnel probe ship. This is the result. I poured me life into this ship, creating the solar drive, the collectors, the distiller, the hypostasis unit for long-distance travel, the sails, even the computer. She is the most wonderful thing I have ever made - and they wanted to destroy her."

"Why?"

"Because someone came along with an idea for something considerably more clumsy, but also more profitable for the company. A new fuel drive. As always, solar power gets pushed aside because there is too little profit to be made from it. They ordered then Gipsy scrapped, and the plans destroyed. I could not allow that, of course, so I liberated her. Now if I go back, I will be ban-

ished forever to teach in one of those idiot factories the Eurussians are pleased to call universities. No, I shall stay in space, and go wherever the Gipsy takes me."

"That sounds good to me." Some of Jacob's old mischievousness sparkled in his eyes. "You wouldn't care for a passenger, I suppose?"

"No, I would not - but but a partner might be useful if he understood that I am the Captain of this ship."

"Aye aye, sir," Jacob smiled.

The Solar Gipsy began to ascend from the surface, tearing some of the moss away from the rocks, and exposing the dull grey of an Amerasian Mining Corps survey vessel. Shards of green velvet fell away from the Gipsy's hull as she glided slowly upwards between the massed trees. They crowded together, their palmy boughs suddenly rigid as steel arches meeting over the ship. Lalique felt the ship straining against them and ordered the computer to throttle back, fearing damage either to the hull or to the plants.

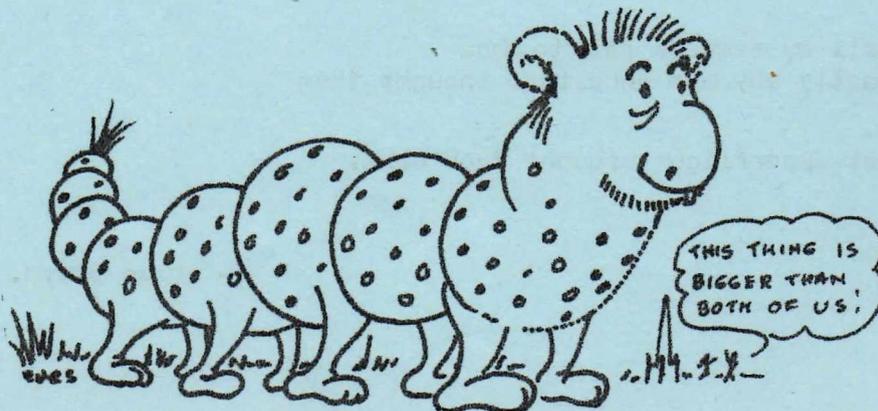
"You're right again, it seems," he said grimly to Jacob. "She doesn't want to let you go."

It seemed an eternity as they hung under the steely canopy, the freedom of the skies glimpsed tantalisingly ~~between~~ ^{through} the leaves. Then, without warning, the trees loosed their hold, and the Gipsy drifted away, out of their grasp.

"She did that," Jacob said with certainty. "She made them realise, for me. She understands I have to drift away to live."

Lalique did not argue. The Gipsy was climbing more rapidly now, her sails streaming behind her. Below, a forest of verdant arms waved as if in farewell.

-- by Gail Neville.



THE PLEASURES OF THE GROUNDINGS

night feet grate across the sites of scorchmarks:
how they do gloat, the young ones, to come here
their favourite place to couple where they dream
spaceships might any hour return
as sudden as they went

ah that vast tail-jet furnace from above
how it would take brief trivial pleasure sweats
and turn them in an instant into
hard gems of legend

like the volcano's edge they find
the promise of the threat makes fertile ground

darkness solidifying swiftly
into starbursting

joy howling the sky, they would not thank you
for the dull proof safe in my dozy archive
how the last fleet went phut on Auto in the sun
a thousand years before the oldest of these studs
was conceived on that same perflat spaceport ground

still my records fail to show
exactly why our ancestors thought then

that spaceflight brought such harm.

- steve sneyd.

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER :

GRIMESISH GRUMBLINGS -

ROUND UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS...

Most people have seen that classic film CASABLANCA. In it there is one memorable piece of dialogue -- no, not "Play it again, Sam." It is when Claude Rains, as the Police Chief, says, in a bored voice, "Round up the usual suspects." I never dreamed when first I saw the film that I should, one day, be the cause of such a round up.

The evening started pleasantly enough -- a P.E.N. dinner at which the film star Jack Thompson was the guest speaker. Very fortunately, as it was to turn out, I drank very little and, had I been driving a car, should have had no worries at all had I been asked to breathe into a bag. But I wasn't driving a car. I returned to Potts Point from the Journalists' Club by Eastern Suburbs Railway, walking the short distance from Kings Cross Station to my flat along my usual route. The time was shortly after 10.00 pm.

As I approached the block of flats there was quite heavy vehicular traffic both along Hughes Street and even in the normally quiet Tusculum Street. And then as I approached the ground floor door, there was a sudden lull. This ground floor door, admitting one into the vestibule, is an affair of steel and heavy metal mesh. It is spring-loaded and the lock is a spring lock, both of these factors playing an important part in what was to follow.

I unlocked the door and was just passing through when a young lad came up and asked, very politely, if I could tell him the time. I was looking at my wristwatch when another lad, a little older, appeared as though from nowhere, aiming a gleaming hunting knife at my belly and snarled something along the lines of, "Your money or your life!"

During my long years at sea I must have developed the ability to think quickly and, as I discovered, that ability is still with me. With the heavy spring-loading of the door in my favour I was able to force it shut, despite the efforts of my attackers to keep it open. The click of the engaging lock was one of the sweetest sounds I have heard in my life.

The bandits melted into the night and I hurried upstairs to my flat, where I rang the Kings Cross Police Station to report an attempted robbery with

violence. In an amazingly short time the police were on the scene, four very well-spoken young men. Well-spoken and well-dressed; I looked with envy at their holstered .38 revolvers...

They listened to my story. They asked me if I could describe the young criminals. I told them that I couldn't, that I'd been too busy trying to slam the door to get a good look at them. But I could, I said, identify the knife...

One of the officers advised me to sit down with a good, hot cup of tea while the neighbourhood was being scoured. I didn't quite take his advice but poured myself a really stiff Suntory whisky. I'd taken no more than a couple of sips when there was a knock on my door. (The local police, I think, must have pass keys to all the security doors in the area.) It was the senior constable. He told me that he and his colleagues had picked up four youths with one knife between them and asked me to come down to try to identify them. I said, "But there were only two of the bastards." He said, "We've got four."

So I went down to the Black Maria. In custody were four long, lanky louts - and my two assailants were both less than average height. I said this. So the knife was produced. "Perhaps this will refresh your memory, sir."

But the weapon was a small Wiltshire kitchen knife. Such knives would make very nasty weapons and being self-sharpening are, as any owner of such cutlery knows, often the cause of inadvertent self-inflicted wounds. And, although my knowledge of lethal ironmongery is confined to firearms I should never mistake a small kitchen knife for a quite large hunting knife.

And that was that. The usual suspects had been rounded up. Possibly the police were able to hang something on them, without my cooperation. But I wish that they'd caught my two "friends". A mugging, even an unsuccessful one, engenders a certain viciousness in the victim and an impatience with those do-gooders who bleat, "Poor, dear boys... It's all society's fault!"

Some time ago I listened to a talk-back radio programme. The subject being discussed was the absurdly light sentences for quite serious crimes being handed out by some judges. A caller, identifying himself as a retired police officer, listed the three qualifications for a "good" judge. (a) To have been run down on a pedestrian crossing by a motorist disregarding the red light (b) to have had his house burgled and (c) to have had his wife raped.

I'd add one more: To have been the victim of a mugging.

- A. Bertram Chandler.

—o0o—











The R. & R. Dept.



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I thank Brian Earl Brown for his data on costs of copiers vs. mimeo. I would remind him, and others, of how pocket calculators cost a fortune when first introduced. Then the prices tumbled. I still maintain that copiers will be the fannish choice in ten... nine years.

I am sorry if I upset Chandler. But he will have to face the fact that, like it or not, the metric system is going to win out. If not this year, then next year. I understand his problems. I was brought up for the first 29 years of my life in the "English" system of measurements. But JPL works in metric... the scientific system. I will admit having trouble every now and then. But it is essential that children be taught metric as their first language of measurement. We are now entering the ago of very high technology, and it will be measured by metric system. Period.

I'm afraid Michael Hailstone has the wrong idea of why Kepler gave Mars two moons. It was not foreknowledge. It was mysticism. Earth had one moon, Jupiter had four. So Mars had to have two. Kepler went on to predict that Saturn would have either six or eight moons, to keep the pattern intact. Kepler was a real strange fellow. He does deserve credit for being the first person to write about ETs, but that needs an article to explain.

This time around I have no nitpicks with Chandler, because I am guilty of many of the sins he quotes: I was dropped on my head as a baby when a V2 rocket slammed into the earth very near our bunker; it tossed me out of my crib. Since then, I have never had binocular vision. Nor much of expertise in spelling, grammer and especially punctuation. Which has not bothered me. I am still a whiz at math, and for that reason wound up working at JPL on the planetary exploration program.

Minor comment on your editorial. As far as I am concer ed, Ted White is wrong about Aussie fanzines having a bad reputation overseas. Most of the fanzine fans I know like the Aussie Fanzine scene. The main frustration is the transit time. Not Ted White. (Well, maybe Ted White). On the other hand I am semi-gafiated, so maybe I am in the wrong circles. Who knows?

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U.S.A.

I read most of the October issue of The Mentor yesterday, Christmas Day. This turned out to be an error in judgement, because Gail Neville's story was among the portions I read, and yesterday was the coldest Christmas in the 90 years of official weather statistics in this area.

The temperature hit a maximum of four degrees above zero fahrenheit in the middle of the afternoon, which I think translates to somewhere around 14 below zero celsius or centigrade. By the time I reached the end of the story, I was wondering if it might be an accurate prophecy which erred only in the setting of the action. Nevertheless, I thought the story was generally good. The cannibalism theme is somewhat overworked in science fiction and fantasy in recent years but it's introduced early enough in this story to avoid the usual cliché of appearing as a surprise ending. My only criticism involves the failure to be more specific about what happened and why everyone didn't flee toward the equator in any canoe or raft that might be available instead of just sitting there through the catastrophe. A better background would remove any impression that the story is just another account of hard times in Alaska or Siberia converted into science fiction.

It would be nice to conclude that Bert Chandler's explosion against careless writing will improve the situation. But I have doubt that anything will change. Even the most famous writers slip into blunders. Isaac Asimov had an article about his favourite shows in a recent issue of TV Guide, the largest-circulation periodical in the United States. In it he must have approached the recent record for the widest split of an infinitive in prose intended for a mass audience: "All my life, I have known that if every some hoodlums were to insult or molest any woman I was with, I would have to (by the laws of the tribe) challenge said hoodlums to mortal combat..." The classified advertisements in the Hagerstown newspapers have long been famous for blunders, some of which recur decade after decade even though employees are told repeatedly about them. One of the worst is the frequent appearance of wench where winch was intended in auctions of machinery or farm equipment.

Ted White is the only fan known to me who thinks other fans hold Australian fanzines in scorn. For that matter, I don't see much evidence that United States fans think of "Australian fanzines" as an entity or an special kind of fanzines. They seem to be reviewed and criticized as fanzines, not as a sub-species of fanzines. (There has been an occasional tendency to write about British fanzines or Canadian fanzines in a few United States fanzines as special cases, when the reviewer was irked by blasts from several United Kingdom fans at United States fanzines in general or the two or three Canadian fans who allege United States fanzines to be dangerous tools of Uncle Sam's imperialism which are striving to turn Canadian fanzines into helpless pawns of the bad guys just to the south of the border. I don't find even this small amount of prejudice against foreign fanzines involving those from Australia.)

Your book review section's illustrations convinced me that professional science fiction publishers have become as fond of phallic symbols on front covers as fanzine editors and artists.

The letter section has as much interest and amusement value as ever. One other fault with metric measurements is the danger of misunderstanding them because each of them sounds so much like one or two others. Foot, inch, yard and mile have radically different sounds which can't be confused like kilometer and millimeter. Meter and

liter are much closer in sound than yard and pint. As for the feminists' efforts to have the female pronouns used in Biblical references to the Deity, wouldn't it be consistent to propagandize also for change from masculine to female pronouns where the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the Devil, and other important forces of Evil are the topic? Instead, we'll probably find in an upcoming new edition of the Bible a reference to the Wizard of Endor. I hope John Alderson was 100 per cent facetious when he proposed Li'l Abner and Blondie as clues to the understanding of American society, not just 96% or 98%. But his statement does conjure up for me a vision of a science fiction story in which through some freakish chain of circumstances, one or both of those comic strips represent the only knowledge of daily life in the United States which survives into a distant future after a continental disaster and they are seized upon by learned scholars as the basis for extrapolating other facts about how 20th century Americans lived. I share your opinion of people who make decisions by flipping a coin or reading tarot cards or other superstitious tools. But I think this habit must be linked to other phenomena like the poor turnout for elections in nations where voting isn't mandatory, parents' refusal to get involved in organizations which seek to improve and advise educators in their home town, and the public's habit of watching in huge quantities any television program which has received large amounts of advance publicity: most people don't want to think for themselves, are afraid to make decisions for themselves. It seems to start in school when kids' are afraid of being considered different from everyone else and start indulging in drugs, practising shoplifting, cutting classes just because everyone else is doing it, not because they have intellectual reasons for such behavior.

Another fine pair of covers. The front one reminded me considerably of the style and theme of so many Amra illustrations. The back one is strikingly different, but I wish the face had been turned this way a trifle. No nose is visible and at first glance it looks as if the poor lady had a nose as large as mine and a very weak chin.

Roger Waddington
4 Commercial St.,
Norton, Malton,
North Yorkshire,
YO17 9ES UK.

It's maybe betraying my age by revealing that TAFF was the only method of fannish propulsion when I first came to fandom. The profusion of Funds since could maybe be linked to the growing bonds of fandom round the world or else to the effects of inflation, that there are less and less people able to make such trips out of their own resources. Certainly, this is the first - and only - reason that I'd find tenable; that, and the proviso that it should be their first trip abroad. (No, I'm not putting myself forward!)

For those outgoing, extrovert fen who get on the ballot form by persuading others that they'll be the life and the soul of whichever Con they're sent to, I'd suggest a Modest Proposal... That they should compete for funds, but to the extent of buying a one-way ticket only, so that the fen whose hosts they'll be will have the prospects of their permanent benefit... and when they begin to tire of their company, the hosts should organise another OWFF (One Way Fan Fund) to send them back. With such a system, surely it'll be easier to gather funds from fen wanting to send them off, and more so than the present struggle to get enough money to send less worthy fen abroad. Though as to naming the fen who would benefit the rest of us by going; well, I'd better leave that...

On Australian zines vs. the Rest; it seems that some of us haven't yet grasped how sf and fandom have spread, and are still thinking in terms of the American product being the only true one; and finding all else wanting. I'd say it's the fear of something different, outside experience, that leads to such criticism and - such is the power of the written word! - hoping that this'll make the unknown disappear. The only answer is education; though I remember a publication called INTERNATIONAL SF back in the late Sixties that only lasted a couple of issues. The time wasn't right then. But today - thinking particularly of the example of DAW Books - European sf is accepted where before it seemed a freak and European fandom along with it. So can the Australian variety be far behind? It's just a matter of time.

I wouldn't dare to cross swords with John Alderson on his theories, but I welcome his articles as providing a painless education in the origins of Society, whereas I might have passed such thesis-level material by, otherwise. Well, when you read something as brain-numbing as sf all the time.... Certainly it's made me think that in spite of all our proclamations of "modern" ways and morals, almost without exception they can be shown to have been done before. And the works of sf writers, in spite of their pre-occupation with the future, often betray their origins in the societies of the past. So much for the observation that the past has nothing to teach us!

Generally liked the illos, though the female warrior on the front, thanks to the lines, seems very deformed. No wonder she needs a sabre-toothed tiger by her side as further protection. Or else the lines show that she is bursting out of her body, like a chrysalis...



Glen Crawford
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Gosford 2250

Re TM 47.
Michael Hailstone
may indeed suggest
that I have been

working too hard lately, and he would be exactly right! I have in fact worked myself to the point of a nervous breakdown, and only the fact that I went off my brain at the boss and promptly got myself transferred to another store prevented my from destroying myself and my family as well. I can, however, claim no-fault on my misreading of his letter on the grounds that the word that I mistook for

'marine' was the victim of some sort of typo that made it appear to be 'marrine' rather than 'Machine'. I, in my haste, read it out of all context to the rest of the letter, and replied accordingly. I stand suitably admonished, and apologise for my lack of intelligence under those conditions. I have, by the way, solved all my work problems by tossing aside a seventeen year career in retail management, and at 35, starting a new one in real estate. I have been in the new job a whole two weeks as of tomorrow, and have so far sold a total of almost a quarter million dollars worth of homes and land, so I am feeling rather pleased with myself at present, and also more relaxed than I have been for many a long month. I have found to my pleasure that people respond favourably to an honest attempt to help, without pressure to buy, and I am getting casual lookers coming back to me as serious buyers already. My faith in human nature is restored!

Joy Hibbert
11 Rutland St.,
Hanley,
Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire ST1 5JG,
U.K.

Christianity has only become Mariology in Catholic countries. And I don't agree with many of his [John Alderson's] guidelines for matriarchy. He strikes me as the sort of idiot who only looks at the surface of the society, people who believe that footbinding etc, done by older women to girls, is done because of older women's jealousy of girls, when to reality it's done so the girl will have a husband, and thus not starve. He's also the sort of person who sees matriarchy simply as the opposite of patriarchy, in the sense that certain things are just reversed. For example, will it be polyandrous simply because our is polygynous? Implying that spouses will increase if the dominant person can afford them implying that men can be forced to marry as much as women can. It's far more likely that men will only be married off willingly, simply because men cannot generally be raped. Will a man's heirs be his wife's children? Isn't it generally established that his heirs will be his nephews? Either because the society is pre-fatherhood, or because women are polyandrous and thus a man wan't know which his children are. Also, I think it's wrong to compare the Virgin Mary with a real Goddess. 'Mariology' is practised largely in societies where a women controls her family and nothing else and is respected for faithful motherhood and nothing else. So she is worshipped as a way of keeping women 'in their place' and also because, as something less than Christ, she is more likely to have time to listed to people's prayers. John also uses silly euphemisms. What does he mean, the women 'made a harlot'? Why doesn't he say constantly raped when that is what he means. Also, in such a society there is a tendency to much sexual experimentation, thus making harlots almost useless. They are only necessary in a society where a man has to be able to afford to buy a woman in order to have sex with her. Such as ours, though things are getting looser.

"This leaves marriage open (to men at least) to very near kin". Silly. If a man is close kin to a woman, then she is close kin to him. A girl in the mother-veve can have her father, uncle for paternal cousin, for example.

"Desired to appear young" suggests that Alderson listens to those 'anthropologists' who judge other societies by our own but without knowing why things are as they are in our society. Women in our society wish to appear young because that is their livelihood. In a society where older women are respected instead of reviled, why should a woman wish to appear young? Alderson apparently believes there is something inherently more beautiful about a girlish woman.

Does Alderson believe that all goddesses, even Isis, are merely virgin-mothers? Although one of the most well known aspects of Egyptian mythology is that Isis conceived her son by reasonably natural means, ie sex. Also Isis was quite a strong character, as John says, 'the corn goddess, the discoverer of wheat and barley', not just the token woman of a male god.

It is now more commonly believed that the marriage of an Egyptian princess with her brother was not a marriage as we understand it, as he was not the father of her children. This means, in effect, that it was a fratriarchy, where a brother's position in life depended on what his sister was, and where his heirs were her children by other men. How does Alderson think the patriarchy managed to take over from the previous system? Were there male priests because male gods were gaining in power? Is this why there is so much incest in later mythology, as the brothers of Goddesses, who were lesser Gods, began to dominate their sisters through marriage?

This comment about prostitution: chaste is a matter of opinion, something for each society to decide. If a woman slept only with strangers in the temple, and with her own husband, could that not be 'chaste' by the standards of their society? It makes sense for a woman to have to give up her virginity in the temple: she would not be able to blame her husband for the pain of her first intercourse, she would not be constricted in her marriage, feeling that she had only ever had one man, and perhaps the Goddess liked the harmless sacrifice of blood. Are we to believe though, that the Babylonians worshipped only one nymphomaniac Goddess? Someone who has little or nothing to do with peoples everyday life? Someone who was neither Huntress, Corn Goddess, nor someone who helped with any other serious aspect of life?

Next he contradicts himself, claiming on page 18 that women performed female infanticide to keep their strength, while page 14 tells us that a woman needed daughters, son-in-law and grandchildren in order to be a matriarch. Also, it isn't fair to cite a religious rite as evidence of polyandry. This is like citing the Catholic habit of calling their nuns 'brides of Christ' as evidence of polygyny! Actually, claiming that female infanticide is the woman's idea, is the same as subscribing to the belief mentioned earlier, that abominations against women are always the fault of older women. A good mother is one who ensured her daughters survival by making them marriageable, ie making them the sort of women men want. In our society until recently this was done by encouraging girls to be frigid. In other societies genital mutilation and footbinding are common. Female infanticide has the effect of making the dead girl's sisters, aunts and cousins more marriageable, by reducing the number of women. What exactly is Alderson trying to show with these articles?

On to the loccol, and Alderson suggesting that old men should be allowed to rape at will, by believing a piece of mythology to the effect that they are incapable. Old men are as capable as anyone else if they keep themselves in reasonable condition and have sex as often as possible. I imagine the case was brought because a woman wished to assert her right to say 'no' - a right that Alderson clearly objects to.

I don't know whether the woman had a right to say 'no', in the society she was in. I think the point was, she didn't, and our society was foisting its beliefs onto her society. - Ron.

I imagine that the artificial light used in the time of Louis XIV wasn't very good, and since he was clearly a suspicious type, he would have insisted on the laying down position, from which you can actually see the child coming out, rather than the crouching position from which a child could be slipped slowly down behind the woman if someone actually wanted to do that. Of

course, this assumes that his reasons were to ensure that the child actually came from her. If he wanted to examine the process, or merely to feel superior to someone going through this process, or to embarrass her by his presence where men should not be, then the lying down position, which slows the process of labour and exposes more of the woman's body, would be ideal. And there's a difference, as far as I can see, between what Alderson sees as giving birth lying down to sitting up, and the modern system, which is the position animal doctors use to retard labour (eg is the mother is bearing two or more young, who have got mixed up inside). I feel that it is fairly pointless for feminists to attempt to justify more healthy positions for giving birth by saying it was done this way in the past. It is always difficult to find evidence of these things, because often the rich women did it one way, and the poor women did it another, and the rich women had male doctors who had no interest in the comfort of the woman, and poor women had midwives, who had probably been through the process themselves. It should be enough for feminists to say that given a choice only about 2% of women choose to give birth in the "dying fly" position, that natural birth is more possible in other positions, that women have stronger feelings towards their children this way, so this is the way it should be done. They should also make it clear why the "dying fly" position is used, according to the bossman of a major London hospital - for the same of the doctors. So the doctors are the important ones, the mothers are just an inconvenience.

That is an unfortunate choice of words "this is the way it should be done". If the woman wants a certain birthing position, she can seek out a doctor who allows that position. After all, you can still choose your own doctor for delivery (at least here in Australia. - Ron.)

Diane's letter - abortion is a necessary evil until we get 100% safe, undamaging contraception. Pity Ron is so narrowminded about things that science hasn't caught up with yet. Does he believe science has stopped? What will he do in the future when scientists work out how Tarot etc works? Not that I'm looking forward to such a time, Tarot etc are ok in the hands of magical people, but I prefer not to think of such powers in the hands of governments. Women, and many men, are getting justifiably worried about science run riot, which is what we have to look forward to. I can see that Ron will be one of those who say "it was necessary to nuke the world in order to save it, and only a few superstitious women objected". Women, and male feminists, wish to live, and wish their descendants to live in a reasonably society which doesn't deny spirituality. Why do you think paganism is on the upswing (but keep it quiet, we don't want religiocide committing again by frightened men).

Firstly, science hasn't "run rampant", if anything has, it is applied science - ie technology. Which I wasn't talking about. Science, incorporating the scientific method, disposed of such superstitions as the Tarot and astrology a couple of centuries ago, when the scientific method was first applied. I think most people who want children (and thus, a future) want it to be a reasonable society. However, because of the complexity of expanding populations and expanding education, that society will necessarily be much more complex. I think paganism is on the upswing because many people cannot, because of their background (both psychological and environmental) keep up with the envisaged changes. The education systems are falling down here. Thus paganism, which offers a diety, Earth mother or whatever, to 'understand' the poor confused supplicant in the late 20th Century. Because of the increase in population and the media outlets, more of this unease (future shock) is made apparent. - Ron.)

Rich'rd Faulder - keep your eye open for silly male fashions, now that the sex ratio has changed again, to show an excess of men, who will have to compete for women. There is no reason to suppose their idea of "competition" will be any less silly than ours.

I thought the sex ratio is different for different countries - for instance several years ago there were many more females in the UK to males, whilst in Australia there were more males to females. Even now, the personal columns of the newspapers are filled with courtship advertisements for females looking for males. - Ron./

Julie Vaux,
14 Zara St.,
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NSW 2068

I liked Kerries front cover for the December issue better than the back, but I think it would have printed even better if she had had most of the textural effects in the background only.

Michael Hailstone: the Epic of Gilgamesh held a central place in ancient Mesopotamian culture, much as the Aeneid and Homer's works held a central role in classical culture. Versions of the Gilgamesh story are found on cuneiform tablets in the Sumerian (a non-Indo-European race); Gilgamesh being king of Erech in Sumer. This epic was adopted and absorbed by the later Semitic cultures and other versions are found in Akkadian, also in Babylonian.

Gilgamesh is the Semitic Heracles, a mortal who becomes an immortal god of wisdom. The Semitic Heracles is the Heracles of Tyre and the Phoenicians mentioned by classical authors. Heracles the Mycenaean prince-hero and ancestor of the Heraclids who led the Dorian clans into Greece is a different character whose adventures became legends that matched the archetype of this hero.

Gail Neville
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Warragamba,
NSW 2752

There is an article in this month's Omega on William Aren's book The Man-eating Myth which Mike Hailstone may have read, or would like to read. Arens makes an excellent case for cannibalism being largely a racist concept, an opinion

I favour. Indeed the research I did for Paddo yielded only three fully documented, unarguable cases of cannibalism; the Donner Pass Incident, which is well known and needs no further comment; the Andes Plane crash, in which as recently as a few years ago members of a football team turned cannibal to survive; and that of a Tasmanian convict who ate his fellow escapee as they drifted in a small boat toward the coast of Victoria. All these cases involved so-called civilised white people driven to cannibalism in order to survive. I based my story on the two former incidents, involving the extreme cold and privation, with the truly macabre elements of the third to create, simply, a horror story. I didn't think anyone would ask why Sydney was frozen over, because I - foolishly - assumed most of you would have read the same newspapers.

As Arene points out, in 'primitive' societies, cannibals are tried and convicted. From what I could gather, in our civilization you are more likely to be jailed for having intercourse with a human corpse than for eating it.

My eyebrows rose slightly at the sub-title of John Alderson's piece - A woman dominated society (b) where the man is treated with honour. Blime! What fascinates me about these studies is that no matter what role is taken by women, it generally transpires to be the inferior one. If they are the workers and breadwinners, it is because men are too

fine and valuable to be wasted on such things; if they are denied useful remunerative work and study, it is because they are too stupid to comprehend it.

In his last paragraph John is surely confusing intellectual and sexual issues and pandering to old men's beliefs. (Perhaps he secretly yearns to belong to one of those creaky old British clubs where old men sit about puffing cigar smoke at each other, loins quivering at the mention of a demmed woman. Gad, sir!) Men and women do sap each others energy, usually in bed, or anywhere handy at the time. The intensity of sexual involvement drives every sensible thought out of most human heads, where it stays until the situation is resolved. But research workers, sports people and others of mixed sexes cannot be said to be sapping each others energy. Often there is the reverse effect, of redirected sexual energy giving intellectual energy a metaphorical shot in the arm.

I notice John makes no comment on men sapping women's energy. (Poor cows, after all those kids, we don't have any). Yet time and again, we see bright young girls who get straight As in math and 'hard' subjects until they reach puberty, when they discover that 'society' (i.e. Muscular young men) considers prowess in these fields to be unfeminine. But th admiring glances of a nubile young woman can help turn a weedy youth into an Iron Man, or an average Joe into a winner.

So whose energy is being sapped, John? And why?

: Raymond L. Clancy, Terry Jeeves (who sent an illo of a perpetual motion machine that works - it uses a dry-cell battery to charge/discharge a pith ball in a bell-jar, which bounces to and fro between the poles), and Steve Sneyd, who send the following quotation from Friedrich Wilhelm IV: "Liberalism is a disease whose first symptom is an inability to believe in conspiracies." Also Burt Libe and Boris Zavgorodry sent New Years greetings.

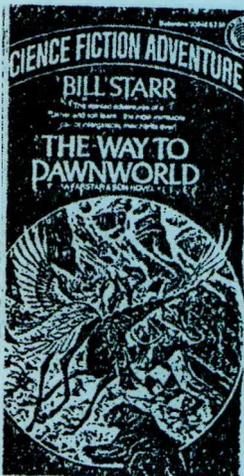
A very short issue this time . Hopefully the next one will be a little larger. This is coming out when it is so I can get enough time to get all the zines out for MEDTREK 2 in March. So far we have 167 members, so it looks like being one of the larger media cons held in Australia. Actually, most sf cons here are more media related that this MEDTREK will be - there are no films being shown, for example, whereas in most sf cons there are all-night movies.

oOo

JAN HOWARD FINDER FOR DUFF!

ON MY SELECTION -

CURRENT S.F. BOOK RELEASES



THE WAY TO DAWNWORLD by Bill Starr. Ballantine/Del Rey, dist in Aust by Doubleday (Aust) P/L. 249pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is the first in a juvenile sf series which was first published in 1975. It tells of the meeting of Dawnboy, a citizen of the Apache/Highland planet Apache Highlands, which was settled by people from earth who thought that a vigorous society with the best from the Apaches and the Scots would have a good chance of succeeding. They were right. Dawnboy was being initiated into manhood when his father, Ranger Farstar, turned up to try and persuade him to try spacing as a passtime.

This isn't too bad for the audience it is obviously aimed at. It is simple, but still a good sf adventure. It would make a good introduction to sf for someone in their late childhood.

* * *



THE TREASURE OF WONDERWHAT by Bill Starr. Ballantine/Del Rey, dist in Aust by Doubleday (Aust) P/L. 232 pp. A\$5.95. On sale now

The second in the series has the father and son business team on their second adventure. Their first had been the search for a world which it was thought the long-gone super-intelligent race of prehistory had a base on. They had managed to pick up the asteroid machine which kept the planet livable. In this adventure they are after a treasure supposedly hidden in the tail of a comet.

Starr isn't a bad writer, though he does tend to give his science and information in lectures, or talks between the two characters involved, making it a dry page or two.

* * *

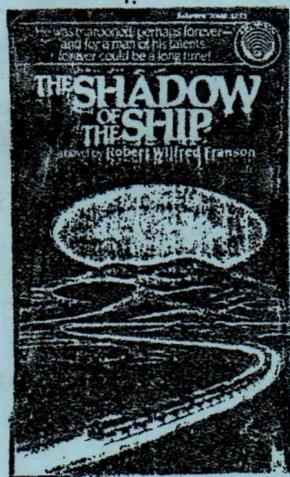


THE MENACE FROM EARTH by Robert A. Heinlein. Corgi SF, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers (Aust) P/L. 189pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

You can always tell Heinlein's short stories by the style. Many of these included in this volume were written at the height of the Cold War and the tension of the period shows. As does the author's so-called "fascism", which is really patriotism of the type more noticeable in wartime. The stories in this collection are: THE YEAR OF THE JACKPOT; BY HIS BOOTSTRAPS; COLUMBUS WAS A DOPE!; THE MENACE FROM EARTH; SKY LIFT; GOLDFISH BOWL; PROJECT NIGHTMARE; and WATER IS FOR WASHING.

These stories include one of the best time-paradox tales written, and a picture of alien intelligence that is ally alien but from earthside. If you haven't read these before -- *Recommended*.

* * *



THE SHADOW OF THE SHIP by Robert Wilfred Franson. Ballantine/Del Ray, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. P/L. 273pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

The concept that this novel is based on is one of the stranger landscapes of subspace I have ever read. The Earth culture uses starships to travel between the stars, but the culture of the Trails uses caravans drawn by giant waybeasts called squeakers, whose mental projection enables them to pull the caravans through the weird subspace landscape. If halted, and if anything fell which was outside their influence it 'fell' through into normal space - somewhere.

I can't say I thought much of this novel -- it is too laboured for an easy read and the scenes jump around too much for easy assimilation.

* * *



DRAGONWORLD by Byron Preiss & Michael Reeves, illus by Joseph Zucker. 545pp. A\$5.50. Dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers (Aust) P/L. On sale now.

This is a long novel -- 545 pages, though there are some 80 black-and-white illustrations executed exquisitely by Zucker. As I've mentioned previously fantasy stories are either good or bloody awful. This is one of the better ones, though a fantasy novel has to be really outstanding to hold my interest with all the dross these days.

DRAGONWORLD is set somewhere where the humans are still expanding through their world. Aeons before the dragons and their smaller kindred, coldrakes had lived in a more pleasant climate which changed as geographic ages passed, and they started to die out. This is a well thought out novel written with care. A good read.

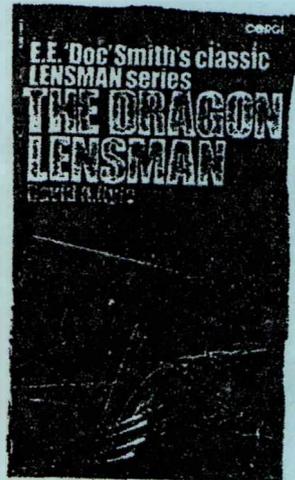


THE AFFIRMATION by Christopher Priest. Arena Books, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton Aust. 213pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

With this novel, Priest out-ballards Ballard. It is all here - the hot sticky tropical English climate, the Dream Archipelago and the bright images and madness. The protagonist is Peter Sinclair, who has just been battered with the death of his father, then loses his job, is tossed out of his flat and also loses his girlfriend. It is too much for him and he manages to get away from London for a few months to a cottage in the countryside. It is here that he begins his autobiography in an effort to understand himself.

This book won the Ditmar, which is a dead give-away that the book is speculative fiction, not science fiction. It is also an indication that it will be literate, but convoluted. It is copyright 1981, which in another indication that Australian tastes are still six years behind the rest of the world.

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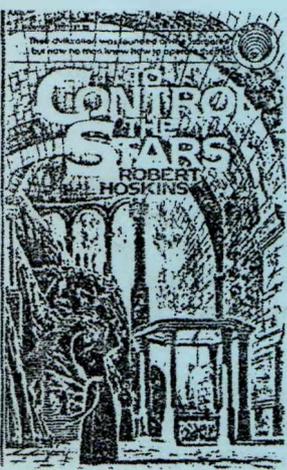
THE DRAGON LENSMAN by David Kyle. Corgi SF, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers (Aust) P/L. 176pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

This is another addition to Doc Smith's classic series by David Kyle. This time it is Worsel that gets the hero treatment as the novel follows his adventures in what starts out to be a series of blunders.

Kyle writes in a simpler vein than Smith did - I think that the market they are aiming at is the juvenile; unfortunately it is noticeable. The best juveniles are also readable by adults; books such as RITE OF PASSAGE and Heinlein's best. This book does not reach that high note.

I suppose it could take an hour or two's reading for a twelve year old.

* * *



TO CONTROL THE STARS by Robert Hoskins. Del Rey SF, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. 188pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

The civilization described in this novel is another using Stargates (apparently the Gates are now an institution, the same as hyperspace was in the fifties) which were first set up some million years before by the First Empire, when the first wave of humans spread through the Galaxy. The second expansion, starting from Earth, had reached some 5,000 worlds and one of the organisations of the Federation that 'guided' the inclusion of the newly discovered worlds into Civilization was the Society for Hominidic Studies. The original charter given to the Society was to observe the new members, but somewhere the original charter had been changed to 'guide'.

The story follows one of the newer members, Shan Eliot, as he is introduced into the organization. However, his uncle is a Director of the Society and is against the new rulers... An SF adventure.



HALF PAST HUMAN by T.J. Bass. Del Rey SF, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust P/L. 279pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This and the following novel tell the tale of the future life of humanity on Earth; governed by the Earth Society, evolving towards the four-toed Nebish, and with a population of some seventy trillions, the pressures keep mounting. One of the characters says that mankind in Nebish form will last hundreds of millions of years in the Hive cities, with his foodchain and the machines serving him.

HALF PAST HUMAN tells of the last of the groups of five-toed humans and the attempts to eke a living out of the leavings of the Hive society. And the legends of OLGA and the dreams of freedom. *Recommended* - though would have been better with less of those medical terms.

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THE GODWHALE by T. J. Bass. Del Rey SF, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust P/L. 282pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

The sequel to the above. The characters are different and the events take place some time after those of the first novel. Some of the five-toed humans left behind have mated and their population has risen as they spread over the sea bed. Then their prayers are answered and what turns out to be a returning starship seeds Earth's oceans with protoplasm which evolves very quickly to the higher forms. The five-toes move onto the islands which are still not Hive saturated and spread over the surface.

When the seas bring forth life again the Hive tries to move out and harvest it. They come into conflict with the cyborg harvester the Rorqual Maru, which was a base for the five-toes. *Recommended*.

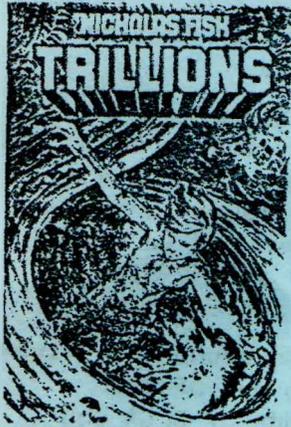
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THE NAGASAKI VECTOR by L. Neil Smith. Del Rey SF, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust P/L. 242pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Another time travel police story, but with a difference. The Academy is an organisation that polices the time lanes in an attempt to keep historical changes down to a minimum. Capt. Bernard Gruenblum was in charge of a survey team which was more than it was supposed to be. They were criminals who decided to obtain the use of the timecraft that he was in charge of and make off to bring their (political) aims to fruition.

Unfortunately the craft, when out of control, ran into the aftereffects of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and this threw their plans way off. Into a parallen universe, in fact. Then they tried to make off with the timecraft again. I didn't think much of this one - skimmed the last third.





TRILLIONS by Nicholas Fisk. Puffin Books, dist in Aust by Penguin Aust Ltd. 119pp. A\$2.95. On sale now.

The Trillions of the title are almost microscopic particles that fall from Earth's skies one day. They fall first on the town of Harbourtown West and they laid like sand or snow in drifts and covered almost all surfaces with their coloured crystal faces. It was the children who first named them Trillions - there were so many of them. It is the children that the novel follows as it details the efforts of the scientists and military to find out just what they were. In the end it was one of the children who found the answer to them.

Though this is a children's book it is very well written and is also good enough for adults. The plot is a little crammed near the end, but well worth the \$2.95 price tag for those children lucky enough to get it bought for them.

* * *

PRISONERS OF POWER by A. & B. Strugatsky. Penguin SF, dist in Aust by Penguin (Aust) Ttd. 316pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

This is a translation from the Russian by Helen Jacobson, and it has a forward by Ted Sturgeon. As are a lot of the Soviet SF stories translated into English, politics is part of the plot and a main part at that.

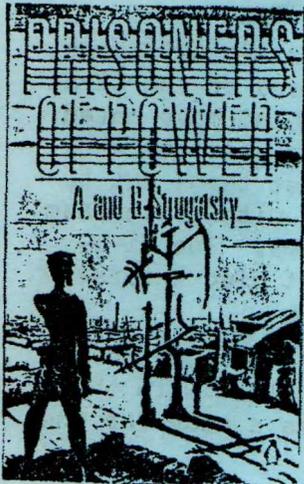
The story concerns an earth exploration ship pilot who manages to have his ship destroyed by the superstitious natives of a planet almost as soon as he steps out of it. He finds himself engaged in a war between two super-powers and he is horrified to find that he has almost no chance of escape from the planet.

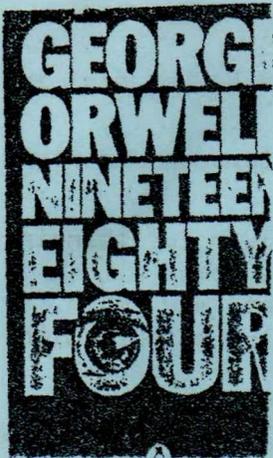
I find, reading these translations, that they seem to place a distance from the reader. I don't know if it is the fault of the translator, or the Russian style. I find it from the 19th century authors right down to these two.

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Stories Of The Future: CONSTELLATIONS, edited by Malcolm Edwards. Penguin SF, dist in Aust by Penguin (Aust) Ltd. 175pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

This is a collection of some of the best sf from the last thirty odd years. They range from the 1951 Leiber A PAIL OF AIR (still excellent) through to the 1975 Kilworth LET'S GO TO GOLGOTHA! The full list is: LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS by Bob Shaw; A PAIL OF AIR by Fritz Leiber; BEYOND LIES THE WUB by Philip K Dick; LET'S GO TO GOLGOTHA! by Garry Kilworth; OF MIST, AND GRASS, AND SAND by Vonda McIntyre; HARRISON BERGERON by Kurt Vonnegut Jr; RESCUE OPERATION by Harry Harrison; IT'S A good LIFE by Gerome Bixby; MISTER DA V by Kit Reed; BILLENNIUM by J G BALLARD; THE STORE OF THE WORLDS by Robert Sheckley; and THE WIND FROM THE SUN by Arthur C Clarke. Excellent reading.





1984 by George Orwell. Penguin SF, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust Ltd. 268pp incl Appendix. A\$4.95. On sale now.

This is, of course, the book of the Year. It has been constantly in print since 1949. How come I haven't read it till now? The concepts of Newspeak & Doublethink are part of the world'd folklaw, and the image of Big Brother is that generated by the totalitarian state.

Winston Smith's fight for the little piece of freedom, which he knows he must looe because of the nature of things, is the fight of humanity for a freer and better life. It is interesting to note that some of the concepts that both Orwell and Huxley (in BRAVE NEW WORLD) thought grotesque are now part of the world scene. Conception outside the body is now a medical fact and the bottle raising is forecast for the near future. The creches also exist - brought about by the rise of inflation and feminism. The everpresent TV screens only need the feedback facility - or it it here already?

* * *

STARTIDE RISING by David Brin. Bantam Books, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers (Aust) P/L. 462pp. A\$4.50. On sale now.

This is one large pb. Brin has broken the novel up into discrete sections (chapters) with each character having a chapter to him/herself/itself, though the others also feature also. I found this, though it did break up the action somewhat, made the curiosity re finding out what happened to that character more intense.

The story follows the fleeing Terran exploration ship Streaker as it tries to shake off the various bands of ETs which are rying to ascertain the whereabouts of a fleet of ancient starships so they can greet the Progenators, the first Galactic race, which disappeared some two billion years before, and which started the practise of Uplifting races into sapiency (something like the monolith in 2001). An interesting novel, especially if you like dolphins.

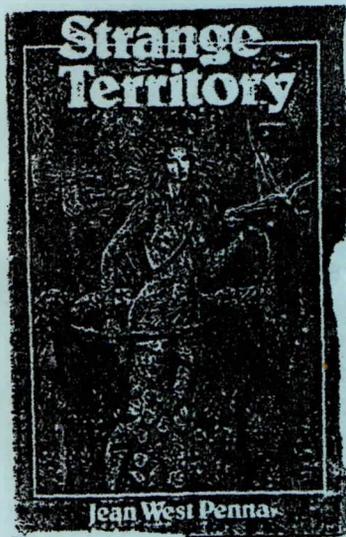
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SUNDIVER by David Brin, Bantam Books, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers (Aust) P/L. 340pp. A\$4.50. On sale now.

Another large book by Brin. This is set in the same universe as STARTIDE RISING, but earlier. Actually this is Brin's first book - I am just reviewing it second.

In the time of this novel, the branch Library of the Galactics has recently opened and their help, along with those of several ETs and Jacob Demwa, is sought. A deep diving team into the Sun has found what could be intelligent life there. Demwa is an expert on dolphins - he is engaged in their uplift. Since the novel is set before STARTIDE, the antagonistic faults of the majority of the ETs is not known. This novel begins to show thier faults and the pressures brought by the branch Library in the exploration of the Sun. Hard-core SF.

* * *



STRANGE TERRITORY by Jean West Penna. Walrus Books, dist in Doubleday Aust. 216pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is a straight forward novel of shipwreck and fight for survival on an alien world.

Looking at the cover one might be forgiven for thinking this to be a fantasy novel -- a young nubile woman with a wisp of transparent fabric around her breasts and loins clutches a bow in one hand and strokes a blue unicorn with the other. The novel, however, is pure sf. If a reader wanted to read a good sf story with a romantic element running through it, when all comes out well in the end, they will like this book.

I found it interesting and written in a clear style and it kept my interest throughout.

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THE HORSE LORD by Peter Morwood. Century Publishing, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. 254pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

As I keep on mentioning, most fantasy these days is rubbish, written in cliched form with the same worn plots and pedestrian writing that does not liven them up. This novel is one of those at the top of the form, however.

When Aldric set off for an assignation he did not dream when he returned that his world would be shattered and that his future life would be bound up with vengeance. He found his father's castle empty and his father dying, a spear pinning him to his throne.

Wizards, both black and white (though they are not called that), vie for supremacy as young Aldric fights for his life.

* * *



WORLD-EATER by Robert Swindells. Knight Books, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 104pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

This is one for the younger generation.

The hero is Orville Copperstone, who raised pigeons in his spare time. The outside world intruded in his private world when a new planet was discovered "orbiting the sun at a distance of seventy-eight million kilometres ... First estimates of the objects size is about two-hundred-and-fourty kolometres in diameter".

The strange thing about this object is that it has a thin crust and a liquid interior -- and Orville suddenly is struck with a horrible thought. The trouble is, how can he convince people of what he believes to be true?

* * *

JOHN GORDON

The Edge of the World



THE EDGE OF THE WORLD by John Gordon. Patrick Hardy, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group (Aust) p $\frac{1}{2}$ l. H/C. 186pp. A\$13.95. On sale now.

This is another children's book - as are those following. There are all sorts of happenings in this story - a sighting of a ghost by Tekker Begdale to the World War I aviator and his strange house with the aeroplane propeller across the ceiling.

I think children of about ten will find this book very good, as it keeps the action going from one scene to another without much respite..

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DRAGONFALL 5 And The Master Mind by Brian Earnshaw. Magnet Pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 175pp. A\$3.96. On sale now.

DRAGONFALL 5 And The Super Horse by Brian Earnshaw. Magnet Pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 148pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

These two are part of a continuing series by Earnshaw. The main characters are the family aboard the ancient starship Dragonfall 5 - Big Mother, Old Elais, Tim, Sanchez, Minims and Jerk.

In this first adventure they land on a planet of giant hares, where trouble is brewing when the computer governing the snow planet seems up to dirty tricks.

"... The Super Horse" concerns that old starship again, when they land on a planet of wild horses, active volcanoes and violent electric storms. This is the sixth book in the series.

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STARSTORMERS - SUNBURST 2 by Nicholas Fisk. Knight Books, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 126pp. A\$3.95. On sale now

This is another series with a starship as the means of gallivanting around the galaxy. In this case the Starstormer is built by a gang of kids who are left in a boarding house while their parents go to a planet to start to colonise it.

In an earlier novel they almost reached it, but were taken by an ancient colonising ship, and just managed to escape in time. This novel continues straight on from that point.

In this 'chapter' they come across an abandoned starship, apparently from earth which signals that it is a plague ship. However they must board it to obtain additional equipment for their journey.

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ACE DRAGON LTD

RUSSELL HOBAN
Illustrated by
QUENTIN BLAKE



ACE DRAGON LTD by Russell Hoban, illus by Quentin Blake. Magnet Books, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 38pp in colour. A\$3.95. On sale now.

This is a book for those aged from about six to eight.

John was walking down the street one day when he saw a manhole cover with "Ace Dragon Ltd" inscribed in it. He knocked and a dragon answered. It was a peculiar looking dragon, with wellington boots on its feet. The, for some unstated reason (probably because what else are dragons useful for) they got set to fight.

They fought all over the vacant lot and well into the afternoon. As to who won - I'll leave that up to you.

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THE COMPLETE BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY LISTS, compiled by Maxim Jakubowski & Malcolm Edwards. A Granada Book, dist by Granada Publishing (Aust) P/L. 350pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

It is amazing what you can have published in sf and f these days. I suppose someone wants this kind of fluff - if you are a gung ho young fan you might buy it to impress your friends, or in the heat of the moment (before you gaffiated).

There are some 343 pages of various lists, with headings such as "Four Books full of SF In-Jokes" and "Twelve SF Novels In Prehistoric Times" - probably with a newspaper dated 10 million BC.

Also included are the Hugo results over all those years. Unfortunately there is no index or contents page. Also the binding of the book leaves something to be desired - when the pages were cut they were cut too close to the top of the page, leaving the bottom of the page with a lot more space than needed.

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2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY by Arthur C. Clarke. Arrow Pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 229pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

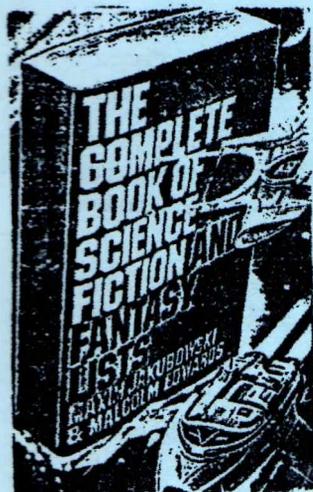
2010 ODYSSEY TWO by Arthur C. Clarke. Granada Pb, dist in Aust by Granada Publishing Aust P/L. 297pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

The re-issue of 2001 plus its sequel 2010 issued at the same time! If you missed them the first time around in H/C, then this is the time to get them.

The story of the black monolith is now a part of the image of alien presence, made manifest through the advent of the motion picture and TV and the strains of Thus Sprake Zarathrustra is now known by almost everyone.

I thought that the continued story, when read by itself, was not as co-herant as when read in conjunction with the first part of the story in 2001. So read them together as close in time as possible.

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OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

HUTCHINSON: BEST SF OF THE YEAR 12 - Carr.
STEPS OF THE SUN -- Tevis.
SUPERLUMINAL - McIntyre.
RINGWORLD - Niven.
DR WHO: SNAKEDANCE - Dicks.
DR WHO: ENLIGHTENMENT - Legg.
PROGRAMME GUIDE: BLAKES 7 - Tony Attwood.
STAR TREK SHORT STORIES - Rotsler.

PAN: MAJIPOOR CHRONICLES - Silverberg.

DOUBLEDAY: THE ELVES & THE OTTERS KIN - Boerr.
THE SOURCE OF MAGIC - Anthony.
MERLIN'S GOODSON - Munn.
MERLIN'S RING - Munn.
A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON - Anthony.

TRANSWORLD: THE RIGHT STUFF - Wolfe.
THE SEREN CENACLES - Norwood.
FATA MORGANA - Kotzwinkle.
PAWN OF PROPHECY - Eddings.
WE - Zamyatin.

SPHERE: AMTRACK WARS - Tilley.
CHILLER -- Sale
KEEPERS OF THE SECRET - Farmer.

PENGUIN: ROBOT REVOLT - Fisk.
TITUS GROAN - Peake.
GORMENGHAST - Peake.
TITUS ALONE - Peake.
STARGATE - Gedge.
FUTURETRACK 5 - Westall.

HODDER: PSION - Vinge.
HADEN OF ANCIENT OPAR - Farmer.
FLIGHT TO OPAR - Farmer.
THE DARK CRYSTAL - Smith.
STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN -- McIntyre.
THE PRIDE OF CHANUR - Cherryh.
THE MAN WHO JAPED - Dick.
THE SIMULACRA - Dick.
THE GOLDEN MAN - Kick.
STAR TREK SHORT STORIES - Rotsler.
PRINCE OF THE GOOBORN - Harris.
THE WAR HOUND AND THE WORLD'S PAIN - Moorcock.

MARCH RELEASES:

HUTCHINSON: A THEATRE OF TIMESMITHS

APRIL RELEASES:

HUTCHINSON: DR WHO & THE DOMINATORS - Marter.

MEDTREK 84 - PROGRAMME

For those fans interested, below are some of the highlights of the upcoming convention MEDTREK 84, being held March 9 - 11 at the Shore Motel, Artarmon. Attending membership is \$35 for the weekend, for \$20 for the one day, Children under 14 are \$15.

FRIDAY NIGHT: 8.30 pm Panel - "Pornography in Fan Fiction", or "They would if they could, but they can't so they don't."

9.30 pm - Bjo Trimble's film.

SATURDAY: 9.00 am Registration opens/Models, Arts & Crafts & Huxters open/Master Mind written test.

10.00 am - GOH's speeches.

11.10 am - DR WHO talk by Paul Kennedy.

1.00 pm - Auction Part I - conducted by S. McCormack.

1.30 pm - "The worlds they left behind" - Gay Williams.

2.10 pm - "Writing for fanzines" Panel - N White, S Clarke, S B. & N. Harris.

3. pm - "How to wound your hero convincingly" by M Weber.

4.30 pm - Transfinite show.

6. pm Banquet and National Awards.

8.45 pm - Costume Parade.

SUNDAY: 8.30 am - Voting closes.

10 am - Auction, part II.

- "The book of the film" or "The literary merits, or lack of, media transcriptions" panel.

11 am - "World Makers" panel.

1.30 pm - Slides - "Aliens in Star Trek".

4.10 pm - "Costuming" - Bjo Trimble.

5.20 pm - "Fiddlers on the Run" - Blake's 7 musical.
- Fanzine publishers panel.

7.50 pm - Repeat Grover from Uncle film.

8. pm - Closing ceremony.

As you can see it is a pretty full programme, with multi-strand programming. One of the most interesting sessions is the Business session at 6.30 pm on Sunday, when the future Natcons will be discussed and the next years con site chosen.