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THE MENTOR

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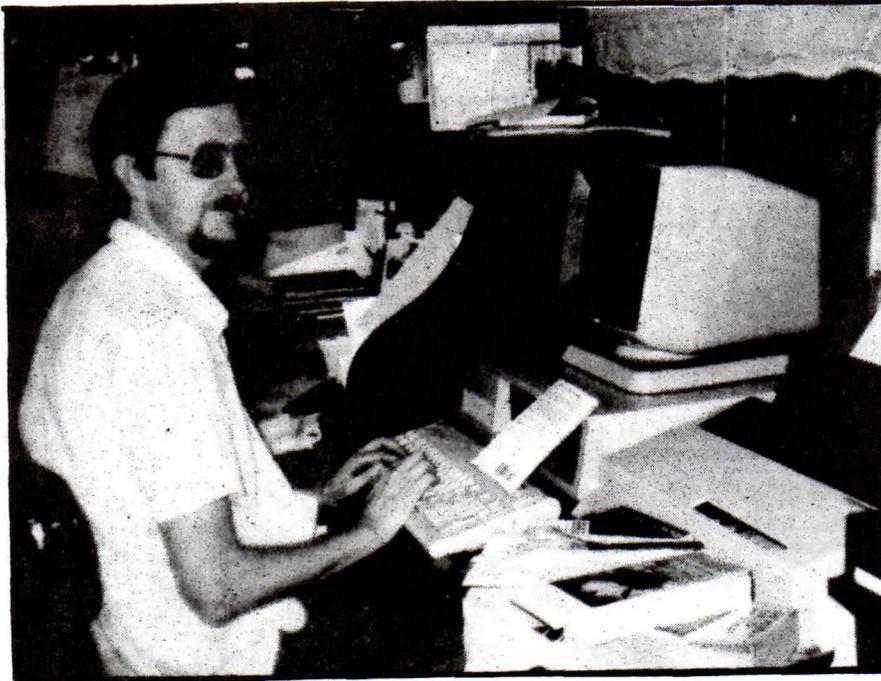
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At the moment I am ultra short of good artwork, both for covers and interiors. Preferably line drawings, though I can get them screened.

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CLARKIE'S COMMENTS

1988 has been and gone. It was a busy year with many things happening, which is one of the reasons why there was only three issues of THE MENTOR out then. They were the January, March and April issues. After April things became busy with the family and work pressures.

SYDNEY IN '91 took up time and energy. Sue was helping edit DOWN UNDER PRESS for them and keeping the membership lists up to date and I was printing it and working out and keeping up to date the treasury (what there was of it). There were many people supporting the Sydney bid, both in Australia and overseas and both Sue and I would like to thank them personally.

Because of the bid, Sue has managed to make it overseas at last - she has been trying, through fan funds, since 1975, but nowadays it does not matter that you can't afford to go overseas - it matters that you promote yourself with a high profile, even if you only publish one or two issues of a fanzine.

In this issue is her trip report. Published three months after she came back, it is probably some sort of record. She has more material in her diary, but this section is large enough for this issue. Sue left for a month in the USA with a ticket from Qantas and \$100 spending money. It was all we were able to afford.

Back at home I had a month recreation leave so I could look after the kids. Luckily three of them were at school, so I only had one three year old to look after, and he nearly looks after himself. A month may seem like a long time, but there were dozens of odd jobs about the house to do - rubbing off the white paint spots from the stained staircase was one of them - a job I had been putting off for six months. I had the kitchen ceiling to paint - a year or so before Sue spilled some oil onto the electric stove coil and it caught alight, sending flames up the wall. She managed to grab the extinguisher and put it out, but there were black smoke particles up the wall and on the ceiling.

That month was a wipeout for relaxing, though I had planned to do some reading I didn't get around to doing any. Which is why the Review Supplement enclosed with the Australian issues of TM 62 cover seven months of reviews.

Claudio Noguero of Argentina wrote that he had heard that I had printed a history of Australian fandom and would I be interested in printing one of South American fandom. Late in December I received the photocopied history and pages of photos and book covers he had sent six months previously. It looks as though I will have to do both the reprinted Australian History and the South American History. How many fans are interested in them? - Ron.

NOLA CON — A BRIEF ACCOUNT

VIA THE DIARY OF SUSAN CLARKE

PREFACE:

I suppose this should be called - "How I got involved with Sydney in '91" - as that's how I got to go to America, my first trip overseas (see the hopeful tone of that statement). It was a working trip for me - at least until New Orleans - and I hope that supporters of the Sydney Bid were not disappointed in our presence in New Orleans. We tried to make as good an impression of fandom in Australia, and our beautiful Sydney, as we could make. We had backdrops designed and donated by the Sydney Tourist Bureau, pamphlets about Sydney, the Bid, donated material to sell to help pay for the cost of the Bid, t-shirts designed and printed by Michael McGann and koala bears. So many people helped with the Bid. Kevin MacLean and Greg Rickards laid the foundations of support in Brighton the year before and because so many people had supported us - from the many clubs in Australia in fund-raising, to those who put out their money, time and effort in support, that we felt rather strongly about carrying through with the bid even after The Hague had won last year.

The selection of the two representatives who would be sponsored by Qantas and American Airlines was done by vote from the committee and interested people. We had to put forward our own qualifications for going and the voting was done more than once when we all got the same number of votes. It wasn't easy, for any of us.

Somehow, Wil and I ended up as going - but we were the newest members of the committee (except for Ron) and perhaps the less deserving in that we had not been there from the beginning and fought through the rigmarole of incorporation, setting up, negotiating with Darling Harbour and the Opera House. Despite all, I still think that there could not be a more ideal and beautiful venue than Darling Harbour. I hope to see the Worldcon there eventually.

Burn-out was heavily in evidence with some of the committee members. My biggest regret about New Orleans was not having the wisdom of Kevin MacLean at least there.

I'd joined '91 in a fit of post-convention depression. It is always hard to run a national convention and then go back to suburban mediocrity and I found myself subject to this rather badly after the last National Media Convention that I had run. I'll point out here that most Nat Media Cons in Australia have about double the numbers of attendees than Natcons normally which is a pittance compared to some US conventions, I know, but more than enough for us to handle. But that's another topic altogether...

I took on the task of fund-raising and addressing groups of would-be supporters and did an almighty lot of travelling in the end on that. At one stage, when Gary Makin was bogged down in his studies, I even offered to type up the Down Under Press magazines. I kept address lists up-to-date and encouraged people to write to o/s fans about the bid. Officially, I was the co-chairperson, but this, I found, was to

satisfy various government regulations rather than to have any influence on the committee.

'91 gave me the chance to get back into mainstream after being involved almost totally in media fandom for many years. I think people in Australia forgot that I had run a NatCon, the Sydney SF Foundation for a few years and edited their magazine. And media fandom, in Australia, is unfortunately, still being treated like Mainstream's poorer and backward young relative, despite the efforts of people like Jack Herman and Cathy McDonald. There's little or no split overseas in the fandoms --- we've got some growing up to do over here, I think.

In many way, I personally am glad we didn't get the bid. Not so much because of the amount of work that would have been involved, but because we weren't ready for a Worldcon then. The other members of the committee would probably not agree with this, especially when people like Karen Roe, Sarah Murray-White, Brigid Mullane and Graeme Batho had put so much time into the bid during the course of their association with it, but we had to use this time as a learning experience. Next time, we'll know how to mount the bid more professionally. Take notice of people like Shayne McCormack and Ken Ozanne and their experiences at previous bids. No, this time was the learning, next time, we'll be a force to contend with, properly.

Sydney really is a city that could host one hell of a great worldcon.

THE TRIP...

26TH AUGUST

2030 - Sydney

Just a few minutes before we board - boarding passes inspected and we wait in a people-yard reminiscent of the cattle yards awaiting movement.

From the frantic rush of the day, the frustration of not being able to leave my house orderly and clean, the work up to date, the drive down in a jewel of a night - black and velvety, the sky like an array of perfect jewels - how much the night hides! It was quiet, as if no words dare pass between us.

A numbness pervaded. Where was the excitement this adventure should have generated?

From Brighton-le-Sands, the sea lit a silver passage with moonlight and the airport was a slim necklet of lights.

I wish Ron and the children were here.

Once past the immigration doors, it becomes another world.

Its fascinating to watch the people waiting - impatiently, laconically, happily, whimsically, some sad. |I'm still awaiting the excitement to descend.

Oh, we have a stop - honolulu - that should be exciting - if I can see anything. Because we were so late arriving all the non-smoking and window seats have gone.

We shall see.

I wonder what the movie will be.

I wonder if I'll do anything constructive on the flight.

I wonder what the flight shall be like.

At least I have my slippers in my cabin luggage. And my books. And my sewing. And my writing pad. And my life savers. I think I'll need them.

They're boarding now.

2145 - Sydney time

Well, we're away at least - my left ear keeps popping and when my seat neighbours go to sleep, then I'll slip off my shoes and relax somewhat. Still a little early for me to kip down to sleep, but soon - I've got to catch up on that sleep I've not been getting of late!

I'm watching a fascinating audio-visual display (without the audio) on where the plane is and boy, is it moving fast. We're 25,000 feet in the air - past Gosford/Palm Beach - I should have waved to Mum & Dad 164 miles away already.

Susan Bellinger, Joanne, Karen, Ace & baby Gene and Ruth Collerson came to see me off. Of course Ron was there too.

Joanne bore musk life savers and Sue some towelletters. Everyone's been kind and so generous - without rancor that I'm making this trip.

The take-off sensation was like an elephant leaping with all his might and we, the hapless burden.

Hence the name Jumbo Jet, I suppose.

27TH AUGUST

0500 - Sydney time

Another day begins of life on board a jet travelling across the world. Truly remarkable when you think of it. Early pioneers thought their 'hops' across the Pacific were a breakthrough and yet, each day, jets like this disregard the need to refuel on long journeys. The stewards and stewardesses (there seems to be more men at this job - at least on this plane - which amazed me - female chauvinist that I am) seem inexhaustible. I just hope they slept as well whilst we napped.

Literally napped.

They served pre-dinner drinks at 2300 - I wisely stuck to cordial and took my tablets. Dinner was at 2400 exactly

I had seafood cocktail, fillet of beef smitaine served with a sour cream and chive sauce, and mango mousse. I was absolutely stuffed.

But then, heaven knows when I will eat this well again so I'm not complaining.

A movie - Little Nikita with Sidney Poitier - was shown at 0100, but I kept drifting in and out of sleep. I did wake briefly when it finished - no noise in my ears via the headphones. All was quiet (relatively) and dark, then the sun - we were galloping to meet it, of course - made the shades glow orange. My seat mates are still sleep - I may try and doze before we get to Honolulu. I've been good and filled in all my customs and immigration forms.

Outside the sea is a blue-grey wash as far as you can see - no pun intended.

Breakfast time.

26TH AUGUST (again!)

1030 - Honolulu time

A half hour break from the plane in Honolulu. It's hot and humid here and once again we've gathered in a people-yard, but this one has huge walls of windows and window seats although the scene must be typical of anywhere in the world - planes coming and going and ground vehicles dashing back and forth like ants in the sun.

This will tickle the girls back home - they were paging "Mr. Simon". Yep, Mr. Richard Simon" when we arrived - I almost expected him and AJ and Magnum to be walking up the concourse - and Higgins too, of course.

And people do wear Hawaiian shirts - bright, happy ones.

27TH AUGUST

0810 Sydney time

Back to Sydney time until I reach L.A. Hey, I really set foot on foreign soil even if it was only for a half an hour.

Four hours according to our computer graphics to Los Angeles.

The airport was surrounded by a fringe of palm trees and trees thick and spread like Morten Bay figs, but bright green and luxurious foliage with brilliant pink flowers to crown them.

Honolulu hugs the sea and is fronted by an immense aquamarine lagoon. The mountains are black - not like our gentle blue ones. Jagged extrusions invading the clear, brilliant blue sky. When we rose into the air again, I realised they were volcano craters. And yet houses climb their bases ---

We passed over Diamond Head and Waikiki Beach and the waves were large and amazingly, we saw a huge school of dolphins!

Whoops, nearly forgot! They had paper disposable toilet seats at the airport!

1210 - Sydney time

One of my seat companions tells me its only ten minutes or so now before we reach the coast. Now I'm excited and frightened all at once. Almost there. My hearts pounding.

Just got to take each hurdle one at a time.

The sun's low outside and no longer shines silver off the wings, making them dark grey. According to the computer graphics, we're 28 minutes to go. It feels like a countdown.

26TH AUGUST

Los Angeles - 2303

Finally caught up with US time - did it just as we were landing.

Lord, my head hurts.

27TH AUGUST

Los Angeles - 0612

The Muppet Show's on and my migral and mersindol have worn off. I'm just waiting for the next lot to take effect although I'll be tired and with a hangover all day. Here's hoping it doesn't happen like that.

Last night, the excitement and fear finally got to me..I'm still shaking with palpitations and nausea.

It took an awful long time to get through immigration and customs and then they really didn't check a thing.

The customs hall was a large theatre-high place with enormous US flags hanging from the ceiling. The Immigration lady was friendly. The line was two hours long.

From the air, L.A. looked like an immense grid of green and yellow lights, broken only momentarily by a mountain range, then it continued on, and on. The smog was like a fog or haze from the land.

Lifting the boxes of promotional material for Sydney in '91 from the carousels was no fun, especially when it cost \$1.1 to use the trolley.

Everywhere there were steep ramps so it took a lot of effort and time to get out of the Customs Hall.

But Bjo, John & Kathryn Trimble were there waiting for me which was great. Kathryn looked trim and well - she'd lost a great deal of weight since the last time I saw her last year.

And we headed straight for home.

The koala suit and other boxes haven't arrived yet, so I'll have to start tracking it down today.

I was so tired last night.

I saw my first real-life limo with their boomerang shaped television aerials on the back - in fact, I saw a whole car park of them. It just didn't seem real.

Just as well I was so tired though, as I was sitting in the front of the great wide car of Bjo & John's 2 going around a corner for the first time - it was an incredible sensation. I wonder how long it will take to adjust to the driving. I really empathise with my US visitors and from now on they ride in the back and sleep!

696 S. Bronson 3 is built on mammoth proportions compared to our little Aussie bungalow - at least, the downstairs and the bath upstairs are. As if it should belong in a manor house, or something at least that grand.

It is also sold.

I slept the night on a fold-out sofa in the lounge room. A big bay window reveals a street of similiar sized houses.

I really do feel like a stranger in a strange land.

There are an assortment of animals here - a huge, mammoth (like the house) golden retriever called Corey, two long-haired but stringy boy cats who don't meow, a shy great tabby called Heidi and a cross basenji called Princess - but I've only heard her so far.

1150

Just back from a little drive down to Super Yarn Mart where embroidery cloth and cottons are very cheap. I picked up a small cross-stitch pack for Evelyn for her stocking at Christmas. We went down Wiltshire Boulevard and past the home of some well-known people and Julie Avenue (which has the most expensive houses here), past the poorly looking Hollywood palms (yes, down Hollywood Boulevard too!) and the famous California bungalows built when the Hollywood scene was just beginning.

All the houses are unique - deliberately individual - from castles to tudor manor houses.

2250

We even went past the house where "Willard" lived with his rat friends and whose interiors were used in the Adams Family and more.

We went out shopping some more after lunch and I got some coloured aidar over which most craft & needlework shops in Australia just look askance at you. Also, some truly fine weave for pettipoint which is my favourite.

My headache continued - even stronger than before with the persistent nausea. All I can think of is the tension is finally getting to me - or the smog and heat.

I am doing my best not to be a guest who needs entertaining - I just don't think I am succeeding at all. I keep to my embroideries whenever possible. It's soothing.

It's Kathryn's birthday today and they had a party for her in Pasadena and delivered her there in a sparkling white limo. What an experience! The driver, Gloria, was a brilliant-smiled negro lady with a sense of humour who told us about her job and the limo - carpeted & comfortable - with its drinks, moon roof, mood lighting, cassettes and so much more. Just watching the faces as we drove by was entertaining!

28TH AUGUST

2322

Wow! What a day! I'd so tired and so wide awake, so I'll do this entry for as long as I can. I'm hoping that at least some of the dozens of photos I took today came out. I want to share this with my family and friends.

My headache is finally shifting which is a relief. It came at a good time although my throat and eyes are sore today after a day out in the extremely dense smog. In fact, it was so visible that the neighbours yard was hazy as I sat at the refractory table, writing to Joanne. 4

John made hot waffles for breakfast which were great and I think my depression was lifting at last, but probably not for long! There's a lot of work ahead with the Sydney in '91 Bid.

Jennifer and Lora are flat-hunting at the moment as they intend to stay in California when Bjo, John and Kathryn move to Houston.

Jennifer, their adopted daughter has beautiful, pale golden skin and short, straight blonde hair and is of amazonian dimensions - friendly and ready to talk. Lora looks like her father with her long, golden blonde hair and talented with a wit-sharpened tongue. They get on well together.

Anyway, they all went off today, so Kathryn and I went to Universal Studios. It was very hot and as this was school vacation and Sunday, it was crowded with people like me from all over the world and it was bright and summer and hot.

Once in, we passed through Baker Street where the celluloid Sherlock Holmes once resided long ago. The amazing thing though is where you often think there is brick and cement, there is actually compressed and molded foam.

We went on the tram tour of the backlots, with explanations all the way along - watching the technical effects and having them explained - but still, the magic is still there. Mind you, it helped that the adrenaline (already at a high level through just the fact that was I was here and not still at home, typing up fanzines) was really pumping hard after a confrontation with the Phantom of the Opera, who tapped me on my shoulder whilst standing outside the tram. I swear I screamed. He was literally only inches away and face-to-face, and quite frankly, it was not a pretty face that his mother would have been proud of.

We wound our way up and down the hillside and through the backlot streets. So many familiar scenes greeted us - ones we've seen in "Simon & Simon" and "Back To The Future" and different Alfred Hitchcock movies and so much more. Francis the talking mule's barn and the delorian from "Back To The Future"; the house from "Psycho" and so very much more. I want to go back again some day and experience it all again and see the things I barely glanced at the first time around.

Our first adventure was to be captured by the Cylons and our tram was escorted aboard their space craft, but Captain Apollo came to our rescue amidst a blaze of laser lights and special effects.

From there it got even better.

The memories are beginning to feel like a kaleidoscope of brilliant scenes.

The Star Trek Adventure had me frankly envious - wanting to be in it as well - and a black satin and silver and gold embroidered ST jacket incited me to immense temptation for a while - but I really enjoyed the rest, so not to worry. Juggling money and going without it is okay. It's normal.

Conan was real lust value. The set was straight from sword and sorcery and the gleaming muscles of the actors and actress was something else. I even had my photo taken with the villain who was wonderfully obliging.

The Cowboy Stunt Show was funny and I yelped and reacted in all the right places. That's the trouble with empathy.

The Miami Vice Show could have been improved with some microphones although as the show continued with explosives and fires and water combining the action and spectacular fireworks/pyrotechnics to give it its proper name. We literally gave up our day with a bang.

MONDAY, 29TH AUGUST

I made myself a note to insert the giant green koala caper about here as this was when it happened.

When I arrived, there were no boxes awaiting me. The trouble we had taken to get them prepared and here on time and there was no sign of them. Arriving late on the Friday and the Qantas Cargo Offices not being open until the Monday was a frustration that I tried to forget as much as possible.

There were three boxes that had gone astray: one of printing, our backdrop material and Gary Armstrong's martian koala costume. The printing I could describe to the girl on the other end of the phone, however the carefully neutral tones as she slowly enunciated in her soft Californian accent: "a giant green koala suit. Yes, ma'am, we'll check for that."

"Oh," I added, anxious to see our suit again. "With antennae."

"Of course," she came back smartly and suddenly her laughter filled the line. It was funny, I suppose, only it hadn't occurred to me whilst I was so worried at the time.

She promised to do her best for us, between chuckles and with an obvious effort at a business-like sobriety. And did, as they arrived in New Orleans safely - just in time - thank heaven.

Today I went to Hollywood and Vine and did the promenade, photographing the stars in the pavement and fitting my footprints to the best of them.

No photos could do justice to the extraordinary beauty of the Mann Theatre - it was larger than life in the brilliant colours of red, green and gold, and is being used daily as an ordinary theatre, so, unlike a great part of Hollywood, it's still alive, still with its touch of magic although the tawdriness of the area could slip in. Security is frightening. Guns for heavens sake! Yet, all security people seem to wear guns around here!)

Hollywood, the town, is seedier and dirtier than Sydney - the smell in places is truly horrible, like an open sewer in the main streets.

Of course, I didn't see it all. Tried to but time seemed to run out and the sun made an inconvenient exit, welcoming the night-life from out of the shadows and that was frightening for a country girl like myself. Halfway down Vine, we had dinner at a MacDonald's-like Chicken place where I sampled Sprite and found it to be our version of lemonade. The lemonade over here is sweetened lemon juice!

Hollywood's wax works was disappointing yet not so. Some were brilliant reproductions, others were barely recognisable - it was the bodies that disappointed most often as they just didn't have the details of the faces.

30TH AUGUST

L.A.X.

Another day, another plane - I'm going to be a real seasoned traveller by the time I finish all this.

Poor Lisa Matthai, our liaison with America Airlines, had to go change around all my tickets - I pick them up in New Orleans now as they wouldn't let me change them here. Not to worry. It's all been straightened out now. I hope. At least I am trying to exude positive thoughts...

Later, above Yuka:

I sat at the airport watching the tight ballet movements of the giants and the tiny frail-looking craft - the parking of these vehicles with their angled wings almost interlocking really is an artform.

1443 - L.A. time

Passing over some incredible area. I've seen waves in a desert looking like a frozen sand-coloured river and a huge lake about which is a flat land, perfectly squared off patchwork. The area it covers must be phenomenal.

1955 - Dallas time

Well, so that's Dallas - an oasis of green and trees, and people have a swimming pool each - at least that's how it looked from above.

The accents filling the air are charming and now I knew what Bjo's "darlin'" comes from. I suspect this airport is like this state - broad and widespread and I "mosey-along" slowly, stopping and checking out the t-shirts (my white one got grotted up over dinner - or should I say under dinner!). You ought to have seen the cute stewards face when I asked for my first cup of tea! Mind you, it was just hot water, a do-it-yourself teabag and I had to ask for milk, and they produced coffee whitener - erk!

Just taxing off again now.

2004 - Dallas time

The sun's setting and I'm glad we stopped at this time. There was no pretty sunset, but not to mind. I've only seen one coloured sunset so far since I arrived. I missed the bold flashes of rose and crimson and gold of the horizon at home.

Actually, when the plane turned, the sky coloured through an almost rainbow pale lemon, pink and lavender across the flat horizon.

The jumbo shuffle at L.A. is spectacular - here in Dallas its awesome - there's a never ending stream of planes - all shapes and sizes that an elephant line seems tame - as they play follow the leader up the runways. You'd expect that the larger ones could take the top from the smaller ones as they turned - they make it look like clockwork precision - I have nothing but admiration for them.

6TH SEPTEMBER

1400 - N.O. time

I've already left New Orleans and still I've not filled in this diary. Now I will have to rely on the brights and hazes of memory to recall just so much that had happened. We've flown over the gulf and the Mississippi delta which looks, for all the world, like the green scum you find on a polluted river - as if it were floating rather than solid, which it possibly might be. New Orleans itself is built on the mud on the banks of the river. Theresa said that the whole town is sinking at nearly 3 - 4 feet a year and that it is below sea level now and hence the levees built along the river like the dikes in Holland. Eventually the city will be abandoned.

Ferns grow on the top of and around the ledges of the buildings. The air was incredibly heavy and moist with it being at least 97% humidity whilst we were there.

In fact, the air was so saturated with evaporated water, that it would rain about 4 pm each day - one day fooled us though - it rained all day!

I am so tired, I keep drifting off to sleep.

Dallas Airport - 1615 D.T. time

Just filled out the postcards to my hosts and had a very nice meal. I just hope they don't feed me on the plane as well.

Dallas is starting to feel like home. Just waiting for my connection to Memphis. I'm looking forward to meeting Pamela at last.

I'm trying to step back and remember my first impressions of New Orleans - wet - wet and warm and heavy - and so late at night!

I met Theresa Buffalo at the airport - long, pale brown hair, small, smiling lips and a joyous smile in a moon-shaped face. Her green eyes are a flirting invitation and her voice and manner - pure Southern Belle. And it was friendship at first sight. Theresa has style and an extremely ladylike manner that would be extremely difficult to find elsewhere and I love her.

I tried to give her room to do her own thing since she had so many of her B7ers with her. We had fun getting her into the convention since the bank draft that we had sent a month before to cover it, didn't get through, or had and hadn't been re-recorded. Apparently there were many, many people who were in this situation at the convention. And we had no money between us to pay it again.

The biggest trouble though was that we didn't connect up too often and so we missed each other a few times.

She fell into immediate lust with Wilson who got very cocky about it all so we had to slap him down (ever so politely of course - what do you mean you didn't notice, Wil?) a few times towards the end.

Theresa's cousin, Cynthia, took us in to her place - it was a settlement or housing development on the opposite of the Mississippi - very much like the ones in Canberra but without the greenery. 5 The kerbs are mere inclines and you can climb up them to park on the sidewalk (see how Americanised I am getting?). She took us to a sleazy bar on that side of town. It looked more like a double garage, with pool tables, a long bar and loud music - nobody there except for a few blokes who were shooting some pool.

The rain was coming in the spots and dashes we're used to in the mountains and the ground was soft beneath the feet. Apparently the moist, hot, lush feel of that area is there all the time. There were no really tall trees at all - not like at home - but they were green and the soil was black and heavy.

The from the air, the Mississippi had wound its way like an oily black snake, lined with lights.

Theresa and I got to talking when we reached Avondale and we just talked and talked and walked until the wee hours of the morning on her cousin's waterbed. My friend.

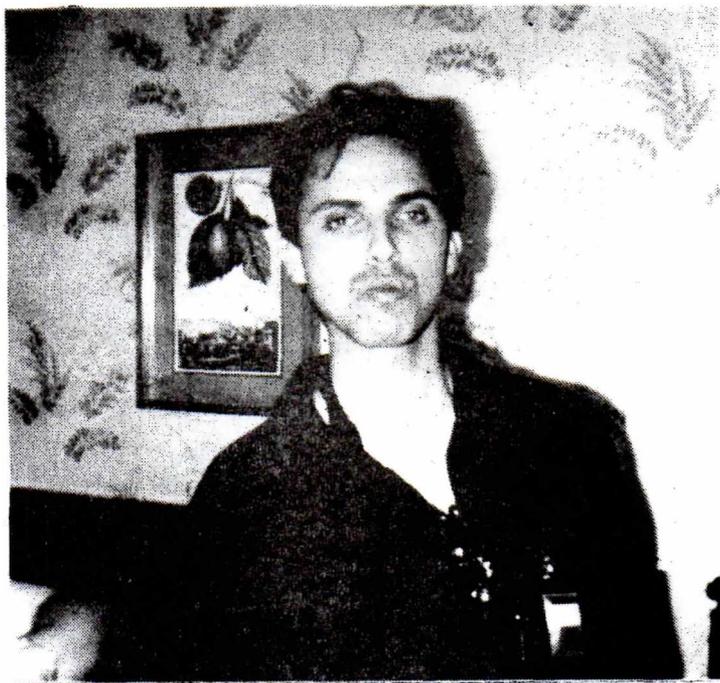
The next day, I was introduced to New Orleans peak hour and the incredibly high bridge that spans the river. Often the traffic came to a complete stop for a long



Left to Right: Paula Davis, Theresa Buffaloe, Graeme Batho.

time. A 20 minute drive took 2 hours. However, Wilson was only just up when we arrived.

We went for a walk together - down to Woolworth for me to get some black stockings for the party what were to host on the friday night. We even dragged Wilson along. The day was extremely pleasant although the only time I was able to relax and I suppose it was the same for Wilson, was when we went to the famous French Quarter (where we were quartered in the Monteleone on Rue Royale) and Pat O'Briens which is a famous bar there. We sat there and mellowed somewhat and talked about everything we could. Wilson was still unwinding from his non-stop flight to New Orleans the day before.



Wilson da Silva, Sydney In '91 President

Theresa flirted, with a fluttering of her fan, and we talked about what we were going to do with the campaign. Theresa's help was invaluable, as she explained the local customs and things like 'tax' to us. We tried to find out more about the convention and I made arrangements to meet Devra Langsam the next morning for breakfast.

Wil and I walked through the french quarter, with trepidation, that afternoon & evening and it was honestly like nothing I knew before. Perhaps if Kings Cross was in Paddington? No, not really. The streets running parallel to Rue Royale were blocked to automobile traffic from the early afternoon, and were thick with people.

Honestly, it's a wild city - one where you can't tell the SF fan from any other person on the street - and that's in costume, which I found that SF fans wear anytime, anywhere, as they fancy.

On Bourbon Street, buskers play jazz, they dance, sing, do clown acts and entertain. Apparently there are 30 licensed entertainers and numerous others who go through the city. Some very good indeed. I stood for a while and listened to a country and western singer once. He was so good. I guess the competition is fierce in this city so that you really have to be very good to survive.

Just before I left LAX, I had spoken to Quantas again about our missing parcels. They had been found and were being forwarded by Federal Express which was a relief, but it meant that we were waiting and waiting before we could do anything at all.

It was all so very frustrating.

The Monteleone was an old hotel in the French Quarter - furnished accordingly - with the most fascinating antique hand-carved clock in the foyer. The problem with that hotel was the fact that they knew they were special and gave the definite impression that we should be privileged to stay there - they had this superiority complex that we came to blows with when it came to our parcels and poor Graeme's luggage. They never made mistakes...

Graeme Batho didn't come in by the time we decided to retire - Theresa and I to our bed and Wilson in his short blue pjs to his own. Graeme finally arrived extremely late and minus his luggage that Continental had managed to lose on him.

The next morning (thursday), we were up early (yawn!) and walked with Wil to the Moonwalk and the Cafe Du Mont to participate in the very french and fashionable coffee and biegnots. The cafe was fairly crowded and I managed to find Devra okay

first time which was great. She's a tall, thin, dark-haired and bespectacled New Yorker. She talks fast and clipped and I have a great deal of respect for her.

I also met Linda Denerov whose zines I shall be agenting for and who used to put out Universal Translator and so actually knew me. She's a short, slim lady with an abrupt bronx speech but very kind. There were also Alyson & David, an US army couple. All incredibly nice people.

New Orleans gave of her best for a couple of hours that day so we got to circle Jackson Square where jazz is played and street artists of incredible talent show their wares. Along the cobblestone streets, buggies drawn by mules with beflowered hats, waited in resigned silence for custom. A huge, french-style cathedral rose up behind the square. We just ate in the sights and continual damp heat.

We spent the rest of the day meeting people and setting up our bid table. That day, Theresa went to lunch with her Blake Sevens friends, and I had take-away with Kathryn Jackson - a blonde, good-looking, slow-talking fan from Texas. Later, when we had packed up for the day, I went back to the hotel to have a couple of drinks at the Carousel Bar which was horrendously expensive and after two tias and milk, I couldn't tell if it was me, the world, or the bar that was spinning.

We met some of pen-friends who were to become good friends during the course of the convention and afterward, I hope!

Michelle Worley whose attraction for Wilson was mutual is a petite, bright personality. Loving.

Paula Davis, a larger, married lady who took us into her heart and helped constantly.

Theresa took us to the Gumbo Shoppe that night were we first experienced creole foods - jambalaya, gumbo, black fish creole, blackened chicken. All superb except for the milk which, I thought in New Orleans, is at least one day off and that's how it always tastes in New Orleans.

It's a crazy city: dangerous and seedy at times, beautiful and wistful at others. The days have started to become rolled into just a blanket of memory now.

I remember walking down towards the Gumbo Shoppe and being stopped by a barker outside a strip joint...

"Come inside, lots of pretty girls," he insisted. Why me? There were men in the group - I'd seen their washed underwear drying in the bathroom and my mother didn't raise no idiot child.

"Thanks, but I'm not interested" I said most primly.



Theresa Buffalò helping staff the Sydney In '91 table.



Left to Right: Kerrie Hanlon, Syd and Jon Stevens.



Left to Right: John Gaspar, Wendy McKenzie, Joe, ?.

"Not boys... the show across the road, they don't have girls, only boys."

The others were amused... I wasn't. "That's nice. I'm not interested in boys either," I said and kept walking.

Suddenly he was in front of my with an expression half-way between a leer and something tentative. "I am a man," he said. I just wish it had been with more conviction.

It must have been the way he said it. I patted his shoulder and smiled at him. "I'll take your word for it. Thanks all the same."

Terry Dowling and Kerrie Hanlon and putting on the Sydney in '91 Bid Party - drinking my first fosters lager and how I kept drinking it - being a little over the wall that night - using a flirting fan yet taking time out to talk to some extremely nice gentlemen from Georgia, whilst sitting on the floor in the corridor where you could hear yourself think. It was a strange sensation and the party was quite a hit. A couple, Wendy & Iskander (a giant celt of a man) also added with their beautiful voices and folk songs. We sang a lot of the night away.

Martin Hall of Wollstonecraft was our host for the party and is proving to be a strong supporter along with Scott Yipp. Such wonderful help.

Our Koala finally arrived and made public appearances. He was extremely well received by the fans and by and large people have complimented us on our presentation.

Saturday I worked most of the day at the table and voting table. I took an hour off at once stage to buy a beautiful skirt and blouse for myself and blouses for my girls.

Because Wilson was arranging interviews and photographs, Martin and I went with Elaine Pelz to do the counting. The results were overwhelming.

It's true that Americans, no matter how much they supported a Sydney bid would vote for two out-of-the-country bids in a row. Mind you, we gained a lot of pro-Australian support, (people even came over to our table after voting, feeling obligated to tell us they had to vote against us and why) but it still didn't help the sunken feeling after all our work.

Martin and I tried to find Wil to let him know. We ended up on a shuttle to the New Orleans public theatre and watched with complete admiration, the dazzling display of costume and design, the brilliant kaleidoscope of colour and brilliants and, for a moment, I forgot all but the show and my admiration and awe of the talent displayed. Dear Jan Finder was in the Carnivale Macabre group from Something Wicked This Way Comes.

I left Martin who was coping in his own way and went back to find Wil. I didn't want to tell him.

How complicated life becomes at times.

Wilson's not a good loser. I dressed up and we went out to dinner at a bar and grill and sang Australian and rock songs with Theresa, Michelle and Martin. Graeme was back at the hotel, asleep.

It was kind of freaky of us and the anger about Will was almost tangible. We'd been left with a solid amount of work by the previous committee and had completed it to the best of our ability and fulfilled our commitments to the fans who had supported us. But it had taken a great deal out of both of us. I finally cried when I got back to the hotel - just tiredness and homesickness for my family and my country and the let down from pressures that had built up until that moment - and curled up to Theresa that night and we comforted each other as real friends do.

Sunday, we allowed ourselves a chance to sleep in and get around and see some of the city. I packed up and held a "used koala sale" and then prepared for the party - a wake - in the traditional Irish sense. Our host, Iskander made a sign - a "You'll-come-a-waltzin'-and-I-bet-they-think-they're-voting-for-us-in-'94-Party" - and the party was a huge success.

After witnessing one mugging and one of us being involved in another, we were incredibly careful about carrying purses and wallets around this place. Theresa and I took to carrying our change purses in our hands, filled with pennies and other small coins, and carrying our notes, keys, etc in our cleavages -- both of us being

somewhat well-endowed in that direction. The money we had collected together to pay for our wake was carefully stored (who says money can't keep you warm?) and somehow, it was always me that was sent out to collect the fosters, etc. That city keeps alcohol everywhere! Supermarkets, drug stores, the local t-shirt shop... Our source of fosters was usually the local t-shirt shops as they were right next to the Marriott on Canal Street. (Hey, I got caught in a thunderstorm on the Saturday - I know exactly why they call it Canal Street...) I usually remembered to make a withdrawal (with interest, some sly fan muttered) and put it in my purse on the way to the shop, but once I forgot --- now, if I hadn't been drinking the fosters all evening, then that could have been embarrassing.

You know, I don't think I've ever been hugged and kissed so many times in my life. Afterward, we went out to a bar on Bourbon Street with Frances and David who were local fans, and even it was closing up - we actually outlasted this city!

I think that particular wake will be remembered for quite a while thereafter.

Theresa left the next day to head back to Alabama where she is a mild-mannered school teacher. I missed her dreadfully --- actually, we all did.

Monday, we all did our own thing. I went to the closing ceremonies which was the only part of the programme I had seen all weekend except for the Masquerade (and I actually saw at least one item more than a lot of other people at the convention). It was in the form of a jazz funeral --- a slow, solemn march in, but once the convention was officially declared dead, a pepped-up beat, the souvenir dubloons thrown across the hall, and smiles all around... just like our wake.

Afterward we had a luncheon on the riverbank at Riverwalk (how apt) and ate watching the paddleboats and barges make their way up and down the river. We fed Wil cajun foods and watched his expression. Mind you, just the walk down was eventful as Wil stripped off his shirt on the walk, and was nearly arrested for indecent exposure. Apparently, it's not done to have no shirt on...

Dinner was with Alyson, David, Linda Denerov, Michelle, Wil and Chris Barkley at the Royale Cafe, just down the road from the Monteleone. I enjoyed dinner and the company immensely, but then, the convention was over and tension had worn me out totally. Relief was starting to sweeten the time left. With Chris accompanying me (I late found out a mixed couple is apt to cause more trouble than a woman alone), we strolled to the river bank, went up to and admired the Natchez at its Moonwalk mooring and just talked, unwinding.

I finally crawled into bed at 1.30 which was the earliest since I had arrived in this country.

AFTERWORD:

I found America contagious. In New Orleans, Wil was threatening to kill me if I sounded as if I was born in Alabama once more. Hell, we-all's from the South, aren't we? He forcibly restrained me from getting a fan of my own as his arm was covered with the bruises of Theresa-where-the-Hell's-my-fan?-Buffalo's smartly-snapped-shut black lace fan and his ears still ran with her admonition of "Sir, you are no gentleman!" But then, we all knew that!

The fans make a worldcon. Personalities, dusted off from wherever they are put during the year - probably from the pages of their fanzines, are all important. Parties are where these personalities shine... the convention just an excuse to throw them. In that, NOLACON had some wonderful parties and some great fans and I'm not sorry I went at all.

New Orleans also made this particular worldcon. It's a unique and interesting city that keeps fan-hours and doesn't blink twice at fan-activities. Of course, problems with hotels, programming, the mix-ups with registration... it didn't effect me so much as once we had found our niche to plant ourselves, we remained there for the duration of the convention - we were there for a reason after all. But the comments were thick and fast from the other attendees.

I am sure there are people I have forgotten to mention in relation to the Worldcon and the 91 Bid. I ask you to forgive me for this as I took most of this directly out of my trip report which was written as I went, when I could manage it and at the time, I really didn't think I could forget any of you... I still haven't. It's the names I am having difficulties with.

FOOTNOTES

1. Trolleys are free at Sydney airport. Of course, we are without porters though, which means you get to do your own lifting and hauling. Being an inexperienced traveller in the States at the time of arrival, I didn't know much about porters and struggled about LAX by myself.

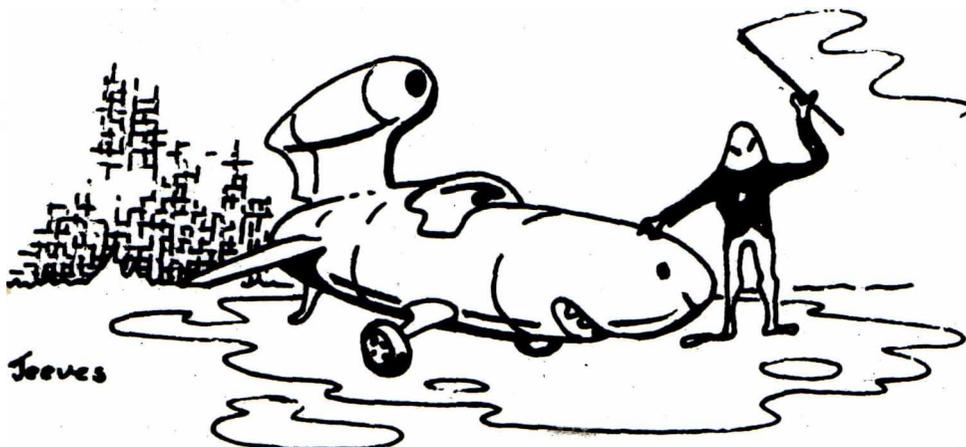
2. An oldsmobile, I think.

3. Bronson runs of the famous Wiltshire Boulevard which seems to start in Downtown Los Angeles and go in a straight line to the sea, but I may be wrong... it probably goes forever. Most US streets seem to do so... Mind you, I am impressed with the logic of house numbering and block numbers being related... however, I had a hard time, without a map, distinguishing up from down (Help, I don't know how you folk stay on when we know South is actually the top of the world...!) let alone north from south, etc. It really bemused me to end up in a strange city and have someone describe how to get to a place by compass directions. You know, three blocks north, then west for four... I only got the hang of things when I was about the leave.

4. Joanne Keating, my co-editor and friend.

5. Blocks of land of about 50 feet by 75 or so, with small yards, no fences and a rolled gutter. Cramped and raw. Streets barely big enough for one car, let alone parked ones.

- SUSAN CLARKE.



21st CENTURY DREAMTIME

By Grai Hughes

The sphere, my sphere, is built of stone, cut and measured orange sandstone blocks, washed through with yellows and reds, desert pastels, all cemented together with a dark substance, flaking and coloured like dry blood.

Over four metres in diameter, it rests in a bowl shaped depression on a cliff that overhangs a meandering offshoot of the East Alligator River, flowing murky dark and sluggish, a hundred metres below.

I found the sphere when I left Darwin nearly four months ago in the olive four-wheel drive that now stands wedged nose first in a crack that zig-zags halfway across the jutting promontory.

The little I have learned of the sphere in those four months leaves me ever more puzzled. Clearly it predates white settlement but its construction would have required advanced tools and mathematics which the aborigines did not have.

Architecturally it seems related to the spiral minaret of Samarra, that I have never seen, and the Martian Helix which I have. The stones are largest around the sphere's equator and from there diminish upwards and downwards in spirals that end at the poles with triangular keystones. A circular opening in its southern hemisphere, though only a metre high, serves as the entrance.

And through this entrance I crawl each painted evening returning from the river gorges that fragment this land, as if, long ago, it was made of thick glass that had been shattered by a rain of hammer blows.

From the maze of gorges I return, moor my three metre aluminium dinghy on the rocky beach below the cliff, rope together the crocodile carcasses hunted during the day, walk up the narrow ledge that leads to the top and then using a handwinch mounted on the rear of the four-wheel drive I haul the heavy saurians up and prepare them for Kundallajapininni, the enigmatic aboriginal who guts and tans them ready for sale to representatives of exclusive French and American fashion houses. A lucrative though illegal business.

"K.J. what do you know about the sphere?" I asked him one starshot moonless evening as we contemplated our first months's profits, the flickering campfire, and got drunk together.

"Maybe it's a tjuringa for modern civilization." He said laughing, his voice like shifting sands and deep flowing waters.

"Churinga? What's that?"

"Here," He threw me a small stone, lined and coloured much like the sphere. "A tjuringa for you, Spaceman."

"This is the Mars rock I gave you. You've carved it." He opened his eyes wide, teeth flashed in his shadow etched face, pale palms wove patterns in the darkness.

I studied the tjuringa while listening to the flow of his voice.

"You found the rock so it is forever yours, Spaceman."

Rough gritty stone, perfectly circular.

"Your tjuringa is the home of your spirit, a map of the pattern of your life."

Spiralling up and down, clockwise and anti-clockwise, ever diminishing rectangles.

"Never let anyone touch your tjuringa. No one, evey, or Mourmu, The Evil One who lives in all men, will enter it, and take your soul."

In the etched lines a dark substance, minuscule flakes of it speckling my fingers as I turned the tjuringa.

"Accept this. Sing with me 'medicine man' of the 'tribe descended from the spirits of the sky'. Sing with me; become spirit-brother of sun and moon, planets and stars. Sing with me."

And he began a chant, deep and resonant, that seared me to the bone.

"No." I said bitterly, interrupting. "I hate the stars, the planets of the stars."

He chuckled then, "Oh well. 'Destinies once set, can scarce be broken but by the hand of Death'." A half familiar quotation.

"Don't repeat the words 'medicine man' or 'tribe descended from the spirits of the sky' to anyone." He had used the aboriginal words for those. "They are sacred, secret, taboo. It would be best if you forgot them."

After a pause, punctuated by the fire's solemn crackling and the taste of whiskey I said, "I'm sorry I couldn't accept." I offered the tjuringa, "It's just... the past."

"No, that's still yours. What happened to you, to the Mars Project? Why did it end?"

"Madness. I can't say. My culture's taboos."

"Ah well. Greater powers shape our lives than either of our societies' primitive rituals." He often mocked his own culture when we drank together. He had been born tribal, had gone to the Australian National University, as had the medicine men of the last three generations of his tribe, had graduated with distinctions in

medicine and philosophy, (he had been nicknamed K.J. there) and then returned to the tribe.

And that was the only time he answered my questions about the sphere with anything other than a strange look or a muttered aboriginal word. He was, to me, as mysterious as the sphere itself.

I was outside cracking the empty blue dawn with rifle fire when the 'copter appeared, a distant whirring insect, in my crosswires. Coke bottles and cans exploded off the bullet riddled hulk of the four-wheel drive and lay scattered and ruined, fragments in the dirt like yesterday's forgotten dreams and remembered failures.

Harris, the Yank, and Kate of course. I pulled the rim of the grey Akubra I was wearing over my eyes, protecting them from the dust swirling up as the 'copter landed.

Walking down to meet them I took .338 cartridges from the pocket of my khaki cut-offs and reloaded the Ruger. They hopped out and walked towards me, Kate in jeans and white tank top, honey-blond hair blowing wild around tanned shoulders and fox-like face; as beautiful as ever, I thought. Harris in grey business suit, grinned broadly with patent American insincerity.

I slung the rifle over my shoulder and asked, "How did you find me?"

Harris answered, "That aboriginal mate of yours said to follow the East Alligator River till ya see a patch of red desert in the middle of the jungle. He came into Darwin last week, sold some 'gator skins to a friend of mine from back home."

"Crocodile skins." I corrected.

"Croc, 'gator, what the hell." He grinned again.

"So you found me. Why?"

"I was worried about you, Mark." said Kate.

Harris slid his thick arm around her slim waist. Something between jealousy and hatred rose in my throat. I swallowed it.

"Going off on walkabout like that, not tellin' anyone. Thought you damned well killed yourself." Both their eyes, his blue, hers grey, wandered over the four-wheel drive.

"Unfortunately I didn't damn well kill myself. You shouldn't have bothered coming here." I said and regretted it instantly because Kate frowned and I realised she probably thought so too. Her frown tore at me; I decided I did want them, her, to stay. I could put up with Harris's banality and the reawakening of emotions I'd purged through hunting, alcohol and solitude, for just a few hours with Kate.

We had met one year after the Mars Project concluded, at the end of my six months rehabilitation, and had been together for two years before coming to Darwin trying to trace the origins of a unique aboriginal artifact I'd bought, cheaply, at auction in Sydney.

It was cheap because most doubted its authenticity; two spheres, one slightly larger than the other, connected by a helix, carved out of a single piece of a dark, hard, fine grained wood. Aboriginal? Unlikely said the experts.

A strange, geometrically perfect, sceptre or club. Strange to me because it summoned images, memories: Through filtering glass a blood red rock peppered plain. Towering, twin spirals connected by sets of three bars a metre in length, each set undefinably patterned. Two space-suited figures both ten metres away; we form a triangle around the Martial Helix. Then, not even a scream; static. Two space-suits rippling as though the bodies within are turning inside out. Then? A blackness that felt more like burning incandescent light. The image faded. I bought the sceptre.

At Kate's suggestion we presented the Heritage Foundation with the artifact and they presented us with a substantial research grant. (After all an ex-Astro's pension isn't that generous.) I loved her then, I loved her when she left me for Harris five months ago, I loved her now.

"Mark, you're still so serious, so dramatic about.. everything." said Kate.

"Yeah, stop actin' like a character from a third rate soap opera." said Harris.

Was I? I looked to the ground where I had unconsciously traced a circle in the red sand with the toe of my boot. Were the powerful emotions that ran through me, that had motivated me since the end of my rehabilitation, just shallow melodrama?

I caused several ugly embarrassing scenes during that last month in Darwin after she left me, and, in a moment of clarity in the midst of a throbbing hangover I stocked the land-cruiser and left so my self-pity, bitter jealousy and anger wouldn't taint her new found happiness. A selfless act I thought, a brave act of self-sacrifice for the woman I loved. Or, as I thought later in moments of drunken melancholy, the actions of an immature, emotionally self indulgent, unsophisticated, romantic fool. Shallow melodrama? Only to those who lack a deeper sense of understanding.

"Come on, Mark, lighten up, let's talk things over. I've got a case of beer and a few bottles of Chivas Regal in the 'copter." said Harris.

"Bring the scotch." I said forcing a weak smile. He grinned and ducked back into the cabin, then came out, still grinning, a bottle in each hand. Harris couldn't be too bad, I thought, after all Kate loved him, or at least thought she did.

"What a weird place," Kate said as we walked past the strange monument of the land-cruiser and into the wide bowl with its enigmatic globe. "What is it?"

"I don't really know. A key to a puzzle? A message? You know what it's related to don't you?"

"The sceptre and the helix?" Kate had shared my obsession, had become part of it. Maybe that was why I felt so hurt, so bitter and betrayed. I had shared part of the foundations of my delicately restructured soul with her.

"I know the aboriginals didn't build it. It's too old to have been built by whites. I had a piece radiometrically dated and though that's not very accurate it dated back to the early Paleolithic. No one's ever really explored this land properly, dug down to where its secrets are buried. There's been time enough for dozens of civilisations to have flourished and died out here. Died without a trace. There's a lot of paradoxes, I know, but.." Again I was sharing my obsession with

her. Why? Because this was something between us, something that excluded Harris. If Kate had any ideas on the subject she kept them to herself. Obviously she doubted everything I said and probably thought I was mad, otherwise she wouldn't have left me, rejected me, she would have believed in the connection between the helix and the sceptre. Anyway wasn't the sphere further proof?

"Looks like a bad copy of the Red Planet." said Harris. We crawled into the cool interior. I lit the gas lamp; hissing and flickering it revealed the incongruous evidence of human habitation; a small gas operated refrigerator, the front and back seats of the land-cruiser neatly covered in blankets, stacked and fallen books, coke cans, an albino crocodile's oddly patterned hide, bullets and bottles all pointing to the centre of the floor, folded canvas chairs and two rifles leaning by the entrance. I placed the Ruger with them then unfolded three chairs, while Harris and Kate puzzled at the unsettling, unbalancing, baffling effect of the interior of the sphere. Everything leaning at crazy angles and the illusory impact of spinning created by the spiral patterns of, not only the bricks, but the swirls and whorls in the colours of the stone, minutia upon minutia of undefinable pattern, giddied and disturbing them.

"Ice?" I said as they sat down, relieved, their sight now distracted by mundane things, though with the ever revolving universe fluttering around the edges of vision and consciousness.

Both nodded, I passed them glasses and sat myself. "It fills to just above the entrance in the rainy season, you can see the water lines, so I'll have to..." I was going to say I'd have to come back to Darwin soon anyway but I stopped because it occurred to me that the whole depressing situation had caught up with me again. I drained the scotch and poured another.

Harris eventually broke the silence, "A friend of mine'd pay a fortune if we could dismantle this thing and ship it to the U.S." I decided to argue with him, score some points off him in Kate's eyes.

"That's all you Yanks ever do, exploit and plunder everything you get your hands on. No wonder half the rock paintings have been chipped off the walls since the bloody tourist invasion. You bastards think you own the place."

"As a matter of fact we almost do," he said, face flushed with anger. I don't think he understood why I was attacking him, "I just leased the mineral rights for my company from the tribal elders. It's no worse than what you're doing, illegally killing a protected species."

"The government makes it legal or illegal at the drop of a hat. Anyway hunting's man's work. It's not double talking the abs out of their land by bribing crooked government officials. You think you can buy anything with your all powerful blood-soaked Yankee dollar."

"I can and I have." He said quietly.

"Will you two please stop arguing." Said Kate. Harris and I both looked at her. She turned to him, caressed his shoulder the way she used to caress mine to relax me. He grinned. I burned.

I stood up, smashed the glass in my hand against the wall. Fragments.

"You Yanks are so hotshit let's see what you can do. I'm going hunting either come with me or piss-off." I grabbed the Ruger then picked up the other rifle and tossed it violently to Harris. He caught it, accepting the challenge.

The sun burned behind the sphere now, spears of light danced around its silhouette. We stood trapped between the deep blue bowl of sky, the red cracked dish of land, the green-brown shimmering horizon, in the black disk cast by this unlikely eclipse, forgotten satellites on collision courses, our converging orbits hidden in emptiness.

We walked down into the still, cool shadow of the gorge, cancerous cells corrupting the land's veins. Harris jumped into the dinghy, Kate hesitated.

"Let's just leave, Harris, please!" She said as if I couldn't hear, "The sphere, the desert, they've driven him insane." The words fell dead on my ears, nothing more could penetrate the armour of my inner turmoil.

"No." said Harris.

The dinghy slid into the water, stones grating on the smooth hull. I jumped in rocking it, and ripped the cord. The outboard screamed into life and we roared off dangerously, our wake lapping at the corrugated walls of the gorge.

Kate screamed, Harris shouted, "Slow down! God damn you. Slow down!" Echoes bellowed through the chasm as I cut the engine, not wishing to endanger Kate. Did I love her? Did I hate her? The dinghy slewed around a crooked elbow bend and clanged against the wall.

"Look," I said, "There's no need to worry, I know these rivers like the lines in my palm."

"Just take it easy. Okay?" said Harris.

"Okay, Okay." I said placating. I knew where to head. The crocs would be moving downstream now, disturbed by the noise and shocked water. They knew when death and danger were around and would move away from it.

Slowly, now, like bored tourists, we broke from shadowy black water to where sunlight sparkled on green. Up ahead I saw bubble trails that signalled crocs underwater. I held the throttle at a dull throb, herding the beasts up the dead end canal. Cliffs loomed above us, silent, watchful.

Harris sprang up and fired three shots rapidly, rocking the dinghy dangerously. Reverberations pounded back and forth like the cliff's rumbling anger.

"I saw one! A dark shadow under the water." Harris said pointing.

"Get down!" I shouted. "Don't stand up in the boat." The crocs would be moving faster now, as death came closer. A dark stream clouded the green-gold water.

"Don't shoot at 'em if they're under the surface."

"Why?" Asked Harris, a puzzled look on his face.

"Because if you don't kill them they'll leap out of the water and kill you." He grinned and laughed. I did too, though for different reasons. Kate sat quietly, frightened, or at least, apprehensive.

We drift into the lagoon, engine silent, hearts beating to the rhythm of the water, thick with growth, that slapped and dragged at the boat. Lily pads smothered the surface, hid the depths, bull rushes swaying gently fringed the sides, dark algae crawled up the walls, coated the rocks and black wood that lay like the rotting

corpse of some forgotten giant; fallen boulders against the far cliff his knobbly skull, sharp stone ridges the bared bones of his broken hollow rib cage, dead gum trees his skeletal hands clawing opposite sides of his grave. One knee a stone arch the other the broken trunk of a once enormous tree, the bones of his feet a series of stone pillars that thrust from the water on each side of the entrance. All clothed in glaucous algae, ragged swathes of dead brown weeds and bilious hanging moss; his torn and festering flesh. Buzzing clouds of insects rose and fell feasting on decaying vegetation.

This macabre apparition, stagnation and the slow pulsating rhythm of the water, a death chant, reminded me of my love, now dead, corrupted by a cancerous hatred and putrific jealousy that I had fed with self-pity until malignant, now it pulsed within me, an adamant fist clenching my withered heart. Harris and Kate sat, silent, seemingly oblivious to this Radamanthine vision.

Rushes to our left suddenly rustled. Harris fired as a dark shape slid into the water. Screeching birds disappeared above the cliff's edge, one remained however; a cawing crow in the tangled branches of a swollen boob tree above the giant's skull, the highest point of the escarpment. I aimed my rifle at it, and, still cawing, it flapped lazily away.

"Here," I said handing an oar to Harris, "paddle us up to that rock."

"I thought you said there'd be some crocs here?" Harris said as the dinghy nosed into the skull's half submerged eye socket. I jumped onto the boulder and pointed to where lily pads were closing over our wake. "Look."

He stood and turned, dark menacing eyes, long snouts and serrated backs surfaced. They watched us with a cool, appraising intelligence.

Then Harris fired, spasms of irrational fear shook him and he fell backwards into the water.

A four metre croc splashed forward towards Harris, screaming and thrashing in the water. I swung my rifle down and fired, the saurian's blood spouted painting lily pads red, splattering Kate's white tank-top, clouding the water. Another surfaced and snapped as Harris got a grip on the boat's edge. Kate screamed and screamed and shouted, "Mark!"

I think I saw movement out of the corner of my eye, but I shot the crocodile behind Harris and they felt the crunching and tugging at my leg. I fell on my back and started sliding down into the water.

Strangely, I was cool and calm, the pain in my leg seemed a distant remembered pain. Overhead a crow circled and laughed. A flaming crescent sun broke the edge of the escarpment a dark shape stood silhouetted there. I heard a booming, felt water cover my face, felt hands grip mine and felt no more.

Blurred memories; the boat slicing through water, the sky above framed by cliffs, Kate crying, Harris sombre and silent, and, was it K.J. muttering and bandaging my foot?

The helicopter, a crow flying into the white hot disk of sun. Darwin below, a strange circuit-board. Waking in the hospital, searing pain in my left foot that was no longer there.

After four months in hospitals and rehabilitation centres I left Darwin. I saw Kate the day before I left. She was going to the U.S. with Harris. She thanked me

for saving him, said he had deposited fifty thousand in my account and promised more. He had signed over the helicopter to me as well. I didn't care. I was past caring.

I hired a pilot and searched for the sphere, the patch of red desert in sub-tropical jungle. I searched for weeks. I asked the tribal aborigines if they knew of it, knew of Kundallajapinni. They knew of neither.

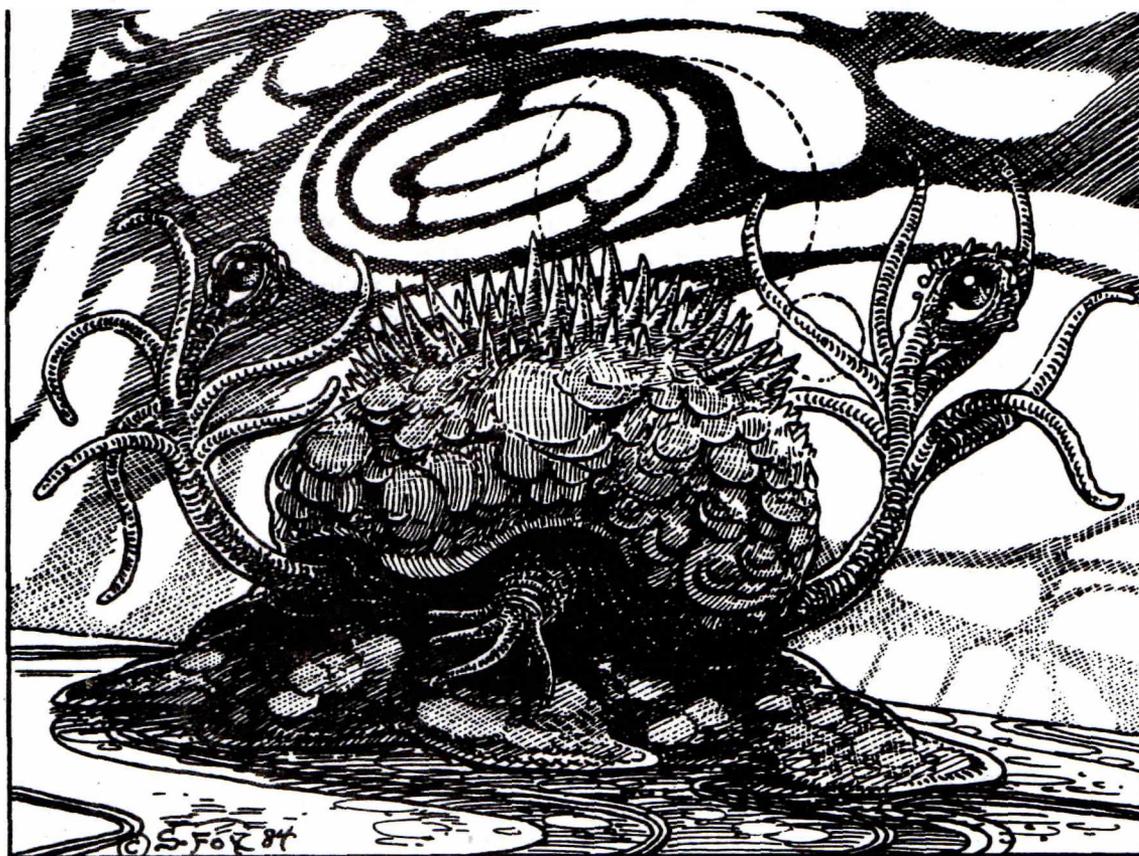
Now living in Darwin I feel disassociated from the series of images that run through my mind. They seem as vague and blurred as a half remembered dream. But when my plastic and aluminium prosthetic foot takes the weight of my body I see fiery eclipses, fractured landscapes, helices and spheres, skeletal giants and the slow beating wings of a crow.

Delusions says the doctor. But what is the reality? Delusions of being the sole survivor of the Mars Project? Fantasies of being a crocodile hunter? An imagined aboriginal friend? An illusory relationship with a dream girl?

A car accident, they say. Injury, exposure, shock. Trauma. A common enough occurrence they say. Confusion, fantasy. Therapy.

But I turn the small lined rock in my hands and study the dark specks on my fingertips and I realise the truth, the connection. From the wardroom's window I watch the aborigines who smile knowingly at each other with a confidence and a knowledge that runs as deep, as ancient and as strong as their genes. So I wait...

- Grai Hughes.



There were no recordings of these early events, because tape recorders were rare and expensive and mostly non-portable before the 1970s. Chuck Rein made a couple of 45rpm records for the Fantasy Record Company in the late 1950-s (I'm not positive about the date), but it was 1976 and 1977 when Leslie Fish and her group put out two lp records of mostly "Star Trek" songs. Record production takes more equipment than most fans can manage; tapes are easier.

The first professionally recorded filk tape was made by the Filk Foundation, for sale only to its own members, in 1979, which isn't all that long ago. The term "filksing", by the way, can be credited to Ted Pauls, who made a typo of "folksing" when doing a con report for his fanzine some time in the 1960s. It was picked up and made universal by fandom's singers. There are now somewhere between one hundred and two hundred professionally recorded filk tapes in circulation, with more appearing regularly. As a huckster, this means that the cost of my inventory is now several times what it used to be when I just handled books...

Off Centaur, Inc., is the "giant" in the filk field; it recently incorporated and inflicted itself with a payroll, tax forms, employee insurance, and all the other impedimenta which distinguish a business from a hobby. This is the equivalent of turning your fanzine into a promag and hiring staff to produce it. Wail Songs is the #2 company, and trying harder; DAG Productions is getting larger. All three of these firms are in California, which means that a lot of singers have begun to produce tapes of their own. Suzette Haden Elgin's "Magic Granny Line" has produced five audiotapes and one videotape of her own and Randy Fannan's singing, so far. Barry and Sally Childs-Helton have their first tape from their "Space Opera Company". Robin Bailey and Daniel Drew produce their own tapes, as does the trio "Technical Difficulties". Van Siegling was behind "Starwind Productions", which produced a Bill Maraschiello tape, and so on; there are a lot of them. Most of the filkers and the tapes seem to congregate on the west coast, in the southwest, and in the midwest. East coast singing still seems to be mostly the "singalong" variety, requiring songbooks and old standard songs, though Technical Difficulties is from the east. One of the newer singers is former Australian Mitchell Clapp, who had appeared on several tapes from midwest conventions and is now in California, close to the major tape companies.

Juanita and I are pretty closely associated with Off Centaur, though I'll huckster the tape of anyone who'll offer me a reasonable discount. A huckster's loyalty is to his cash flow.

Most conventions, at least in the midwest where I can afford to attend, now feature regular filksings as part of the program, with from a half-dozen to two dozen singers. Various space conferences have begun to import filkers. Plus, there are now at least three annual filk conventions; Conchord and Bayfilk on the west coast, and the Ohio Filk Fest (OVFF) in the midwest. Currently filkers are excited about the possibility of a filksong winning the "Other Categories" Hugo at New Orleans, though they'll have still competition from the comics fans. For that matter, OVFF presents Filk Awards in several categories; so far, these haven't acquired a cute nickname.

I have no idea of how much filking is done in the rest of the world. The Wail Songs tape, "The Wail From Down Under", included several Australian singers from the filks at Aussiecon II, plus a few English, Americans, and one Canadian singer who has since moved to the U.S. There were British filkers at Brighton in 1979; I particularly remember James Campbell, Gytha North, and the duo "Alien Dream". I don't know of any tapes or records from any of them -- if you do, let me know, along with how I can acquire copies.

As a non-singer, I've been dragged into all this, kicking and screaming. At its first meeting, the Filk Foundation railroaded me into its presidency and then ceased to have elections, so I'm still stuck. Fortunately, Margaret Middleton runs the group and I can be a figurehead. Then in 1982 I did some recording for Off Centaur at Chabanacon. I bragged to Gene DeWeese that I was now a sound engineer and he said I was more of an unsound engineer, so I got Van Siegling to make me up a badge saying "Unsound Engineer" and wore it to a few cons. I may have to dust it off again; Juanita and I have just finished recording an entire tape by Mike "Moonwulf" Longcor for Off Centaur, and I'll be recording Juanita and perhaps a few other people for them. (It's either that, or give back all their nice equipment, which I have on loan...) But this is really All Juanita's Fault; all I did was tag around and listed to her, and somehow got trapped into the whole mess. (Still, our huckster's table now pays all our convention expenses and sometimes turns a profit; there are compensations.)

- Buck Coulson



E V O L U T I O N

by Andrew Darlington

aquarium-green striplights glow,
lap around the primally dark
Bar alcove, shimmering his
hooded eyes to dark pools
unblinking,
while he muses
"seems it happened this way,
a crazy lungfish a million years ago
sprouts legs to walk on,
grows fingers to grasp with,
grows eyes to see the land,
grows a nose for snorting air,
grows its brain to co-ordinate
said evolutionary gimmicks.
so it walks and it grasps,
breathes and co-ordinates,
hangs around a million + years or so,
and generally louses up.
so hey!
don't you think it's time
it went back to the sea?"
washing a webbed hand
over his scaled forehead
in the low-level
aquarium-green glow...

E N D G A M E

by Steve Sneyd

Perseids hit
ship rocked front-end

tore off like usurped crown
through chasms of broken

corridors a soft wet
redness slithered

eyes like black seeds spun
as if a watermelon spewed

amid the spray towards torn outfall
lead-based chaste as chess

pieces the robot crewman alone
stayed unmoved untorn

by events in vacuum as in
any other crisis the logic rules

still stays the same
don't move till you've

sufficient data
don't be softer than

surrounding matter
smugly they agree

a stolid circle
stumpy as wagons what should've been

the humans should've
safely stayed

at home where they
belong

UNDER TWO MOONS/"BANDITS OF THE
STARWAYS" (from 'INCREDIBLE
SCIENCE FANTASIES)

by Andrew Darlington

cornering the night TOO FAST
thru the crash-barrier
4 wheels to the wind...

constellations spray like shingle

read this comic-book once
where a man takes a cab
that's REALLY a disguised
space-craft piloted by
a green Martian
hunting experimental humans.
Central-locking slams down caging him
& they launch from the highest loop
of the cloverleaf like a sudden red
insect soaring against the moon's disc.
The dupe scrabbling at the glass
as the M-way shrinks to a relief map
& continents recede beneath him,
the blackness of deep space
folding in around them as they
motor to the vivisection labs
of Mars Central...

for one long second it's like
I too have made it up thru
the stratos-fear...

then the windshield shatters

and worlds
white
out

OLD BILL'S TALE

BY JULIE HAWKINS

It was a hot day. One of those days when even the flies don't do much. That was why I happened to be in the pub when old Bill came in, looking like he'd been dragged behind a runaway horse. He sat down and ordered a beer like the rest of us. Now I don't want you thinking that I spend my days in the pub, far from it, but when the temperature reaches a hundred and ten in the shade there's no better place to be. In our town there is no other place to be, unless you find the general store or the service station interesting. But i'm digressing.

Quite a few of us had gathered in the cool of the bar on this particular day, purely to prevent dehydration of course, and we were having a friendly chat over drinks when old Bill came in. Now there's nothing unusual in that, he comes to town on odd occasions and he usually stops for a beer. After one beer he would go home.

That's why we thought it strange when he ordered a second, and even more so when he started on a third. By this time we were starting to wonder what was wrong. He didn't look the best and it seemed as if he was trying to get drunk.

"G'day, Bill," I said as I moved toward him. "Is something wrong mate?"

"Wrong! Somethin' wrong!" he gasped. "I've just escaped by the skin of me teeth, I've lost me cows and me livelihood, and you ask if somethin's wrong."

"What do you mean, escaped?" I bought him another beer. "From where? And what happened to your cows?"

"Not where mate, who," he took off his hat and showed me a large purple bruise on his head. "Tried to kill me they did, but I outsmarted 'em." The room was quiet and everybody was listening to our conversation. If there was someone out there after one of our own we wanted to know about it.

"Maybe you'd better tell us what happened," I looked at the others and they nodded agreement. "We might be able to help."

"Nobody can help me if they decide to come after me, but I'll tell ya anyway." He took a long swig of his drink then continued. "Ya see, I weren't doin' anythin' unusual, just be everyday jobs, when I noticed that me cows had disappeared from the bottom paddock.

"Now that's strange, I thinks to meself, where have they got to? Anyway, I wanders down for a look but when I gets there I couldn't find a sign of 'em nowhere. There was no holes in the fences and the gates were shut. I'll tell ya now, I was

puzzled. There was no-one around and I didn't have a clue where they'd got to." He paused for a drink and we all ordered another round.

"Anyway," he began again, "I thought I might as well take a look over on the old Murchison place, ya know that empty place that backs onto mine. I thought someone might have bought it and let me cows out by mistake, anyway, I wanders down.

"That place has gone to ruin with no-one lookin' after it, but, as I said, I goes down and comes up the back of the house. I was nearly at the top of the hill that overlooks it when I hears these weird noises, like nothin' I ever heard before.

"So I stops, and I says to meself, 'Bill,' I says, 'somethin's goin on down there, somethin' ya might be better off knowin' nothin' about.' So I turns around and was headin' for home when I hear me cows. Now I knows they were mine 'cause ya get to know your own cows when yuv had 'em for so long. So anyway, I turns back and has a look over the hill.

"That was the wrong thing to do I'll tell ya. I flattens meself down on the ground and peeks over the hill. I didn't believe me own eyes!" He stopped for a drink and his hands were shaking as he picked up his glass.

"What did you see?" Someone asked impatiently.

"Huh! Ya won't believe me but I'll tell ya what I saw."

He stopped again and seemed to be struggling with what he wanted to say. "There were these two big silvery things sittin' in the front yard. They was so bright that the sun shinin' on 'em nearly blinded me." He stopped as several people chuckled and looked away.

"How many beers did you have this morning, Bill?" Someone asked with a laugh.

"Did you see any little green men?" Laughed another.

"Ya can laugh all ya like but I know what I saw and I got a bruised head to prove it. I'll tell ya, I didn't know what to do. These things was as big as the house itself and I didn't know what they were, I'll yell ya I had some thoughts about 'em though. I figured that if I went for help they'd probably be gone by the time I got back so I just sat and watched 'em for a while.

"That was when I saw me cows. They was in a pen on the other side of the house and I was gettin' ready to go down and let 'em out when one of these things opens up. I lay flat so they couldn't see me and watched as two things in silver suits comes out and goes over to me cows. They took two of 'em out of the pen and starts leadin' 'em back to the thing they came out of. I don't know what I was thinkin' but I stands up and yells at 'em.

"'Leave me cows alone!' I yells.

"Well, they turns and looks at me and I reckon if I hadn't gone to the toilet earlier I would have done it right there and then. I don't mind tellin' ya, I was scared. Anyway, these two things stood there lookin' at me then one of 'em pointed his finger at me and I couldn't move. I was frozen still.

"By this time I was petrified! They starts walkin' toward me, jabberin' these strange noises I ain't never heard before, and I was sure I was a goner. I honestly thought me minutes was numbered."

A chuckle broke out among the listeners and Bill frowned, apparently disappointed by their lack of trust in his word.

"Anyway," he sighed and continued, "They put me in the front room of the hose and went back to me cows. After an hour or so they comes back and I thought they was goin' to put me inside one of those silver things. I couldn't do a thing! Then one of 'em points his finger at me again and I could move."

"Did you float into the house, Bill?" Another laugh broke out.

"Did they have your cows for dinner?" Everyone laughed again but Bill just slouched further over the bar and glared at the speaker.

Bill sat still and quiet as he stared into his glass and it didn't appear as if he was going to finish his story.

"What happened then, Bill?" I urged him on.

"I don't see why I should tell ya. I've lost all me cows and nearly lost me life and all ya do is laugh. I could have been taken and ya wouldn't have worried." He sipped another beer and stared sadly at the wall.

"I believe you, Bill," I tried to convince him. "How did you get out?"

"When they let me move they starts comin' at me with somethin' in their hands but I didn't hang around to see what it was. I took 'em by surprise and ran right between 'em, knockin' one of 'em to the floor. The tone hit me with somethin', that's how I got the bruise. Anyway, I runs outside and kept goin' till I got home. I came straight here and I'm stayin' put."

Several people laughed as everyone disbursed into their own little groups. Every now and then someone would glance at Bill and chuckle. Bill just sat there drowning his sorrows in his beer. It was so unlike him that I believed his story, something had happened to him to scare him so badly.

"They laugh, but I know it happened," he mumbled.

"I believe you, Bill," I said. "Why don't you show me where it happened. We might be able to find some proof."

"Not on your life mate! You wanna go out there you go, but I'm stayin' here."

I thought about it for while then decided that I would go out there. When I reached the gate to the Murchison place I left my car and went in on foot, not wanting to draw attention my myself. Something had happened to bill out here and it wasn't going to happen to me.

As I approached the house I couldn't hear anything so I kept going until I could see it. Even then there was nothing unusual about the place, no big silver things or cows. I nearly turned around and left but changed my mind and went in for a closer look. What I found I still can't explain.

There were several burnt patches in the grass in front of the house and the long grass had been flattened in a path from there to the pen where Bill had seen his cows. But the biggest surprise was in the house. In the centre of the front room on the floor was a pile of small, strange-shaped discs. They looked like gold and when I picked them up they felt like gold. I put them in my pocked and went back to town.

Bill was still propping up the bar when I got there and looked like he had no intention of leaving. I bought another drink and stood beside him.

"How much do you think your cows were worth, Bill?" I asked him, loud enough for everyone else to hear.

"I don't know. They're gone now anyway so it doesn't matter. Lord knows how I'm goin' to make a livin'."

"Do you reckon these would cover them?" I dropped the discs onto the bar.

Bill's mouth fell open and everyone crowded round trying to get a better look. You would have thought free beers were being handed out.

Well, no-one knows for sure what happened that day, whether Bill was telling the truth or where the discs came from. The only thing we know for certain is that the discs were made from gold. Bill replaced his cows and left one of the discs on display at the pub. It sits in its won frame on the wall and if you ever come to visit and stop for a beer ask about it. You'll hear the story for yourself and if you don't believe it you can always drive out to the Murchison place. It's still empty and passers by often report seeing strange lights and hearing strange sounds. Up till now no-one has gone to investigate. You could be the first.

- Julie Hawkins.



The R. & R. Dept.



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

I have not previously seen a sercon fanzine about science fiction from Australia before THE MENTOR 60. It is an interesting contrast to the humourous zines and the women-oriented fanzine I have been reading. I particularly enjoyed the articles by John Alderson about marriage customs and the somewhat heated debate in the letters. I am currently reading a history of Australia called THE FATAL SHORE: THE EPIC OF AUSTRALIA'S FOUNDING by Robert Hughes. I found that some of Alderson's discussion tied in with the material in the book.

It was interesting to see what kind of contribution was being made by Boris Zavgorodny, who has since my first letter to you become a card-carrying member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. We continue to exchange the occasional letter and packages. I am now about to send a package of American fanzines to him.

STEVEN FOX, 5646 Pemberton St., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19143, USA.

I should thank you for using my art, and your interest in it. I was very pleased to see some of your contributors have taken to doing stories based on my art. This is one of the highest compliments ever paid to me concerning it; I am overwhelmed!

It is very odd that the drawing on page 2 in issue 61 ended up as an illustration for a story very similar to one I thought about. Yes, the smaller creatures on the left hand side are larval stage versions of the larger fellow on the right. So few times are fan artists paid any compliment at all that it is frustrating for any fan artist to continue doing his/her craft. I've been at this for about 8 years now, and only in the past 3 years have I been getting noticed.

Richard Faulder's WATCHER AT THE GATE OF WORLDS had an obvious documentary flavor to it. The idea expressed was one I had never thought of, but it was a damned good one!

The cover art on The Mentor 61 was excellent. However the art in Mister English's portfolio was somehow lacking due to, I think, a reproduction problem. Not a bad one, but a small one.

The use of photographs as in issue 60 is a real good touch. Photos really improve the looks of a really good fanzine ever better.

BUCK COULSON, 677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348, USA.

O'Brien's account of the old writer's guide was interesting. The "leading sf magazines" were an odd assortment. FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES was a reprint mag, and of no importance at all to writers trying to see new stories. MARVEL was staggering along, and in fact died in 1952, presumably after the book was written but before it was published. AMAZING was having a brief resurgence, but one that didn't last long. FUTURE was one of the lowest-paying mags in the US field, though the editor did manage to produce readable issues.

However, "such writers are generally the same type that produce westerns and detectives" was absolute fact. I recently sent off a column to ANVIL discussing the assorted non-science fiction produced by science fiction writers. I have read westerns by Murray Leinster, Clifford D. Simak, L. Ron Hubbard, Paul Fairman, Gardner Fox, and Noel Loomis, to keep it to writers active in the Fifties. Fred Brown is probably better known to the general reader for his mysteries than for his science fiction. Wilson Tucker and Poul Anderson wrote mysteries. John D. MacDonald began with science fiction in the Fifties and soon switched entirely to mysteries. Anthony Boucher wrote mysteries while he was editing F&SF. (And why wasn't F&SF considered a "leading" magazine in 1953?" It was one of the better-paying ones, and presented top quality fiction.) The variety is still present; Ron Goulart was written Regency romances, former BNF Lee Hoffman won a Western Writers of America "Spur" award for her THE VALDEZ HORSES, former stf writer Alfred Coppel is big in the international intrigue field. (And intrigue writer Tom Wade Wellman wrote the same sort of "novelized history" as did his brother, Paul I. Wellman -- though Paul's novels were the ones made into movies.

Mae Strelkov's "Mien" glyph looks more like a water-lily than it does any animal form.

Terry Broome has an excellent letter that needs little comment, except possibly to say that U.S. clubs are far more restrictive than British ones, due to assorted segregation lawsuits. Membership denials are frequently the subject of court action, and club rules have mostly been declared unconstitutional if they result in the rejection of anyone who is minimally qualified. (Britain will come to it, eventually; it's beginning to get enough of a black population to be a political force, though its blacks are still too scarce to be very active.)

Brian Earl Brown seems to imply that I like the look of my own writing. Of course I do; I wouldn't do it without pay if I didn't. But I'm not fond of even my own con reports. Thing is, Brian, that the Esteemed Editor asked for material on the state of US fandom; "what's going on the US". And what's going on in the US is conventions. Fanzine fandom is already a fringe group here, which may explain the nature of recent fan feuds; political extremism is the mark of the ghetto. The apas seem to be holding up better than the genzines, but Harry Warner recently mentioned that FAPA is now below its full membership, with no waitlist, which is the first time that's happened in the 36 years I've been in fandom. In the Good Old Days, it raised its membership from 50 to 65, and still included endless discussions of "what to do about the waitlist", which at one time was so large that it began its own apa. There are now so many conventions in the U.S. that con committees have problems in finding a weekend without a competing convention in the same geographical area. Next year "Congenial" (Wisconsin) and "Millennicon" (Ohio), will be on the same date, and we'd rather like to go to both of them. This year "Triangulum" (Wisconsin) moved opposite "Conclave" (Michigan). And so on. The "Triangulum" move caused a schism in the con committee and the Fan GoH (Juanita and I resigned in protest (and because the remaining concom never notified us of the change, and the hell with them.) The main feuds in convention fandom are due to overcrowding.

RICHARD FAULDER, PO Box 136, Yanco, NSW 2703.

Always interesting to read Mae Strelkov's linguistic speculations. One question occurs to me, though: Is it the case, as her work implies, that written language, as we know it, originated in the ancient far east? Certainly it must have been developed after the migration of the Australoid stock to this continent (and presumably the Capsoid stock to southern Africa), since the Australoid's written communication lacks the flexibility of pictographic or alphabetic written forms. All the theories I have heard hold that writing originated, with agriculture, in the Fertile Crescent of the middle east. However, the pictographs of the Chinese (or, for that matter, the Egyptians) apparently evolved independently of the cuniform scripts of the Fertile Crescent (and, presumably, from each other). The question then becomes: why did the languages of the Fertile Crescent and the Egyptians die out, while the language of the ancient Chinese was perpetuated phonetically, although not alphabetically? Also, why did alphabetical systems apparently supplant pictographic ones, not only in Greece, and hence the rest of Europe, but also in Indian and south-east asian countries such as Burma? Certainly alphabetical systems are ultimately more flexible than pictographic ones, as the Chinese have now decided, but I can't believe that some ancient scribe sat down one day and decided that the pictographic system in use was too clumsy, and decided to devise an alphabetical system instead. These are questions I think Mae really has to answer before we can give her hypothesis any more consideration.

I'm afraid Julie Hawkins's story didn't really convince me. Certainly the writing style, which was definitely flat, didn't help. The characters seemed somehow lifeless, and I was never able to empathise with the alien commander. At the same time, it was never really clear what motivations were driving the Earthlings. Certainly I could see the logic of their position, but logic is usually used to rationalise motivations, rather than the other way around. Perhaps part of the problem was the usual one that is found with fanfic: there simply wasn't enough time to develop the characters to the point where we can relate to them.

Terry Broome's analysis of the Digital Audio Tape was a curious one. The assessments I've heard so far tend to dismiss it as having been pre-empted before it starts by the compact disk. Certainly they don't seem to suggest the wide-ranging applications Terry seems to project for the system.

MARK ORTLIEB, PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Vic 3131.

I haven't been spending much time on the typing of fanzines of late - school is keeping me too busy. However, I did read Julie Hawkins' story, probably while still in my English teacher marking mode.

I guess my first criticism is that the story does nothing that several good stories in the 1940s and 50s didn't do. When you compare it to Arthur Clarke's RESCUE PARTY or Katherine MacLean and Tom Condit's TROUBLE WITH TREATIES, it is rather thin. It's a dated story too, right down to the "meaningful comment" at the end of the story - very jingoistic for the 1980s. I'm sure that John W. Campbell Jr would have loved the idea of the Earthers outstripping those staid old aliens through their get up and go but it rather ignores more recent writing. I'm not sure that he would have appreciated the mixed metaphor of "spidery tentacles". I can't think of any spiders with tentacles - chitinous tentacles wouldn't be much use. And, despite these physical abnormalities, Julie's aliens are far too human - down to cute little jokes about triple tongues. Their interpreter/spokesperson is not the sort of character with whom one would expect an ossified hegemony to entrust a diplomatic mission of this nature.

I'll be interested to see your article on Victorian attitudes to Sydney Worldcons. Admittedly I was in Adelaide at the time of the '83 bid and was a supporter of the bid, but I can't see that strong a Melbourne antipathy to the idea of a Sydney bid per se. Regarding the '91 bid, it's just that, when the Sydney folk who do keep in contact with the branch of Melbourne I inhabit have little to do with the bid, I tend to wonder why. I've known people like Jack Herman and Cath McDonnell for long enough to know that they'd do a bloody good job of running a convention. I have no idea of the credentials of those running the '91 bid and all I've seen from them in the last year is one flier. On that, the only names I recognise that have any connection with the bid are yours and Sue's. (There is no committee information on their DUP #1.) In order to get support for a bid, surely it is up to the bid committee to gain the confidence of Australian fandom. Some information on the committee credentials would at least give us some idea of what is going on. Sydney in '83 did that, and they recruited widely among Australian fandom as a whole. The result was that the bid laid the groundwork for the later successful Melbourne bid. I can't see the Sydney bid having similar spin-offs for the Perth in '94 bid, but I wouldn't mind being proved wrong in that prediction. Part of the problem with Aussiecon Two was that it did not recruit widely enough but at least with that bid there was an established power base - the nucleus of the first Aussiecon Committee. The '91 people can't expect to say "We're bidding" and then have people falling over themselves to help. They need to establish their credibility among those whose support they want.

** Agreed. We'll see what the next Sydney bid committee comes up with.

The 'old' '91 committee concentrated too much, too late on overseas fans. One of the reasons for Sydney bidding is to give the other half of Australian sf readers - those who reside in NSW and Queensland, a chance to hear about and go to an Australian Worldcon. For those in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth the two Melbourne cons were just the thing, as was the media coverage of it. However, more than half of the Australian sf readership probably missed out because either they did not hear about it, or Melbourne was out of the question for various reasons. Such readers and fans would more likely go - even on a one-day basis to one in Sydney.

Perth, of course, does not have a population base to support such a bid. - Ron.

**

Currently I'm not sure that another Worldcon in Australia is too good an idea. I've seen what Aussiecon Two has done to the energy level in Melbourne fandom, but, if Sydney gets the convention, I'll be quite happy to pay my fifty bucks and attend to party with people.

** Yes, well, Aussiecon Two was run by mainly the same fans who helped with Aussiecon One, so of course they are now jaded with an Australian Worldcon. The Sydney bid(s), however are being organised by (mainly) energetic new fans, with fans who are not worn out with such events. - Ron.**

Enjoyed Michael O'Brien's piece. It's good to see him venturing outside ANZAPA's cloisters.

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

Mae Strelkov's quest - to find the Ur Language behind all other languages is one that intrigues me, though I'm not able to follow her arguments here. (FUGITIVES, #63) very well. I think she assumes more familiarity with the origins, formation and meaning of Chinese ideograms than most fans really have. While it would be interesting there is some parallel between "min" as some kind of earth-mother and the min-otaur as a son of the earth mother I have my doubts that they are at all related. Somewhere in the house is a newspaper clipping about an effort by linguists to

reconstruct the original Indo-European tongue by tracing backwards the vowel and consonant shifts of known common words. And I think they're working beyond that on some earlier language linking Indo-European with some other language cluster, perhaps Chinese. I'd have to find the article to be sure. I find this all very exciting but in the end we'll never know if those reconstructed languages are any thing like what people really spoke. It's all just sophisticated guessing.

Terry Broome's comments on the marketing of the Digital Audio Tape player (DAT) was very interesting but verges on the conspiratorial with its suggestion that the Japanese economy will crumble unless DAT can be successfully injected into the American market.

Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, Maryland 21740, USA.

I know you're right about the fannish spirit surviving in some of the subfandoms that currently are dominating fandom in numbers and in energy. Still I don't feel completely comfortable with some of the ways in which media fandoms and other subfandoms are conducted. Money enters into so many aspects of their fanac: paying celebrities to attend their cons, for instance, setting enormous prices on their fanzines and restricting distribution to those who pay for them, and a general urge on the part of many of those fans to make money out of their hobby as soon as possible by becoming pros or setting themselves up as dealers or in other ways. I suspect they are having influences on mainstream fandom, since it is also going in many of those financial directions.

There is some truth in what you say above, Harry, but there is some misinformation. I think one of the main reasons media fen charge for their fanzines is that they are offset (to give artwork the attention it deserves) and as such because of retail price levels they cost much more than the duplicated product. I think much misinformation about media zines is deliberately given out by fans who do not like the idea of media fandoms - they do trade, and they do give free issues for locs (and contributions). Of the overseas GOHs we have had at our media cons (by 'our' I means those run by Sue) none have asked a fee for attendance. They look upon the trip to Australia (as no doubt do GOHs to mainstream sf cons here) as an opportunity to visit Australia and have their airfares paid. As to making money by becoming dealers and huxters, see Buck Coulson's letter and article. No-one can drop straight into being a dealer or whatever without spending some time learning the ropes.- Ron.

Mae Strelkov wrote a very interesting article, but one that doesn't leave me with any specific comments. Well, I did have one heretical thought about the phonetic glyphs you reproduced with her article: some of them have a vague resemblance to Rotsler cartoons, which leave me wondering if after the collapse of civilisation a fanzine or two will somehow survive the destruction and when mankind learns to read and write again, the new language will also use glyphs, all of them based on Rotsler.

Julie Hawkins' story is quite well told, although like the last fiction in THE MENTOR I commented on, it seems like a condensation of a story rather than the full-length tale. It reminds me a great deal of an early Asimov novelette that had a vague similar theme, but I have failed in the past half-hour to come up with the location where the title of the Asimov story is buried in a memory cell.

If I had to identify the high point in my life, I think it would be something that happened five years and six months ago: my retirement. I had grown to hate in progressing intensity my job during the last ten or twelve years of work, and the day I was liberated from it stands out in memory as vividly and importantly as if it were yesterday. Freedom from association with a bunch of young journalists whose tactics

I abhorred, freedom from the necessity to keep in touch with a lot of news contacts who bored me, freedom from the clock and the necessity of being at a certain place and doing a certain thing at a specific moment six or eight times every day, freedom from the fear that I would drop dead before retirement and thus fail to benefit by the investments and pension credits I'd been creating over the years to finance idleness.

The marketing tips for 1953 found by Michael O'Brien sound reasonably accurate. The bulk of the science fiction that was being published in prozines in that year was routine, stereotyped, and more or less in line with the marketing recommendations. ASTOUNDING, GALAXY and FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES were publishing a superior brand of science fiction, but the only reason to read today most of the fiction published in 1953 in AMAZING or PLANET STORIES is the urge for nostalgia, particularly if the reader happens to be about 50 years of age and thus had discovered the prozines around 1953.

I think "selling fan art" is a contradiction in terms. If the artist sells his creations, he's not a fan, he's a pro artist, no matter whether he sells the illustrations to a book publisher or to attendees at a convention. Remember, I date back to the era when fan artists gave away drawings and paintings to other fans who wanted to have something to hang on the walls. If someone thinks an artist remains a fan because he likes science fiction despite selling his art work, then there's no such thing as a pro; I don't know of any pro who dislikes the kind of fiction he writes or illustrates.

I'd be willing to bet that I'm worse than Brian Earl Brown when faced with the need to recognise someone who happens to be wearing a wig or otherwise has done something mildly deceptive to his or her appearance. I have enough trouble recognising people when they're the same in appearance as they were a month or two earlier when I last saw them; I just don't have the memory for faces that most people do. Oddly, I can usually identify a person for sure by his or her voice more readily than by the face or general appearance.

Most of the arguments against putting DAT tape equipment on the market are fallacious. The fact that it's supposed to permit the creation of copies of recordings identical with the original is meaningless to perhaps 90% of the people who buy recordings; the vast majority of the public have playback equipment limited in quality and incapable of disclosing the difference between a normal cassette copy and the original. I suspect the real fear of DAT tapes is the greater ease of big piracy in the black market record business; DAT decks will simplify the task of selling pirated recordings that sound the same as the legitimate copies even to those with first-rate audio equipment. There are some potential problems with DAT for the general market. Such a preposterous amount of information must be squeezed onto such small areas of the tape that the slightest defect in manufacturing the tape or flaking after repeated plays may exceed the error correction potentiality of the playback equipment. DAT tapes should deteriorate more rapidly than analog cassettes for similar reasons, while lps and cds aren't affected by the passing of years.

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

I see Alderson still doesn't seem to have read French's BEYOND POWER. Why must he perceive societies in terms of domination, efficiency and politics only? Analysis, thesis, synthesis. Methinks his last is deficient.

Marvin Harris is, to me, a far better writer than some of the other sociobiologists. He presents possible explanations of the origins of certain customs

that seem valid to me and more importantly he resists the temptation to extrapolate and use his research to justify negative features of modern society.

The most important thing that science teaches us is that things change. Even those physical laws that seem constant themselves contribute to change. Societies change for better or worse. Who knows, maybe Alderson will someday?? and stop implying that he must be right cos he sounds more reasonable. Rhetoric along is only a too.

JOHN ALDERSON, Havelock, Vic 3465.

My thanks for THE MENTOR 63 which I thoroughly enjoyed. Most particularly I enjoyed Mae Strelkov's FUGITIVES. I have known, indeed as an editor, used Mae's works for years. May I remark that T'ar an "attacking pestle" which latter became to be viewed as a pitchfork "accompanied by loud cries" is almost certainly also the "triple cross" known in South America and the trident, weapon of both Siva and Poseidon, and later Neptune. Poseidon was "the earth-shaker", an earth-quake god and so apparently was Siva at one time (Siva has been almost everything) and if one looks at a photograph of an actively erupting volcano and Poseidon's trident it is evident were the trident came from. T'ar was, I suggest originally, or at one time, an earth-quake or volcano deity.

I suspect that in Solomon's time the Cretans were still doughy warriors. David's bodyguard was composed of Cherthites and Pelethites, the former hides Cretite or Cretan whilst the latter were apparently from Cyprus.

The uncomfortable thing about Mae's glyphs and these ancient roots is that it takes the art of "writing" way back to the stone-age, and can this be worn?

In my own articles I believe I was breaking new ground though I am certainly not the first to use terms such as "male-dominated", "non-dominated" and "woman-dominated" nor, are those terms equal to "patrilineal" and "matrilineal". All those strange things that Terry Broom says may be of profound interest to sociologists, but not to anthropologists. Perhaps Coco-cola has contributed markedly to the decrease in illegitimate births, being an inexpensive and efficient contraceptive and there is the probability that the odd shape of the bottle-neck has something to do with this unadvertised use but it has nothing to do with the structure of society. Indeed, my examination of the Manus Islanders was to point out that environment does not effect the structure of society, and indeed cannot.

Due to lack of space the articles were written rather tersely and such subjects as politics, war, private property (starts with babies by the way) and education will be considered if and when the book is complete, and half that book has been published, but space forbid and Ron brought to series to a close, not myself. It is ridiculous to suggest I am fitting my facts to my conclusions. The research was an eye-opener to myself.

I am not, as Terry Broom suggested, "a subject of a male-dominated society". I have a number of sisters, most of whom have successfully established themselves as matriarchs. The nearest sister, whom I visit frequently, more frequently actually than her own sons, one of whom is married to a successful matriarch and the other seconded to his mother-in-laws family... he has no children of his own. My sister's daughters and their husbands and children are usually in evidence, one or the other, and seeing that one lives two hundred miles away and the other fifty in the opposite direction, shows considerable cohesion within the matriarchy. The nearest son, the one appended to his mother-in-law, is only two miles away and an actual partner in farming with his father, yet the social intercourse between the two families is on a

par only with the rest of the neighbours. Even at Christmas that son is allowed to drop in for a few minutes only, on the way to his mother-in-laws.

My sister took over the domestic arrangements of her daughter whilst in confinement, but not of her daughter-in-law despite the fact that the latter is estranged from her own mother. Another sister of mine has actually flown from Melbourne to Perth for her daughter's confinements, but has had nothing to do with similar situations of her daughter-in-laws. Now this is the norm. These women are matriarchs. No such relationship exists between any of the fathers and their sons. As an unmarried brother/uncle I visit freely and am regarded as a sort of extension to the sister's sphere of influence. However, if I had a wife in tow the matter would be different, it would be like the confrontation of two queen bees. I live in a woman dominated society and I know it, and even if I wished to, I could not alter it.

I also sometimes read sociology, and may I quote Dr. Dan L. Adler, professor of Psychology, San Francisco, in AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY, edited by A.F. Davies and S. Encel: "... the wife's leadership role in Australia, compared with other western cultures, is so prominent that it requires identification as the special social phenomenon which we call matriduxy."

Incidentally, as a Scot and descended from Scots my natural inclinations would be to their non-dominated society, so if I am accused of prejudice towards another type of society I feel flattered that any real prejudice I may have has not shown.

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

I still prefer to use spirit-duplicating, even if I can only get 150 copies. This is more than enough to send copies to all the faneds who send me fanzines. However, three weeks ago my machine broke, and I had to take it back to the place I bought it from in 1977. Yes, it can be repaired, but the spare parts have to be ordered from some place back east. Hopefully, the machine will be ready when I arrive back in Los Angeles. With luck, I may even get the zine out in June. Maybe and perhaps.

Part of my problem is that the Postal Service is sending me to schools in Norman, Oklahoma. Two weeks in January, 3 in February, 2 in April, and now 2 in May. Then in June I start a 9 week school here in Norman. All this makes it hard to keep up with my correspondence, but I do the best I can.

It would help if I didn't spend so much time in other activities, but in the last few months I have rode on mules in the Grand Canyon, hiked thru the desert of Joshua Tree National monument, gone on white-water river raft trips on the Kern river, and today had my first parachute jump. Perhaps this is not in the same class as raising 4 children, but it does take up time that would otherwise be devoted to fanac.

Unlike you, I had drifted away from clubs and conventions. Since my move to Torrance last year, I hardly ever go to LASFS meetings, as they are 1 hours driving time away. I usually go to only 2 conventions a year... LOSCON in Los Angeles over the Thanksgiving weekend, and one other. In 1988 it will be NOLACON II, my first Worldcon since the 1984 version. It may also be my last Worldcon for some time. I am not really a con type, and working for the Postal Service places some restrictions on my time off.

The Postal Service gives me Tuesday and Wednesday off, not Saturday or Sunday. If I want to take the weekend off to go to a convention, I have to use up vacation

time, and right now that is not worth it. At that, I have to plan about a year ahead to get vacation time, due to an overly-elaborate system for assigning vacation timeslots by seniority. I did luck out, and get a vacation slot that enables me to go to Worldcon this year. That may not be true next year.

LASFS is still quite active, and still mostly literary SF. We have some Media, Comics and Video fans, but not the extent that they overwhelm the club.

I think it is true that the quantity of Australian fanzines has fallen off. Still, I can get enough that I feel Australia is still in good shape. You can see that in my fanzine review zine. New Zealand, now, is where a dearth of fanzines is noticeable. At least, I have had only a couple in 1988, from Tom Cardy. Or was that 1987? In any case, things seem to be slow in that country.

Here in the USA the scene is quite active, and I have more than enough zines to LoC. Some of the best, by the way, are clubzines. FOSFAX is a monthly clubzine packed with good reviews and a lively letter column. I consider it good enough for me to nominate it for the Hugo.

In the meantime, I hope you get around to writing that proposed article on the "Victorian attitude" you mention in that editorial. I know that Australia seems to have a solid bid for the 1991 Worldcon, and maybe also the 1994 Worldcon. Do I get the impression that these bids do not have universal support in Australia?

You could say that, Andy. And you may be going to see some interesting times coming. - Ron.

JULIE HAWKINS, 26 Third Ave., Nth. Katoomba, NSW 2780.

I was impressed with the format and the artwork is very good. I have to admit though, I found the first article, FUGITIVES, a little mind boggling, even after reading it two or three times. I enjoyed PREPARING FOR THE MILLENNIUM, it has that amazing ability to make me stop and think, I hope that was the poet's intention.

Michael O'Brien makes a good point in his article. I recently read a 'science fiction' story that turned out to be a Mills & Boon romance in a spaceship! I don't think there are too many writers around today who can create the same sense of wonder and fascination that the masters of sf did and still do in some cases, although someone will probably tell me I'm wrong.

And just a quick reply to Pamela Boal, I'm just as avid about astronomy as I am about sf. How can you write about man among the stars if you don't know anything about them? And the same goes for reading stories set among the stars, it helps if you know what you're reading about. But, as she says, there aren't too many magazines around that mention astronomy.

TOM JACKSON, 1109 Cherry, Lawton, OK 73507, USA.

I was very surprised when I read Mae Strelkov's letter mentioning the Chinese game of Yang, Ching, Pae, a.k.a. Stone, Paper, Scissors. When I was a boy in Oklahoma, I used to play Rocks, Paper, Scissors, never thinking that it was an international game played halfway around the world. I was disappointed you didn't offer any comment, as I wondered if children in Australia play the game.

****I'll let you into a secret - the main reason I usually don't offer comments in THE R&R DEPT is that I let the reader have first bite - unless it is something that is general. - Ron.****

As a fan of Russian science fiction, I enjoyed Boris Zavgorodny's chronicle of fannish doings over there. I wish I knew more about the Aelita award he mentions; it's not clear in my mind whether it's an award by the Union of Soviet Writers or whether it's a fan award, roughly analogous to the Hugo.

****You've come in a bit late in the dialogue. A year or so ago Boris and Igor gave a series introducing Soviet fandom - the Aelita is a fan award. - Ron.****

Brian Earl Brown's suggestion that Boris produce a series of biographical sketches on Soviet sf writers strikes me as a good one. It's impossible to find reference material on any Russian outside of the brothers Strugatsky.

I don't know if any science fiction clubs could be persuaded to publish Soviet sf, but it seems like a good idea for a fannish small press. The MacMillan publishing company did a good job of publishing translations from about 1978 to the mid 1980s, but apparently the company's Best of Soviet SF series has been terminated, and no one else has stepped in to fill the gap. (The only Western translation of recent Russian sf that appeared last year, as far as I know, was THE TIME WANDERERS by the Strugatskys.) The Soviets do publish a few translations - largely reprints of old titles by people such as Alexander Beliaev and Alexei Tolstoy - but the only way I know to get copies is to write to Russian import bookstores or get someone in Eastern Europe to send you some. I didn't find any made-in-Moscow sf books when I was in the huckster room of the 1986 worldcon in Atlanta, and I never see such books listed when I receive book catalogs in the mail.

It would probably be easier to persuade a publisher to put out translations of Soviet sf if fandom had given a better reception to the MacMillan line. Many really fine books such as BEETLE IN THE ANTHILL by the Strugatskys were pretty much ignored.

I don't know if Boris Zavgorodny has ever travelled outside of the Soviet Union, but in other ways he really gets around. A few weeks ago I attended the small convention, Conjunction, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The pro guest of honor was Lawrence Watt-Evans. Frankly, I had never heard of him, but I thought an autographed copy of his latest book would be a nice souvenir for Boris, so I bought a copy in the huckster room. But when I went up to Watt-Evans and asked him to sign it "for a Soviet science fiction fan", the author replied, "Boris Zavgorodny? I already sent him one!"

CUYLER W. BROOKS, Jr, 713 Paul St., Newport News, Virginia 23605, USA.

Nice voodoo typesetting in The Mentor 63! I have gotten a Toshiba laptop, but have not been able to make it do FancyFont. Fortunately the old Osborne still works. George Beahm is supposed to let me try some desk-top publishing software that he got on both 5.25 and 3.5 floppies. SoftCraft has sent a new copy of FancyFont, but I can't try it until it's copies to 3.5; they only issue 5.25.

Hope you are happy with the larger house. I've added onto this place three times but it doesn't seem to get any less cluttered. There are two guys in the back now painting some overhead beams in an attempt to suppress the wood-borers that have gotten into them.

****Upstairs are two kids' bedrooms, a bathroom and Sue's study, with most of her archives, NTSC video and our portable colour tv. Plus her Apple IIe, which is the**

same as mine - enhanced with a 1 meg expansion card. It runs Appleworks with a desktop of about 713k. Hopefully while she is visiting in the U.S. after Nolacon she will pick up on the never-never a 3.5 disc drive and controller card - to try to keep the lid on the number of discs she uses.

My equipment is in our lined garage, along with all our paperbacks lining the walls and our stock fanzines - plus about 200 reams of paper and the A.B. Dick 360 and associated chemicals. Sue has an Imagewriter for her IIe - I have a Brother HR-15. So far the space is keeping up ok - of course we do have boxes of stuff that doesn't mind the damp too much in a garden shed...- Ron.**

Mae's writing is fascinating as always. I haven't heard if she ever got my latest Machen book, the first copy I sent her was apparently taken by the Customs people, something she says is all too common there. I will send you a review copy.

The Julie Hawkins story is well done except for one detail - I doubt that either side would have risked the biological contamination of such a face-to-face meeting, especially when there was no particular advantage to it as compared to a high-quality TV link.

O'Brien's piece on Vernon Heaton and his advice on selling to the sf market of the 50s is funny! I suspect there were quite a lot of "Merely competent" writers in those zines, and some not even that. Don Day's INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES 1926-1950 is full of utterly forgotten names. Heaton is not among them.

TERRY BROOME, 101 Malham Drive, Lakeside Park, Lincoln LN6 0CD, Lincs, UK.

I think John Alderson has forgotten he brought up Joy Hibbert in connection with his attack on feminists in a article which was purportedly an objective, scholarly work. Pamela Boal's comments on his series was perhaps the most concise and valid criticism of them.

I think Steve Fox has a thing about Freudian symbolism with very phallic bug-eyed monsters of his get everywhere.

The illustration which really struck me this time was Malcolm English's one on page 23 - a delight with a good sense of whimsy, a fine eye for 'framing', a scene effectively and with a lovely sense of depth.

Mae Strelkov's FUGITIVES was interesting in parts. It fell short of being the excellent piece it should have been for three main reasons: 1) the text doesn't adequately explain the symbols; 2) it isn't written very clearly, with faulty english and introduces too many new words/ideas in too big sentences; 3) there are gaps in the logic: for ex., I can't understand the initial connection she makes between Eve and "glyphs"/"signatures". These faults cloud over what she is trying to say sometimes - like fitting two bits of a jigsaw puzzle together which doesn't fit - because the pattern is good (and that I can see it in the "fallen foot"/"dog" and "tika" paragraph bottom of page 8).

However there were fascinating bits, as in the connection of mien with mermaids and the minotaur. I wonder if the idea of fitting Atlantis in there, following her "There is a story recalled in China that formerly the Chinese had gills and webbed digits till their "first civilizer" Fuhsi (a 'Noah' type), helped them get rid of them after a flood" comment was a temptation.

Julie Hawkins's TOO LATE THE INVITATION fell down on several minor and some major points, I think - through mostly on points of style.

- 1) Take small talk (the first flaw right at the beginning) is a common fault, used partly to fill in background detail and partly because the inability to get inside her characters - with a result she's at a loss as to how to really portray them - which suggests she cares nothing for them. Which means I care nothing for them.
- 2) With that characterization, what is needed is a strong plot, with some science content or twist (or both), but the story is a cliched one, weak science content and a story which is full of holes.
- 3) Unconvincing aliens (humans in latex): despite cosmetic differences, her aliens are obviously human, an impression further underlined by having them use specific human cultural metaphors - "Just the luck of the draw" and the tongue comment.
- 4) Inconsistent - the aliens would not use the above two metaphors as they would need to be very human-like in psychological makeup and physical appearance.
- 5) The two metaphors mentioned are cliches.
- 6) Another inconsistency - also commenting the humans are arrogant despite lack of evidence presented in the story (guaranteeing safe passage could be interpreted as kind intent based on misplaced over-confidence, but not arrogance) - which further grates because the aliens are so blatantly arrogant.
- 7) The negotiations are incredibly simple-minded, much better to state that they took several years by which time.. and then the humans turned them down. It's much more realistic and credible.
- 8) This flaw, in connection with #4, creates a contradiction. If the aliens are human-like and been around for millions of years (as the Protectorate has), with all this combined knowledge and time, why haven't they come up with Earth's space-warping device themselves? Unless they're very alien, in which case the characterisation of them is all wrong.
- 9) The above flaw highlights a human-arrogance, a human conceit within the author, that she should present humans as being superior, despite all the evidence (a civilization which has lasted millions of years is nothing to laugh at - even more incredible that they should have the same government for that long - when we can't last a decade without some war going on, or a century without drastic changes in government/major war). This conceit is incredibly elitist, especially when you consider the Protectorate have maybe a hundred or a thousand wildly different alien cultures/sets of knowledge to draw on over millions of year, and yet they've still more stupid than humans? It isn't credible.
- 10) Nor is it credible that member planets of the Protectorate would so readily give up Protectorate Security. What would most likely happen is that Earth would join the Protectorate in order to trade knowledge, or the Protectorate would destroy the Earth.

Summing up, now I don't believe Julie means to give a fascist message, but if she doesn't, it shows how little she has thought about the underlying philosophies/politics of the sf she reads. She seems curiously ignorant of the way sf has evolved from the pulp years of the '30s into the 80s.

To encapsulate the individual faults above, I would say that she should relearn the first rules of writing fiction:-

- 1) To write from experience.
- 2) To avoid using cliches.
- 3) To know your subject.

Julie doesn't have the knowledge to write sf at the grand scale of her story - her naivete about politics, science, cultural differences are all too apparent. Her sad lack of characterisation highlights the fact that she is setting her sights too high too soon. It is much, much easier to write about small events than large, events one can envisage with clarity from one's own personal experience. She should concentrate on introducing interesting characters in unusual circumstances - circumstances most likely to draw the drama at from them - and weave a plot around that.

She needs to:-

- 1) Identify her obsessions and concerns.
- 2) Weave characters around them and weave a plot around the characters.
- 3) Read up on the genre by expanding her reading matter in fiction, and in such source-material as Peter Nicholls SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION, and ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, to catch up to date with sf and sf humour, and - if possible - read a few books on Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology, which would provide an extra edge to her fiction, with the increased knowledge of how cultures/society work and how people think.

On the positive side, her style is consistent and her dialogue is smoothly handled, so there is great promise that she will improve given time, and should not give up, despite my criticisms.

The highpoints in my life (referring to Buck's article) seem to be rare indeed - I can think of two - becoming a reviewer for the BSFA, and interviewing/writing articles for a local magazine (which I did when I was 17!)

Steve's poem was one of his better ones. I'd like to see some more non-fiction poetry from him, with a more varied stylistic approach to the disjointed language of his sf poetry.

Boris Zavgorodny's report was also interesting. I was particularly taken with the idea of a Summer Camp. Surely an idea waiting of emulation in the West? The main programme could run along the lines of "Do you think you have what it takes to be part of a galactic reconnaissance team? with appropriate tasks and games arranged which test the various skills of individuals or teams (building, medicine, documentation and so on). The fan prog could consist of late-night panels and discussions by authors and fans around the campfire! Special prizes could be awarded to those fans showing keenness to multiply the colony numbers! No, seriously, it sounds like a great idea. Britain wouldn't be ideal, but the U.S. and Australia are warm enough to make it a happy prospect.

Mike O'Brien's THE GOOD OLD DAYS was fun, if still too short, alas! So now I know where the popular myth that sf should be classed along with westerns and detectives comes from. Vernon Hector (either a pseudonym or an upper-class conservative ignoramus - or both) has a lot to answer for.

THE MENTOR 62's

REVIEW
SUPPLEMENT

WEAVEWORLD by Clive Barker. Collins h/c, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1987. 722pp. A\$. On sale now.

Weaveworld is an ambitious novel. Set in the present day in England, it commences when a pigeon escapes and joins hundreds of other birds flying to circle over a house in Liverpool, England. Calhoun Mooney had had a quiet life up until that event. When he attempted to get the bird back he nearly ended up falling onto a carpet which some removers were making off with to pay some debts. Calhoun carried on however and did not realise just what he had missed.

Later in the novel he does realise and when he meets with Suzanna Parrish after her grandmother had died - been murdered, in fact - they both set out to find out the history of the Fugue. The magical land that was woven into the carpet had a fantastic history, as did the Seerkind, its inhabitants.

The plot is convoluted and there are many threads woven through it. All is sorted out in the end, though. I thought that, for a mainstream novel, this was a very well conceived and written fantasy.

GUARDIANS OF THE WEST by David Eddings. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1987. 429pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This is book one of the Malloreon. If you read the Belgariad series by David Eddings, then you will know the he is one of the best fantasy writers around. GUARDIANS OF THE WEST continues the chronicles of Belgarian, Belgarath and Polgara eleven years later. Belgarian and Ce'Nedra are still married, but they as yet have no issue. Errand is with Polgara and her husband Durnik on her farm. The first time that something untoward is up is when a women appears to Errand and warns him. It is later that Polgara finds that Garian's marriage is having a rough period and the group visits them to put things right.

It is here that the first talk of difficulties in getting a heir comes up and Polgara puts her mind to try to find a solution. She succeeds, and it is not long before Ce'Nedra is soon pregnant. She later gives birth to a son. Garian's sword

plays a part in passing on some information and soon they are 'all on a quest - one of the prima reasons for it is to rescue their infant son, who has been kidnapped.

The Belgariad was the first series, and as such was a breath of fresh air. The Malloreon is more of the same and only time will tell if Eddings can pull it off again.

BETWEEN THE STROKES OF NIGHT by Charles Sheffield. Headline pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1985. 346pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

Charles Sheffield is well known for his 'hard' sf novels. BETWEEN THE STROKES OF NIGHT is one such. It takes place in the near future. Nations are still bickering and the world is well in the throws of an economic depression. An institute doing research into sleep is visited by a representative of an organisation which has been one of the first companies into space - they had a virtual monopoly, since the nations of the earth were at each others throats. An offer was made to the woman in charge of the institute to take her experiments into space. She visited the guiding force of the organisation running the various space operations and came away with a plan that she thought was an excellent bargain.

It was not long before some of the institute was in the space station - and then the international situation deteriorated and the world was suddenly engulfed in war. A nuclear winter settled over the face of the planet. Then the novel takes up the story over 27,000 years in the future...

A very stimulating novel - the equivalent of a modern Skylark novel, with 1980's sophistication.

THE KRUGG by Angus McAllister. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1988. 218pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

The Krugg are vegetables intent on invading earth. When the advance party arrives in orbit they send forth their operatives and take over hundreds of individuals all over the world. Being plants they do have a problem, though, in the way human are governed by their emotions. To a Krugg in his box of soil on the mothership the invasion would show the universe Krugg invincibility.

Arthur Montrose was an 18 year old Scottish lad who had a doting mother. In order to escape her administrations he answered an advertisement placed in the paper by a law firm. It was at this time that the Krugg invaded his mind and Arthur Montrose ceased to be a human being. He still had, however, his human emotions. How the Krugg fared in Montrose's adolescent body takes up most of the book. One of the things the Krugg found frustrating was the body's sexual urges...

The humour in THE KRUGG is not subtle, but the book on the whole is enjoyable.

THE CLOCKS OF IRAZ by L. Sprague de Camp. Grafton pb, dist in Aust. by William Collins. (C) 1971. 191 pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

This is volume two of The Reluctant King - the first volume being THE GOBLIN TOWER, which was reviewed last issue.

In the first volume, Jorian managed to escape the kingdom where he was king because his time was up and the time had come to behead him and appoint another to reign. This volume follows him and the elderly magician Karadur as Jorian tries to escape what is apparently his destiny. When the novel opens he is happily living a quiet life building an aqueduct. A messenger from Karadur arrives but in giving his message to Jorian blows that worthies cover and they have to leave the town in a hurry. Karadur wants Jorian to help him in one of his wizardly exploits and the only thing he can offer Jorian is to help him recover one of his wives he left behind when

he fled his kingdom ahead of his own guards. de Camp has a good fantasy series in The Reluctant King and I enjoyed the few hours entertainment it gave.

NON-STOP by Brian Aldiss. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1958. 269pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

There have been two science fiction novels, among many that tried and failed to live in readers memories, that explored the Generation Ship idea and have been reprinted time and again. One is Heinlein's UNIVERSE, the other is NON-STOP (STARSHIP in the USA). I first read this novel in a Digit paperback in the sixties, and I am pleased to see it reprinted again.

Roy Complain's society was settling towards extinction and its members were becoming lax in their daily life, spending much of it playing games. When Roy's wife was lost it gave him added impetus to leave the tribe and begin a journey that would take him and the priest Marapper through the Deadways into the legendary Forwards, from which no-one had returned in living memory.

This is one of the best space fiction sf novels written and if you haven't read it or have it in your library, get it now.

SWAN SONG by Robert R. McCammon. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. (C) 1987. 956pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

I almost didn't read this novel - from the blurbs and the cover I thought it was horror. It is, but it uses an sfnal background - a future world after a nuclear war. Discounting the slight fantasy elements, it makes a very good hard sf novel. It kept me reading along quite attentively, and at nearly 1,000 pages, it keeps up the pace very well.

Shards of human evil is introduced into the novel quite early - the heroine of the book, Swan, and her mother live with a man who, though one of many in her mother's life, is just able to be put up with until he gets unbearable and they leave him, but not before he has destroyed the garden the young girl is tending. This man is a symbol of the later Evil that haunts the destroyed landscape of the US after the short nuclear war and the following nuclear winter. The evil's prime objective is to destroy both Swan and any hope humans have of living on after the ice and winds of the unending winter.

An unusual and engrossing book.

I HOPE I SHALL ARRIVE SOON by Philip K. Dick. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1954-1985. 220pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

This collection of short stories by Phil Dick was edited (though I would have said 'chosen') by Mark Hurst and Paul Williams.

The stories included are: HOW TO BUILD A UNIVERSE THAT DOESN'T FALL APART TWO DAYS LATER; THE SHORT HAPPY LIFE OF THE BROWN OXFORD; EXPLORERS WE; HOLY QUARREL; WHAT'LL WE DO WITH RAGLAND PARK?; STRANGE MEMORIES OF DEATH; THE ALIEN MIND; THE EXIT DOOR LEADS IN; CHAINS OF AIR, WEB OF AETHER; RAUTAVAARA'S CASE and I HOPE I SHALL ARRIVE SOON.

In HOW TO BUILD A UNIVERSE... Dick explains how the ideas behind some of his stories developed, goes into some of his ideas of the nature of reality, and explains his idea of an eternal Rome - which is the background behind one of his last novels. THE HAPPY LIFE OF THE BROWN OXFORD is an easy to follow early Dick (1965), but does give an idea of the direction he would be exploring later. WHAT'LL WE DO WITH RAGLAND PARK? is a short story that grew into one of the ideas that crept up in

several of his novels, as did I HOPE I SHALL ARRIVE SOON, the last short story in the collection. All in all a good addendum for the Dick fan.

DIRK GENTLY'S HOLISTIC DETECTIVE AGENCY by Douglas Adams. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1987. 247pp. A\$9.95.

This is the latest from Douglas Adams Macintosh computer. It weaves a strange tale of electric monks, a Chronologist, a hero who is seen climbing the outside wall of his girlfriends bedroom, and a detective who I, for one, would not hire at any price.

As usual with Douglas Adam's stories, there are a series of intermingling threads, and in this case, a strange murder and a murderer on the loose who because of his constituency, is as likely to murder again as is the next man. There are some strange events - the horse in the upstairs bathroom and the settee in the bend halfway up the stairs that could not possibly have gotten there without building the stairs around it, and the expedition that found a do do that refused to take any notice of the visitors, gives some idea of the plot.

If this sounds confusing, then that is what the reader finds when he or she first gets into the novel - all is not lost, though. By the time the ends looms up in the black depths, the gentle reader finds all the threads weft and wove together and the carpet complete.

WHERE TIME WINDS BLOW by Robert Holdstock. VGSFS pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1981. 286pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

I've read this novel somewhere before - probably in a US edition. It is hard sf. Set on a planet where winds sweep along the countryside depositing debris from the future and the past it details the efforts of the authorities in trying to unravel the mysteries behind the winds and whether it is possible to travel in them. There have been sightings of what are apparently aliens in a golden pyramid, but the sightings are rare.

The story shows the roughness and deadliness of the planet - humans disappear into the winds, but apparently do not reappear. Some are killed by the winds when only part of their bodies are taken. Life is interesting there, if you manage to escape the winds. Unfortunately the reason humans are on VanderZande's World only because the winds exist. The pay is good, but no-one seems to leave, though many want to.

Engrossing.

WRITERS OF THE FUTURE Volume III Presented by L.Ron Hubbard. New Era Publications pb, dist in Aust by same. (C) 1987. 427pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

An original anthology of short sf stories by new writers. Most of the stories are only several pages and most, I would say, would make up the pages of a good 1960's sf magazine. There are several that stuck in my mind on reading them - A LITTLE OF WHAT YOU FANCY by Mary McDaniel was one, about the perils of the macrobiotic diet; and OLD MICKY FLIP HAD A MARVELOUS SHIP by Lori White, about a sentient ship, which has a different twist than the usual story about the same.

The full list of stories are: JACOB'S LADDER by M. Shayne Bell; THE LANGUAGE OF THE SEA by Carolyn Gilman; LIVING IN THE JUNGLE by Martha Soukup; THE VERY LAST PARTY AT #13 MALLORY WAY by L. Carroll; MONSTERS by Jean Reitz; LONG KNIVES by J. Dunn; A LITTLE OF WHAT YOU FANCY by Mary McDaniel; IN THE SICKBAY by R. Branham; A DAY IN THE LIFE by C. Eward; OLD MICKY FLIP... by Lori White; TIME AND CHANCE by E. Heideman; NO

PETS by E. Stokes; ON MY WAY TO PARADISE by D. Wolverton; and RESONANCE RITUAL by Paula May.

The book is worth the cover price all in all. Though some rework familiar themes, there are some gems.

GREAT SKY RIVER by Gregory Benford. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1987. 326pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

There is a quote on the front cover of this novel: "The spirit of the Golden Age lives in Gregory Benford". I would like to echo that.

The "Great Sky River" of the title is the stars near the centre of the galaxy seen from a planet near there. The planet of Snowglade orbited a star called Denix. The planet was a winter planet when it was first settled and when the human patrols went out and surveyed it they thought that it was worth the effort of colonising. The settlers built archologies. It was around this time that the humans came across the first signs of a local mech. Civilisation on Snowglade. That civilisation was small, but grew in time to rival the humans and then destroyed the human colony, the remnants trekking over the desolate landscape eking out a bare existence.

Another hard sf novel, and definitely of the Cambellian Golden Age. The first of a trilogy - buy it.

SOURCERY by Terry Pratchett. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1988. 243pp. A\$25. On sale now.

The DiscWorld series continues. If you haven't read those irreverent novels that poke fun at numerous Aspects, as well as themselves, then you are missing something.

The world at large has discovered Terry Pratchett and Publishers are digging back through his old works. This, however, is not an old work, but his latest. This time a Sourcerer was born. Now Sourcerer were around at the beginning when there was plenty of magic, but when it was nearly all used up they dried up (so to speak) and only wizards hung in there. Now, however, there was again a sourcerer and the battle was on. This sourcerer, you see, though only a boy, could create raw magic, which made for all sorts of problems.

Pratchett's style is free and easy, but it is something to take in book-sized bites - don't read more than one book at a setting, with the second a couple of weeks after.

FIVE-TWELFTHS OF HEAVEN by Melissa Scott. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1985. 340pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

FIVE-TWELFTHS OF HEAVEN is a strange novel - I would call it space opera of a mystic bent. The novel is set in a future universe where the image of the Tarot are the guide for pilots of spacecraft. Mages hold the mystical power and magic of a sort holds sway. Computers and complicated machines are banned because of their effect on the harmonium - the power that powers the spaceships, and presumably ground based utilities.

The heroine is a pilot who finds herself down and out after being cheated out of her grandfathers ship by her uncle. After many adventures she finds another ship and crew. Shortly after this they are all captured by an expanding star empire and are bound to it by a geas.

All up a strange combination in what at first appearance seemed a 'straight' sf novel. An interesting read, though.

STRATA by Terry Pratchett. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1981. 192pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

As I mentioned above, the publishers have discovered Terry Pratchett. This novel was published some years before the discworld series took off. There is mentioned a flat world - but it isn't the discworld of the series.

The basic premise of the novel was that nearly all intelligent races terraformed - that is, created worlds that suited them out of unsuitable worlds. The terrans did this for payment - the worlds were terraformed from almost the magma up and when one planet was finished, the company moved on to the next. Kin decided that Jago's offer to show her something that would pique her fancy was something that maybe should be looked into - and so she found herself on a flat Earth that had a Rome in its past instead of Remes.

Things get wackier as it progresses - but the revelation at the end is really very integrated with the plot.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN by Terry Pratchett. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C)1976. 159pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

An even earlier Terry Pratchett novel. This time the book follows Dom Salabos as he tries to escape being killed (he doesn't escape), meets a planet-sized computer built millions of year before and ended up meeting his lady love (who wasn't quite a lady).

Pratchett's humour shows through in nearly all his novel. In his later ones it is less subtle. I won't go into the plot details here, but will say that it is quite humorous and is an enjoyable read. In fact it is a good pick-me-up if you are feeling like a lift one afternoon. Play some good music and read this - I guarantee you will feel better after finishing it.

CRADLE By Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1988. 308pp. A\$27.95. On sale now.

Arthur C. Clarke doesn't do many collaborations - I can't remember any others till I read this. It is, I suppose, a First Contact story.

Set in the sea and environs of Florida, it is quite a 1980s novel, with political intrigue, sexual intrigue and military intervention. It seems that representatives of a Galactic supergovernment is visiting new planets as they are found and carrying off specimens for both zoological and species protection programs. There are several species that the novels follows the fortunes of over the millennia; one of them is humankind, the others are whales and another seagoing species that comes acropper with a vicious landbased animal who attempts genocide.

CRADLE is quite rivetting and the technical details and the emotional scenes are very well done, though I can't help thinking that there could be a better tie-up between the meeting of the (admittedly mechanical) representatives of the Galactic government and the modern day earth humans.

A FEAST UNKNOWN by Philip Jose Farmer. Dist. in Aust by Grafton Books. (C) 1988. Available now.

Why me? Ron hands me the books he doesn't want to read, I swear! And this had to be one of the worst. No, I take that back, FIEND was the worst...

Basically, this is the story of a clash between the powerful Lord of the Jungle and the equally powerful Doc Caliban, who have a lot more in common besides their

sexual problems, which, psychologically speaking are typical of criminal behavioural problems. What that is would reveal the whole theme of the story.

This was supposedly-written tongue-in-cheek - so Ron had to inform me after he overheard my moans of disbelief - but I found it hard-going (no pun intended) with blatant sexuality, animalistic rituals, warped, sadistic immortals... no fun. Not horror, just horrorable - Susan

THE UNLOVED by John Saul. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld. (C) 1988. 358pp. \$9.95. On sale now.

A psychological thriller with all the best elements of the genre: death, murder and madness. This is set on an island off the coast of South Carolina although, I must confess, I found the description more like Louisiana which I have seen than S.C. which, admittedly, I've only imagined, and follows the return of the prodigal son and his family to the family to the bedside of his dying mother. When he subsequently inherits the place, people start dying: is it the ghost of the Devereaux family and the family mystery. It is in many ways, shades of 'Carrie' and others of the ilk, but very well written and visually written so that you could actually see it as a motion picture. Recommended to those who enjoy the genre. - Susan.

FIEND by Guy N. Smith. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1988. 311pp. \$8.95. On sale now.

I waded, gritting my teeth the whole way, through a third of this book and found it so unacceptable, I had to put it down and away out of sight. As horror, it is just that. However, what came through constantly is that this is an anti-Russian novel which either had a very insecure author let all his hang-ups about Russian loose onto paper (unfortunately), or it is the worst kind of anti-Soviet propaganda saying definitely, in one place, how Gorbachev was actually a power-monger beneath that pleasant smile and that it was a deliberate way of fooling the rest of the world so that the USSR could become supreme ruler of the world. Whilst it is, hypothetically set in the future with another leader, this friendly-appearing leader is of a similar ilk.

The horror part comes in when the leader dies just before an important political meeting and using ancient Russian methods of raising the dead, he is reanimated. Unfortunately, too late to call back his soul, and it is replaced by one of the fiends of Hell who then is in complete charge of Russia.

If the book had been about an American President, it would never have been published. Without the politics expressed in the first few chapters (saying how Peaceful Resolution is the way the USSR is sneakingly taking over the world), it might have been a good horror story. As it is, I think it would have been better off never printed at all except by one of the propaganda-orientated underground presses. - Susan.

THE MIRROR OF HER DREAMS & A MAN RIDES THROUGH by Stephen Donaldson. MIRROR is a Fontana pb, MAN is a Collins h/c, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1986 and 1987. 658 and 661pp. \$9.95 and \$29.95 respectively. On sale now.

I was very wary of this series after reading the Covenant novels, which I found heavy and hard going to read. After several chapters of THE MIRROR OF HER DREAMS I changed my mind of Donaldson, at least going by this series.

The basic premise of Mordant's Need line is that a certain type of mirror that is forged a certain way has powers that the garden variety of mirror doesn't have. They can transport people and goods, acting like a matter transmitter door. They do

have some drawbacks - the person who created them and who controls their power, must be able to visualise the scene where he or she wants to focus the mirror.

The two books are fantasy. The plot commences in the mundane world where Terisa Morgan is trying to escape the power of her father, who takes her for granted. She escapes in an unlikely way - into the land of Mordant, where there is a war raging, both sides using the power of their mirrors.

These two books are well written and conceived fantasy - if you didn't think much of Donaldson's style with the Covenant books, these will help change your opinion.

THE SPACE MACHINE by Christopher Priest. VGSF Classic pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1976. 363pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

THE SPACE MACHINE is subtitled "A Scientific Romance". The plot is a cross between THE WAR OF THE WORLDS and THE TIME MACHINE (which is quoted on the cover). Through reading like a cross, the plot is not a rip-off of those novels. There is imagination and extrapolation ahead of those two well known stories.

The couple who make their way through the Mars of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS are Edward Turnbull, a commercial representative, and the woman he meets by chance at one of the hotels he is staying at - a Miss Fitzgibbon. Hoping to strike up a further acquaintance with her he goes to her place of work and finds that the person she works for is a well known inventor - she tells him of the several inventions he has worked on and the present one - a time machine.

Through various mishaps the two find themselves in the future and it is now long before they are immersed in hair-raising adventures. Miss Fitzgibbons has, however, a handbag which contains many items that help preserve them, and though both their clothes are torn and disheveled, she keeps her virtue throughout most of the novel.

An interesting read.

QUEST FOR THE FARADAWN and MELVAIG'S VISION by Richard Ford. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1982 and 1984. 310 & 46pp. A\$8.95 & \$9.95. On sale now.

QUEST FOR THE FARADAWN is a book that will stand comparison with those others published within the last fifteen years that are fantasies with animals as the central characters. Those other novels, WATERSHIP DOWN being the one that comes to mind first, are deeper in the fantasy field than QUEST FOR THE FARADAWN.

This is the author's first novel, and it is as good as any fantasy I have read. It is part of a trilogy - the second book, MELVAIG'S VISION, can be read separately. In fact when I read MELVAIG'S VISION I didn't read the blurb and didn't connect it with the first novel at first. MELVAIG'S VISION is a much harder novel than the first. It is set in the future of FARADAWN, which is set in the present in England. The latter novel is excellent, and I think the completed trilogy will be one to remember.

FLOATING WORLDS by Cecelia Holland. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1975. 542pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

This is a giant of a novel, by someone I don't remember hearing about before. The blurb on the front cover says "A neglected sf masterpiece". It may not be a "masterpiece", but it is a very good novel, with good characterisation and plot. There are several things that don't ring true - some scientific beliefs, but that can be accounted for by thinking of the ideas and 'facts' of several hundred years ago that have joined the scrapheap.

The Floating Worlds of the title are those of the moons of the gas giants, where the pirates at the inner planets call them - the Styths - raid the spaceships and supply lines that join Earth and Mars and Venus.

There are other irritations to the people of all the planets - that being race and sex - Western civilization has fallen and the social graces have also, leaving women and blacks to be at the bottom of the heap again. Women are at the bottom all over the system - but the Styths are black, and continue the War.

FANTASMS & MAGICS by Jack Vance. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1950-69. 192pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

This is a novel constructed from six short stories copyrighted 1950 to 1958. Like Vance's other works, they have not aged.

The world of Pangborn has both human colonists, long settled, and a native race that is again vying for supremacy. This is another culture where magic vies with the ordinary physical powers in the fight for existence. Jinxers are those who wield the cloak of magic, and the six stories follow a short history as the ensorsored peoples of both sides fight and fall.

FANTASMS & MAGICS is quite well constructed and the threads can easily be followed. Show me a paragraph or two of writing and if it is written by Vance it is almost instantly recognisable.

STAR KING and THE PALACE OF LOVE by Jack Vance. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1964 & 1967. 204pp and 236pp. A\$7.95 and A\$8.95 resp. On sale now.

Two of the Demon Princes series of novels, these show some of the range of planets and societies that populate his universe.

When five Star Kings descended on his home planet and killed his parents and many of his friends, Kirth Gersen's sole purpose in life was the pursuit and destruction of those five men, and any of their henchmen who stood in his way of revenge. The first Prince Gersen tracked down was Attel Malagate, whose appearance no-one knew but he left his mark on many places and people. Not only were the Princes corrupt themselves, they corrupted others.

In THE PALACE OF LOVE, which was in actuality a Palace of sex and depravity, Gersen knew where his opponent was - or at least was much of the time, but again no-one knew the man's appearance. Gersen managed to gain entrance to the Palace, and the rest of the novel follows his attempts to penetrate his enemies disguise.

An attention stealing series.

WAY OF THE PILGRIM by Gordon R. Dickson. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Ltd. (C) 1987. 529pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

That Gordon R. Dickson hasn't lost his writing ability is shown with this novel. It is set in a future that is different from others he has described - aliens have conquered Earth, and resistance has dissolved. The Aalaag were technically and physically superior to humans and their laws were as rigid as their social mores...

One of the humans working for them as a translator, Shane Evert, was as settled as he thought he could be in his job, until an incident at a rally and his glimpse of a butterfly twisted his attention and he found himself looking at his masters with a different attitude to that he had lived by for years.

Evert took up a marker and made a sign that brought growing rebellion all over the Earth and he found himself, at first reluctantly fighting for freedom. He did not believe that humans had any chance of gaining it, but he was determined to save himself and his new girlfriend over all else.

THE TIME HOPPERS by Robert Silverberg. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1967. 191pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

Robert Silverberg wrote several time travel novels - UP THE LINE being probably his more well known - but this is one of his earlier ones.

Quellen was one of the members of those who travel in time trying to find and if necessary correct any time distortions made by someone trying to change events. One of the problems they came across was caused by Lanoy - who was sending people back into time to escape the present. They went back and fitted into the fabric of past times. The thing was, there already existed records of who went back, at least those who declared themselves when they arrived in the past. Quellen found himself with the job of tracking down and disposing of Lanoy, who Quellen was later to realise was doing a job that needed doing.

Excellent time travel adventure.

A SPACESHIP BUILT OF STONE And Other Stories by Lisa Tuttle. Women's Press sf, dist in Aust by the Australasian Publishing Co. (C) 1976/85. 192pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

This is a good collection of some of Lisa Tuttle's better stories - the sources are F&SF, NEW VOICES IN SF, AMAZING, ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF Mag, LIGHT YEARS AND DARK, NEW VOICES II and FANTASTIC. The stories range from the usual speculative fiction enamoured by the New Wave, to straight sf of the adventure kind, through to hard core.

The stories are: NO REGRETS; WIVES; THE FAMILY MONKEY; MRS T; THE BONE FLUTE; A SPACESHIP BUILT OF STONE; THE CURE; THE HOLLOW MAN; THE OTHER KIND and BIRDS OF THE MOON. Most of the stories would not have been accepted in sf publishing without the relaxing of the strict publishing rules occasioned by the introduction by the New Wave of speculative fiction in the early 1960's.

The stories are well written and their messages are such that they stick in the mind - that of WIVES, where the 'teddy bear' aliens on a planet picked for colonisation are turned into almost slaves by the human populace and such is the psychological effect on the human that those unable to fit into the human society are altered with cosmetic surgery to fit into the society of the 'teddy bears'. One such young man leaves human society but the native society, after he joins it, is not quite what he believed it to be.

I enjoyed reading most of the stories, with the possible exception of the last - BIRDS OF THE MOON, which was a little too shallow.

DAWN by Octavia Butler. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1987. 264pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

DAWN is the first novel in the Xenogenesis series. And the aliens in it are really alien.

The earth was dead, but humanity, or as many humans as the alien Oankali could take, survived in the spaceships worlds. When Lilith awoke first to intelligence she was horrified at the thought of leaving the dead planet and that she was apparently trapped in the room she found herself. It was only later when she met the representative of the Oankali that she understood why her awakening was as it was. She nearly went insane. And later when she met the aliens, she nearly did again. She survived, however, and with others, began the task of awakening and educating the surviving humans in what to expect and how to survive on the ship.

Then they found out what the aliens wanted for rescuing them.

First rate hard sf.

DOME by Michael Reaves & Steve Perry. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1987. 274pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

It has been several years since I have read a novel set in an underwater dome city. DOME is one such novel. The city is almost self-sufficient when the civilisation on the surface is destroyed by bacterial warfare. The city sets out to survive and to move to where another atomic power plant is still putting out power. Because the city hadn't quite been finished they needed the extra power.

The plot concerns the problems created by the presence of active killer virus's on the surface - the physical problem of not being able to live on the surface, and the psychological problems created with the people as the atmosphere becomes more and more electric with tensions and anger.

NORSTRILIA by Cordwainer Smith. VGSF Classic pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1975. 275pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

Gollancz is re-issuing Cordwainer Smith's classics, so if you don't have them, now is the time to buy them.

NORSTRILIA is the story of the adventures of Old North Australian Rod McBan. Rod manages to pass the trial that enables him to take his inheritance on the planet of Old North Australia, and he manages, with an illegal computer of his families, to actually buy Old Earth. He goes there to see what he has, and comes in intimate contact with, not only the Instrumentality, but Underpeople. The Underperson who makes the most impression on is C'mell, the Underperson who is a girlygirl - a cat turned into a human being who is more feminine than any female woman and who wins his heart.

If you haven't read any of Smith, buy this - it is some of the best sf written in style ever.

THE TREE OF SWORDS AND JEWELS by C.J. Cherryh. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1983. 254pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

I had read this before, but didn't wake up to that until I was into the second chapter. This story is a mixture of elvish magic and human aggression.

Though all but one of the elves have departed over the seas, still their legends live on. The humans are still fighting, as usual and the remaining elf finds that they are encroaching on her forest. The elves of this world are a hard lot and any human venturing into the wood finds him or herself soon facing Arafel. Some men must, because they are pursued or otherwise, venture into the wood, and children also do, because of their nature. And there is evil too, in the Shadows that drive men to violence.

C.J. Cherryh is a good writer of fantasy, and THE TREE OF SWORDS AND JEWELS is a well told tale.

TUF VOYAGING by George R.R. Martin. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1986. 374pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This is another novel that has been created by stringing together novelettes. In this case some of the seams show, but it does not effect the overall sense of the novel.

Haviland Tuf's ship was not in very good repair when he found the Ecological Engineering Corps' lost ship. The people who hired him to find up ended up dead, through no ill doing of his own, and, together with his cat, he set out to set some of the wrongs with the settled planets - taking cash or credit when he could, as it

took some stocking to keep the enormous ship running. When he first found it it was gutted in the ancient wars with the aliens, and it was years before it was fully functional.

In the meantime the adventures he had raising the money make very good hard sf. If you haven't read this, buy it.

SORCERESS OF THE WITCH WORLD by Andre Norton. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1968. 222pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

The sixth in the Witch World saga, the reprinting of this series shows that some sf doesn't age. The Witch World that Andre Norton created over twenty years ago still can spellbind the reader.

This is a sequel to a previous Witch World novel and carried on with Kaththea as she flees the Black Citadel and joins a band of gypsies. She is trained by the witch Utta, who had sensed that Kaththea had some of her own powers, though much weakened by the binding of her mind.

It took time for Kaththea to learn to use what powers she had left, and too soon the older woman died, leaving Kaththea to try to guide the tribe as before. Her powers, unfortunately, were not developed enough, and her maturity was not enough to save them. A work of basic fantasy and sense of wonder.

THE REDISCOVERY OF MAN by Cordwainer Smith. VGSF Classic pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1975. 377pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

A collection of Smith's stories over a span of time, from SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN to A PLANET NAMED SHAYOL. As mentioned above, Smith had a unique style, and this anthology shows it to good account.

The stories are: SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN; THE LADY WHO SAILED THE SOUL; THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON; THE BURNING OF THE BRAIN; THE CRIME AND THE GLORY OF COMMANDER SUZDAL; GOLDEN THE SHIP WAS - OH! OH! OH!; THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN; UNDER OLD EARTH; MOTHER HITTON'S LITTUL KITTONS; ALPHA RALPHA BOULEVARD; THE BALLAD OF LOST C'MELL and A PLANET NAMED SHAYOL. Some of these novelettes are among the best he has done - THE BALLAD OF LOST C'MELL and THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN are two that really catch the reader's emotions.

Recommended.

GHOST by Piers Anthony. Grafton Pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1986. 285pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

Piers Anthony seems to cast his net wide with his books written as space operas - they have adventure, alluded-to-sex, mysticism and are written at usually a hectic pace. GHOST is a mixture of all the above - when Captain Shetland disappears into the black hole at the edge of the universe he met some things (both physical and psychical) that put him on his mettle.

THE SUMMER TREE; THE WANDERING FIRE and THE DARKEST ROAD by Guy Gavriel Kay. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1985 & 1986. 323, 298 & 420pp. All A\$9.95. All on sale now.

It is unusual to have a series available all together - I think this is a good idea - there is nothing worse having to wait twelve months or so for a sequel to a book you liked, and having to remember when it does come out the characters, etc.

The Fionavar Tapestry series is the continuing story of five people from our world who are precipitated into a world woven from a tapestry - a world with Warriors, fallen gods and magic. If you liked Tolkien and like your fantasy pure, and you haven't read too much of the modern clones, you will enjoy reading this trilogy.

QUEENSBLADE by Susan Shwartz. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books (Aust). (C) 1988. 275pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

QUEENSBLADE is the final book in the HEIRS TO BYZANTIUM trilogy (the others are BYZANTIUM'S CROWN and THE WOMAN OF FLOWERS). It is a What If series - What if Anthony and Cleopatra defeated Octavian at Actium and Byzantium rose and spread instead of Rome.

A thousand years later Gwenlliant is seeking to awake her magic powers so she can take up the reins of government and let her mother kill herself in the Sacred Grove. Well written and moves well.

LINIAN FOOTSEER and DERVISH DAUGHTER by Sheri S. Tepper. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1985 & 1986. 224pp & 221pp. A\$7.95 ea. On sale now.

I doubt not that there are many readers who thought well of Tepper's series The Land of the True Game which came out several years ago. Tepper has built up on the original idea and continues the adventures of Jinian Footseer and Peter in these two novels.

Unlike most fantasy they are written in the first person, and this helps the reader, be they male or female, follow the story. It is a refreshing change from those heroes (and heroines) who don't seem to think on things but barge on in.

THE BONES by Sheri S. Tepper. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1987. 238pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

I threw this in in case any readers who are hung on Tipper would like to see what other books she has written.

THE BONES is a horror novel - quite rivetting in its own way. To quote from the back cover blurb: "Mahlia Ettison thought she had left terror behind... voodoo magic that steals lives and souls from the most innocent: children. The bones rise from their mud-clogged grave, bringing visions of horror and death: Mahlia's children are to be the next sacrifice."

SPIDER WORLD THE TOWER by Colin Wilson. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1987. 496pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Colin Wilson has written almost as many novels as Michael Moorcock, though Wilson mixes the occult, fact and sf and fantasy (in different books).

SPIDER WORLD THE TOWER has been reviewed by me in the hardcover several years ago - briefly it is about life in the 25th Century under the domination of giant spiders who drift around in silken balloons sniping at humans. The first in a trilogy, the second volume of which is out in a hardcover version and would be available in bookshops.

QUEEN MAGIC, KING MAGIC by Ian Watson. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1986. 239pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

Another novel I reviewed in the hardcover and now released in paperback. Some good sf novels are based on chess games and some, like Teppers above, have the people as chess pieces. This is much what happens in QUEEN MAGIC, KING MAGIC, though this is not giving this novel it's due.

It is well thought out and the characters are well drawn and believable. Worth reading, especially in its paperback format.

ROBOT DREAMS by Isaac Asimov. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1986. 349pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

ROBOT DREAMS is a collection of Asimov's best robot stories in a book that is both visually appealing and stoutly made, with thick pages and first class printing.

The stories included are: LITTLE LOST ROBOT; ROBOT DREAMS; BREEDS THERE A MAN; HOSTESS; SALLY; STRIKEBREAKER; THE MACHINE THAT WON THE WAR; EYES DO MORE THAN SEE; THE MARTIAN WAY; FRANCHISE; JOKESTER; THE LAST QUESTION; DOES A BEE CARE? LIGHT VERSE; THE FEELING OF POWER; SPELL MY NAME WITH AN S; THE UGLY LITTLE BOY; THE BILLIARD BALL; TRUE LOVE; THE LAST ANSWER and LEST WE REMEMBER. A bargain.

*BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED. Novel by Wayland Drew. Screenplay by Brad Bird & Matthew Robbins & Brent Maddock & S>S> Wilson. Story by Mick Garris. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1987. 213pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

A good novel to buy a bright pre-teen for Christmas, if they are of the imaginative sort, or didn't see the film.

The novel follows the screen play pretty well straight down the tracks - the condemned building, the squatters living there, the two small spaceships that descend and (apparently) decide to help the squatters. A fun novel.

WRITING FICTION by Garry Disher. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1983. 97pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is a book written for the Australian market and in the back gives Australian references and Australian copyrights, etc.

Disher goes through the basic of writing and gives a good introduction to the mechanics of it - the subtitle is "An Introduction to the Craft". The chapters are headed: BEFORE YOU START; CHARACTER; PLOT; DIALOGUE; SETTING; POINT OF VIEW; INNOVATIVE FICTION; INVENTION & REVISION; A STORY AT WORK and IMPROVING A BAD STORY.

The information herein is clear and to the point - for anyone beginning writing, a good reference book.

THE MISENCHANTED SWORD by Lawrence Watt-Evans. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1985. 332pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

There are many fantasy stories that try for humour - some make it intentionally, some are so bad they do it unintentionally. For those that try for it, about a third make it - the other two-thirds fall on the wayside.

THE MISENCHANTED SWORD is one of those novels that make it. The humour is understated, but because the writing is flowing and because Watt-Evans is a good story teller, even though the plot has been overworked in the last twenty years, this novel is worth buying if you are a fantasy buff.

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF ISAAC ASIMOV by Isaac Asimov. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1953-1980. 320pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

The stories in this anthology have been picked by Asimov as the "best" of his sf in the short short story line.

They are: ALL THE TROUBLES IN THE WORLD; A LOINT OF PAW; THE DEAD PAST; DEATH OF A FOY; DREAMING IS A PRIVATE THING; DREAMWORLD; EYES DO MORE THAN SEE; THE FEELING OF POWER; FLIES; FOUND!; THE FOUNDATION OF SCIENCE FICTION SUCCESS; FRANCHISE; THE FUN THEY HAD; HOW IT HAPPENED; I JUST MAKE THEM UP, SEE!; I'M IN MARSPORT WITHOUT HILDA; THE IMMORTAL BARD; IT'S SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DAY; JOKESTER; THE LAST ANSWER; THE LAST QUESTION; MY SON, THE PHYSICIST; OBITUARY; SPELL MY NAME WITH AN S; STRIKEBREAKER; SURE THING; THE UGLY LITTLE BOY; and UNTO THE FOURTH GENERATION. A good collection

FORGING THE DARKSWORD; DOOM OF THE DARKSWORD and TRIUMPH OF THE DARKSWORD by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1987 & 1988. 391, 383 & 350pp. A\$8.95 each. On sale now.

Tracy Hickman & Margaret Weis are making quite a name for themselves in the juvenile fantasy market. Firstly they had the will received Dragonland Trilogy, and later they put together collections of short fantasy stories. Now has come this latest addition.

The plot of this trilogy is straight forward - Joram is born without magic abilities in a world where they are a necessity - if one does not have them, one is considered dead. He leaves the town where he grew up when things become too much and joins the Technologists. Here he meets a man who becomes his friend - Saryon and they leave the Technologists and go on a quest. Joram comes in possession of a magic absorbing sword - the Darksword - and takes on various villains. He meets and marries Gwendolyn and, in the TRIUMPH OF THE DARKSWORD, battle overwhelming odds to try to same his way of life.

Straightforward fantasy.

WHEN H.A.R.L.I.E WAS ONE Release 2 by David Gerrold. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1972, 1988. 287pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

No, that copyright statement isn't wrong. What Gerrold has done is rewrite the 1972 book, and updating the computer information. The characters are the same and the title. Some of the dialogue is different and the technical surprises also.

The book is about, of course, a computer software program, and the dialogue between Auberson and H.A.R.L.I.E as the program resident in the computer. I won't give any of the plot away, but the original novel came second (to Asimov) to winning a Hugo.

THE HOUNDS OF GOD by Judith Tarr. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1986. 363pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

This is volume three of The Hound and The Falcon Trilogy. It is a medieval fantasy, the background being the result of the work on her PhD by the authors.

In this volume, Alfred has settled as Lord chancleor of Rhyyana and his wife Thea bore him twins. Things were quiet for a time, then the Hounds of God - the Roman church's inquisitors fall on Rhiyana in an attempt to dispose of its elven leaders. And battle ensues.

A well written and put together fantasy. See if you can find the first two volumes in the series.

RUMORS OF SPRING by Richard Grant. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1987. 458pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

Hmm, these fantasies are coming out like jaffas out of a spilled box. RUMORS OF SPRING is a novel that has a more 'literate' style than those quest novels that the reader can pick up by the bushell.

It seems that the loggers and the exploiters had turned most countryside into a sort of giant suburbia, and soon there was only one forest left - a forest that was controlled by Balance Act Station 12. What the job of that forgotten station was, and what happened to the world when the Station started its Balancing Act will have to wait until you read the book.

KENDER, GULLY DWARVES & GNOMES; LOVE & WAR edited by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 364 & 365pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

These anthologies are Volumes 2 and 3 of the Dragon Lance tales, and are collections of short fantasy tales. Those in Volume 2 are: SNOWSTORM by Nancy Berberек; THE WIZARD'S SPECTACLES by Morris Simon; THE STORYTELLER by Barberra & Scott Segel; A SHAGGY DOG'S TALE by Danny Peary; LORD TOEDE'S DISASTROUS HUNT by Harold Bask; DEFINITIONS OF HONOUR by Richard Knaak; HEARTH CAT AND WINTER WREN by Nancy Berberек; "WANNA BET?" by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman; INTO THE HEART OF THE STORY by MICHAEL WILLIAMS & DAGGER FLIGHT by Nick O'Donohoe.

The stories in Volume 3 are: A GOOD KNIGHT'S TALE by Harold Bask; A PAINTERS VISION by Barbara & Scott Segel; HUNTING DESTINY by Nick O'Donohoe; HIDE AND GO SEEK by Nancy Berberек; BY THE MEASURE by Richard Knaak; THE EXILES by Paul Thompson and Tonya Carter; HEART OF GOLDMOON by Laura Hickman and Kate Novak; RAISTLIN'S DAUGHTER by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman; SILVER AND STEEL by Kevin Randle and FROM THE YEARNING FOR WAR AND THE WAR'S ENDING by Michael Williams.

If I didn't know any better I would say that Weis and Hickman run a very cliquish show.

OF CHIEFS AND CHAMPIONS by Robert Adams. Signet pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 238pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

There must be many of Robert Adams followers of his Horseclans series around - so here is his latest series to be released in Australia. This is the fourth volume of the Castaways in Time series, and tells of the battles on the North American continent between the Spanish soldiers and the red indians. Why the hell the modern Yankees take up the side of the indians is beyond me - must be EEO at work.

If you like solid adventure with sword and knifeplay and violence, you will probably like these. Not so much sf as adventure stories.

CLOSED SYSTEM and GOLD STAR by Zach Hughes. Signet pb. dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1983 and 1986. 173 and 222pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

These are what a long read sf fan would call the Mills & Boon of sf. The stories could just as well have been written in the 1940s about yachts in the South Pacific in the 1930s. They are action adventure with a modicum of science in the way of spaceships and outer planets. If you know any pre-teeners who like action books get these for them.

They are very light reading and at \$5.95 would make good Christmas presents for above fans or readers.

CLIVE BARKER'S BOOKS OF BLOOD Volumes 1-3 and 4-6 by Clive Barker. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1984 & 1985. 481 and 452pp. A\$14.95 ea. On sale now.

These volumes are definitely for horror fans. They are full of blood, guts and sex (literally). Sue managed to read halfway through volume one before giving up (she reads in bed to relax before going to sleep).

The stories in Vol. 1-3 are: THE BOOK OF BLOOD; THE MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN; THE YATTERING AND JACK; PIG BLOOD BLUES; SEX, DEATH AND STARSHINE; IN THE HILLS, THE CITIES; DREAD; HELLS EVENT; JACQUELINE ESS: HER WILL AND TESTAMENT; THE SKINS OF THE FATHERS; NEW MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE; SON OF CELLULOID; RAWHEAD REX; CONFESSION OF A (PORNOGRAPHERS) SHROUD; SCAPE-GOATS and HUMAN REMAINS.

Volume 4-6 stories are: THE BODY POLITIC; THE INHUMAN CONDITION; REVELATIONS; DOWN, SATAN!; THE AGE OF DESIRE; THE FORBIDDEN; THE MADONNA; BABEL'S CHILDREN; IN THE FLESH; THE LIFE OF DEATH; HOW SPOILERS BLEED; TWILIGHT AT THE TOWERS; THE LAST ILLUSION and THE BOOK OF BLOOD (A Postscript) ON JERUSALEM STREET.

Any of those titles tickle your fancy?

THE WOMEN AND THE WARLORDS and THE WALRUS AND THE WARWOLF by Hugh Cook. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1987 & 1988. 429 & 779pp. A\$9.95 & 10.95. On sale now.

The Chronicles of an Age of Darkness is getting to be quite a large work. The first two volumes were THE WIZARDS AND THE WARRIORS and THE WORDSMITHS AND THE WARGUILD.

These two novels deal with the long feuding warlords of the Collosnon Empire. In THE WOMEN AND THE WARLORDS, the heroine, Yen Olass is an oracle who soon finds herself hipdeep in trouble that she just knew she should have kept out of, but the Ondrask and Lord Alagrace talked her into it. The second novel follows the adventures of Drake as he is thrown out of his kingdom and the home of his love to travel through the barbarian lands.

THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT GETS DRAFTED by Harry Harrison. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1987. 256pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

With the publishing of the sf novel WEST OF EDEN, Harry Harrison reached far more readers than his previous works managed. So it will be to many new Harrison fans that the Stainless Steel Rat series will be a pleasant surprise.

The series is written tongue in cheek, and since they are written in the first person (always harder to write good humour in the first person) the reader will find them a fresh approach. If you missed the first novel (which I consider the better) then look in libraries for it. In THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT GETS DRAFTED, Slippery Jim diGriz is just eighteen years old and finds himself, as the title stated, in the military.

CONAN THE UNCONQUERED by Robert Jordan. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1983. 180pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

Robert Jordan has written some quite good novels in the Howard tradition with the continuing Conan series. In THE UNCONQUERED Conan sets off to claim an enchanted necklace from the men who stole off with it. Of course he finds many adventures along the way, including bedding beautiful women (one a virgin) and hacking his way through various monsters and men and then pitting his wits against a villainous sorcerer in the guise of jhandar of the Cult of Doom. Well written Sword & Sorcery.

MASTER WOLF by Rose Estes. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 314pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

MASTER WOLF is the first in a new fantasy series titled Greyhawk Adventures. It is set on the North American continent (judging by the map) and is peopled by six foot heroes and soft and curv'd heroines. And wolves. And fat, evil red-skinned monsters.

The plot is about a war between the tribe of Wolf Nomads and the Kobolds. The latter are a warlike race, and it is all the Wolf Nomads can do to keep them from killing them all. Mike and his wolf companion Tam Tur journey out to do battle.

THE HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING by Judith Tarr. Pan trade pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1986. 278 pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

Fantasy abounds. THE HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING is the first volume in The Avaryan Rising Trilogy.

The tale concerns Vadin and Mirain in his attempts to gain his place as rightful king of Ianon. It was foretold that he would attain the throne, but there were forces that determined he would not attain - forces that had their own ideas of who sat on the throne and who had the power behind it.

Easy to follow fantasy - not too much blood-letting.

LEGACY OF THE SWORD by Jennifer Roberson. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1986. 428pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

The third in a trilogy, LEGACY OF THE SWORD follows the adventures of Prince Donal who is of the race of Cheysuli who had been persecuted in their own land. In the two previous volumes, SHAPECHANGERS and THE SONG OF HOMANA, a revolution overthrew the usurper king and nearly came into their own.

Prince Donal has almost finished his training to enable him to take the throne, but has to talk over the general people into accepting him and uniting themselves against aggression, both internal and external. See if you can get the earlier volumes.

SKEEN'S SEARCH by Jo Clayton. Daw SF pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 299pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

I read this novel through, thinking when I first started it that I definitely wouldn't like it. The author takes a very personal attitude with the reader, addressing him or her directly as if it was a narrative rather than a novel. I got through it, though found that style distracting.

Skeen's search was for the world of Rallen - the lost homeworld of the Ykx. Some of her crew are Ykx, and because of this, when she eventually finds Rallen, she is able to at least attempt to save that world before the Gate closes, sealing them off from her own universe.

HOGAR, LORD OF THE ASYR by John Rufus Sharpe III. Signet pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 223pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Hogar's world is that of the post-Ragnorak age, about 12,000 years ago. The novel is straight-forward sword and sorcery, with gnomes, white hairy beasts, and follows the attempts of Hogar to win his way to a throne.

One of his problems is that he has to obtain the Ravensword, which, like the sword of Arthur, is the most direct way to the throne. He also must battle various gods and goddesses as well as the Fire Lords of Thool.
Rollicking adventure.

LADY BLADE, LORD FIGHTER by Sharon Green. Signet pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 366pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

The cover on this book is one that usually sports Signet paperbacks - done in a clear style that seemingly is aimed at the juvenile. Which is what this novel is not. Oh, a juvenile could read it and miss most of the more deeper points.

The heroine of the novel is the Lady Sofaltis, who had been sent off while she was quite young to the Silver Gleaming company who had turned her out, not quite as a lady should be - she has an expert swordswoman - a Blade - and had her own independent ideas of how people, men especially, should behave.

I liked it.

THE AWAKENERS by Sheri S. Tepper. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1987. 465pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

THE AWAKENERS is a novel set on a world that is not earth. Apart from the fact it has three moons, there are aliens living among the human colonists.

The main feature of the colony is the World River - which breadth is halfway to the horizon. There are 2,400 settlements on the Northshore alone. Sheri Tepper has a good imagination and she has set it to work with this novel. It is internally consistent and keeps the reader engrossed.

With the price of paperback these days, \$24.95 is getting to be a bargain for a hardcover.

DARKSPELL by Katharine Kerr. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1987. 363pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

The sequel to DAGGERSPELL, DARKSPELL continues the story of Nevyn, Rhodry and Jill in the land of Deverry. The world where elves and humans live in an uneasy truce is broken into violence again by the sorcerers as they attempt to ensure that there shall never be an alliance between the humans and the 'little' people.

The three venture on to attempt to quell the sorcerers plans and it falls to Nevyn, old though he is, to bear the brunt of the attack. The background of the novel is Celtic, which will give the widely-read reader of modern fantasy some idea of what to expect.

ALWAYS COMING HOME by Ursula le Guin. Grafton Trade pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1985. 523pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

This is a beautifully produced volume, one could almost say lovingly produced. It is full of poetry, illustrations (nearly one every page) and connecting text, covering the history, archaeology and possibly future of the Valley. The people of the Valley are the Kesh, a rustic people living in the future, in a large valley in Northern California. The book follows the ways of the people as they meet the outriders of a force of armed men travelling through.

Ursula le Guin has created a work of art with this.. you can't call it a novel.. menage. It is something you can dip into and come back later too, and think on later.

If you see it on sale it is worth buying and reading. And savouring. But you will find you must be in the right mood to fully appreciate it, as some readers will find it slow going. It is not an adventure book as such, more a future archaeological find and the time and effort le Guin put into the book is readably seen by the look, feel and the way the book reads - smooth and deep.

VOYAGE OF VENGEANCE by L. Ron Hubbard. New Era h/c, dist in Aust by New Era. (C) 1987. 377pp. A\$26.95. On sale now.

Volume 7 in the Mission Earth series. If you have been following Soltan Gris in his attempts to eliminate the Countess Krak and Jettero Heller you will no doubt want to collect all ten volumes.

In VOYAGE OF VENGEANCE Soltan rescues J. Walter Madman and decides to really get stuck into the Earth - and to ensure that it does what it is supposed to do and smother itself in pollution and drek. Gris sets various plans into motion. Unfortunately (for him) his plans always seem to come to grief, leaving him slightly embarrassed and his enemies - the Countess Krak and Jettero - free to try to undermine him again.

A swift moving adventure story with sniping at the Establishment and the more outre doings of the 1980s.

THE WAVE AND THE FLAME by Marjorie Bradley Kellog with William B. Rossow. VG SF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1986. 358pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

There are some books that shouldn't be published separately when they are part of a series - books that you get engrossed in and can't wait to finish them to find out the mystery behind the plot. THE WAVE AND THE FLAME is such a book. It is book one of Lear's Daughters.

COMPLEX is a terran multi-system company which is one of the biggest in the business of mining offworld. They land scientific teams on newly opened planets to prospect for minerals and do basic (token) scientific explorations. The planet they are currently exploring is a desert world with a population of cave dwellers. The Lander sets down and the team starts to unravel the language. They are hardly into the first translations when things start to go wrong - violent storms nearly wreck the lander and the crew are taken into the caves. Some of the party discover the aliens are apparently not all they seem.

Well written hardcore sf. *Recommended*.

WIZARDRY AND WILD ROMANCE by Michael Moorcock. VG SF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1987. 222pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

This is a different book for Michael Moorcock to be putting out, though with his background and the books he has written, it is something he has experience with.

The subtitle is A Study of Epic Fantasy. Nowhere does Moorcock define Epic Fantasy - indeed he states early on that he has no intention of doing so. The chapter headings will give people some idea of his subject matter: ORIGINS; THE EXOTIC LANDSCAPE; THE HERO AND HEROINES; WIT AND HUMOUR; EPIC POOH and EXCURSIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS. Throughout he gives him highly opinionated ideas, and quotes other (mainstream) literary writers to back up these ideas. I found the book interesting in giving a background to Moorcock's writings and background ideas, and through my way some new ways of looking at the background and plots of those fantasies of the present day - including some of the Mills & Boon!

THE TOLKIEN CALENDAR 1988 - artist Roger Garland. Unwin publication, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1988. 12 full colour plates, page sizes 34x37 cm. A\$17.95. On sale now.

The illustrations in this calendar are extremely good, and the set-out of the monthly dates is done in a strip down the right hand page, with a sand coloured background colour. Plain but easy to read.

The twelve illustrations are of a distinctive style and are more line illustrations than paintings. They are: THU, AS WOLF MORE GREAT; MORIA; THE RETURN OF THE SHADOW; OLD MAN WILLOW; THE FALLS OF RAUROS; LUTHIEN IN THE WOODS OF NELDORETH; THE HAVEN OF MORIONDE; SMAUG; HOBBITON; EARENDIL AND ELWING; PELARGIR AND RIVER ANDUIN and THE FALL OF GONDOLIN. It is obvious that each artist has his/her own vision of the landscapes and people of THE LORD OF THE RINGS, as does each reader (and film director). Overall a nice Christmas gift.

THE WITCHES OF KARRES by James H. Schmitz. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1966. 344pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

I really like the physical appearance of these VGSF paperbacks - the covers are well done (in this case the cover artwork is by Josh Kirby, who has done the DiscWorld novels) and the paper is nice thick hardcover paper inside, which makes the book handle very well.

THE WITCHES OF KARRES is a classic sf novel which I had not read before this. I had read that it was very good humorous sf and had looked forward to reading it. I wasn't disappointed. The Witches of the title are the inhabitants of the planet Karres. The first contact captain Pausert has of the inhabitants is when he buys (in a rescue bid) three slave children. He had wondered why the men who owned the three girls had been so willing to sell them, and it was later, when he was back in space in his ship that he found out.

The humour is not "A slambang space happy fantasy" as the backcover blurb would have it - it is rather a well written and more subtle work than that would imply.

AEGYPT by John Crowley. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1987. 390pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Don't expect this novel to be one of great adventures and swashbuckling or you'll be disappointed. I found that it started off slowly, but grew in power all the way through, coming back again and again to its central theme.

The main plot of AEGYPT is set in the late 1970, even though its threads weave back to the sixteenth century and earlier. The book is a fantasy the like of those others of the mainstream: THE LORD OF THE RINGS and THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS in that its appeal is universal. Universal, that is, in that its appeal is to the intellect, not the emotions.

Agypt is the mythical country that Egypt is the physical manifestation of that land of magicians, living gods and lost knowledge. The story follows Pierce Moffett as he wakes up from his stupefied life and breaks with it to follow his boyhood dream - though he is a historian by profession he decides to follow an idea he has had from boyhood embodied in the idea of Agypt, a land he dreamed about, and a city in that land.

As a man he comes across the idea in some strange places, and eventually comes to believe it himself: Once, the world was not as it has since become...

Highly Recommended.

NEMESIS by Louise Cooper. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1988. 246pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Louise Cooper is the author of the Time Master Trilogy. The Indogo series is of a more ambitious length - eight volumes. At two-hundred and forty six pages by eight, that is a lot of reading. The second volume is Inferno...

In the first book Princes Anghara lets the demons created by mankind in the long ago back into the world. The Earth goddess is not pleased - she makes Anghara into an immortal (she can't kill herself even if she wants to) and sends her on a quest - to capture or dispose of the demons she released and make the earth safe again.

Judging by the first book this may be an interesting series.

LAST SWORD OF POWER by David Gemmell. Legend trade pb and h/c, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1988. 274pp. A\$14.95 and h/c \$29.95. On sale now.

The heading on the cover of this novel is "Pure Fantasy". The setting is Britain and is the sequel to GHOST KING.

Uther Pendragon is trapped and barbarians are on the point of overrunning the country. There are various Romans as well as native Britains in the plot. And of course there is the sword of power - and the Lord of the Lance.

I found the book written in a clear style and easy to follow and read. Many of the latest fantasies require working at to read, not that they are hard to understand, but the writing is rough and the scenes are strung together like unmatched beads in a necklace.

THE PRICE OF POWER by Rose Estes. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 316pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

This is a reprint of an American TSR paperback. The (tm) is Greyhawk Adventures and this is volume two of same.

The novel follows the adventures of Mika as he journeys across the continent trying to keep up the Wolf Nomads' code of honour. He has to change his companion wolf into a troll in a hurry to save the wolf's life, and finds that his beautiful princess has been changed into a she wolf (to use a phrase this book uses). In addition he himself has a problem - he has a demon take him in his possession, and when he angers said demon he finds his fingers turn one by one into talons. He isn't really happy about this.

The age level of these novels is late teens (or dungeon and dragon buffs), though they aren't written down in any way.

VOLKHAVAAR by Tanith Lee. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1977. 202pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Volkhavaar is the name of a mighty magician of old, and how he grew in power from a normal man to one who sought mastery over others. Shaina was a slave girl who had nothing to call her own, except what she naturally could - her thoughts and the depths of her body. Her owners thought they owned her, body and soul, but an old woman proved them wrong.

As the story progresses the reader learns more of the world of the magician - growing more evil by the day - and the slave girl, who manages to fight her way into the city wherein the magician dwells.

Love plays a part in the story also, and in the end it triumphs, though there are twists along the way.

BERSERKER MAN by Fred Saberhagen. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1979. 219pp incl essay. A\$8.95. On sale now.

The Berserker books started off a series in sf that has created an image of mad machines - in that they are against Life - that is proving to be enduring. BERSERKER MAN is one of several novels by Saberhagen dealing with mankind's fight against the alien machines.

The Taj was a more-than-sun-sized construct found near the core of the galaxy. When a human scout ship ventured into it it found features that the two female crew member found almost impossible to describe. While in the alien space the two crew members had sex and, when the female member found she was pregnant, she had it removed at the nearest planet. Eleven years later the battle against the berserkers was still going downhill and a search among the billions of humanity for humans with a special sort of ability to handle a new weapon - Lancelot - found the now grown boy that was the union in the Taj. The berserkers, aided by goodlife, found out also, and the chase was on.

Classic SF Adventure that has caught on well. This book is dated 1979; I don't know if Saberhagen has written any in the last couple of years, but I for one would like to see more.

SHIP OF STRANGERS by Bob Shaw. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1978. 234pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

SHIP OF STRANGERS reminded me strongly of VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE by A.E. Van Vogt which was published back in the 1950s. It too was made up of short stories cobbled together for 'novel' publication. The seams show in the beginning paragraphs of each section, though it struck me that VOYAGE had a smoother transition.

SHIP is about a ship by the name of Sarafand, its 'captain' and crew of men and women who map uninhabited planets for the space service. They could not see much in the surveying, but it paid well... were well. Along the way, between months of boredom there were episodes of adventure, though few and far apart. When they did arrive though, they were hum dingers. Like the time the Sarafand's navigation boards were not all they could be and the ship found itself thirty million light years from earth, in a section of space that was shrinking and no hope of getting back.

Intelligent SF adventure.

FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS by Paul J. McAuley. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1988. 253pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

This novel is Paul McAuley's first. He has had published short stories in the sf prozines so he is not new to actually being published.

Some years before the time of this novel humans exploring a remote solar system were attacked and the survivors limped home, telling of enemies who blew themselves up rather than be captured. A planet was later found several system away with what were apparently a degenerate species that could be that of the enemy. A scientific team, backed by an orbiting Navy, is on the surface attempting to unravel the mystery behind them. One of the team is a newly sent down telepath, and the plan is to see what she can find out that they couldn't.

What she found and what ensued make up quite a well researched hard sf novel. There are rough patches in the novel which with further experience the author should be able to avoid in the future. The writing is clear and the author gets his background across without too much lecturing, though some of the perusing of the heroine could be a little more subtle.

All in all a good first effort.

THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED and THE BOOK OF THE BEAST by Tanith Lee. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1988. 229 & 196pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

The Book of the Damned is a two volumed series, set in the city of Paradys. The main character was an effeminate type by the name of Andre St. Jean. He had a crony, Philippe, who together with his cronies, played the rich princes.

In the first few pages of THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED, Andre comes into possession of a ruby scarab in strange circumstances - an apparent madman on the run presses the ring into his hand before making off with a black rider and two dogs after him. Ever since the ring comes into his possession events take a strange turn - the girl he lusts after (the old baron's wife) dies and her brother takes him to duel. Andre is killed, and after dying, wakes up, in seems, in the body of the dead girl.

Things follow on and the two books follow the strange and unreal life of those who come off second best against her.

Not quite the usual from Tanith Lee.

WILLOW a novel by Wayland Drew, based on a screenplay by Bob Dolman, from a story by George Lucas. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1988. 276pp. A\$8.99. On sale now.

WILLOW is the novelisation of a successful movie released in the USA. I won't go into the plot - it will spoil both the book and movie for you.

The book is written in a spare clean style making it easy to read. It seems to follow the screenplay scenes and scene breaks. There is a colour portfolio of eight pages, which enchances the volume.

By the time the reader sees this review he or she will probably have seen the movie, and the book will make a good keepsake, and would make an excellent present for those young fantasy inclined teenagers, and is the type of book parents could read to pre-teens also.

Quite good for a novel from a screenplay.

THE CRYSTAL SHARD by R.A. Salvatore. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 333pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

Another fantasy novel from TST. In this novel the story concerns the discovery of the crystal shard - a device that had been long lost and which, if found, would bring destruction to all and sundry.

Wulfgar was a young barbarian who with his friends the elf Drizi and tge dwarf Bruenor was hoping to join the other barbarians in attacking the Ten-Towns. As in most of these sword and blood novels, the action is fast and furious and sustained.

Coming out in the Christmas period is good in that they are likely to be bought by parents in search of ways to keep teens busy and off the streets. If you know anyone who is into this type of fantasy - this stays in the D & D type bounds.

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