

THE MENTOR



THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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EDITORIAL

When I finished writing the Editorial in THE MENTOR 65 I thought that was a nice sized zine. At 28 pages it wasn't too thick and came in under the weight size limitation for one of the cheaper postage classes - both in Australia and Overseas mail. So I posted it off and waited.

It appears that there was a mention of THE MENTOR in one of the Australian writer's magazines; over the past few months I have been receiving stories from sf new readers I had not heard from before. This was all to the good, as one of the basic reasons that THE MENTOR was started in the first place was to help people into print, both with fact and fiction. So, in the last couple of weeks all this fiction started to appear.

'Ahah!' I thought, 'Just what I wanted; at least I won't run out of fiction.' So I started typing them up. It was when I filled one side of the disc and started with 70k on the other than I thought that I had a growing issue, even with 12 point Times type. I *was* quite surprised, though, when I did a page view and found that I had over 70 pages. I had made the margins bigger because I had thought the pages in TM 65 looked a little daunting with all that small typeface, but I only took off about 3mm.

I did have Jozef Szekeres' Portfolio, though, and this was eleven pages with blank backs because of the possibility of show-through. When I received all the new material I liked it so much that I decided to put it all in this issue, though there *is* a piece left for next ish. With all this fiction, I am *definitely* after other material - that is, articles, poetry and more LoCs. I would prefer Australian contributors for the fiction, but am also looking for overseas columnists, especially from the UK (which would be nice. . .)

Talking about the Portfolio - it is part of a continuing series on Australian artists in THE MENTOR. Julie Vaux had five pages in TM 48 and there was a mixed-artists one in TM 53. This actual series, though, started in TM 61 with a Portfolio by Malcolm English, though there had been one with Soviet artists in TM 59. The one in this issue, though, is part of a continuing series. Later on in the year I hope to feature other Australian artists who have not had a wide exposure in fanzines in Australia and overseas.

There is a bit of convention fever running in Sydney at the moment: SYNCON 90 is coming up in the middle of the year at Richmond at the old Agricultural College - now part of the University of Western Sydney (the same venue as ECCENTRICON several years ago. Two future convention committees meeting are those for MEDTREK 4, run by Susan, and to be held over the October long weekend in '91 at Richmond; and the SYDNEY IN '95 Bidding Committee, which is getting organised to start drumming up business for that event. They have a meeting coming up tomorrow (Feb 25) and I have been invited as an onlooker.

For those interested, this zine was input on an Apple //e using Appleworks 2, printed on an ImageWriter II dot matrix printer using Timeout's Superfonts. The major headings were done using Publish It!, as was the Contents Page.

This Editorial is one of the last things to be typed, except for several book reviews that will be added later to the Review section and the list of future books. All being well, TM 66 will be printed next weekend (3-4th March) and will be in the mail when I can save up enough money. I have run out of Plates (at \$109 for the last box of 200 they are an expensive block buy) and have about ten reams of paper left; and no envelopes.

THE WHEELING SYSTEM DARKENS

By Shane Dix

The toaster came to life with a low burning hum that melted the crisp silence. Bunch huddled over the tarnished metal box, allowing its mild warmth to embrace the bitter chill that masked his features. He reached down into the pile of video cassettes at his side and pulled one out, feeding in into the mouth of the recorder before him. It snatched the cassette greedily from his hand, digesting it with a single mechanical belch that reminded Bunch of a spring snapping.

He pressed the "play" button and leant back against the corroded husk of a twin tub washing machine, wrapping a frayed and tattered blanket about his shoulders.

The picture was grainy and scratched, and the quality of the sound extremely poor, but Bunch fixed his attention to the small black and white screen with delight. He recognised the film as one he had seen before; long ago now, from an era that had since become lost to the world.

His interest in the movie was superficial, and occasionally he became distracted by the digital display of the recorder that pulsated like a steady heartbeat. He was more of a documentary man these days, though was prepared to endure other things for the sake of something to watch. For Bunch the pleasure had always been in the watching itself more than anything else; and he stared now at the screen, without really seeing it, without hearing it, and smiled appreciatively to himself.

He had stumbled upon the power source earlier that morning. He had been wandering for the better part of the night, idly following a riverlet of computer tape meandering between banks of dishwashers and tumblers and the like. It had taken him into the clearing where he'd heard the familiar thrum in the still morning air.

Excitedly he had scoured the area, kicking aside tangles of lengthy electrical cord and overturning crates which spilled their contents of electric shavers and hair dryers across the ground. Finally he had toppled an old and rusted oven, and there beneath it had been the shallow fist-sized hole.

It was not an unusual find considering its proximity to the wall. Not many people came out this far anymore. Most tended to keep to the centre of the region, living in close knit communities that had established about tightly packed clusters of power outlets. There were only a few like Bunch that actually lived in the outskirts; living alone, moving from campsite to campsite worrying about whether they'd ever find another appliance that ever worked.

But despite the rarity of people here, Bunch knew that within a day or so others would

learn of his discovery. His activities would be like a magnet to the curious nomads of the area, drawing them in to investigate. Word would spread fast about his find, and soon his privacy would be lost to the drifters, all gathering around the power source in hopes of gaining access for their equipment.

The thought upset Bunch, as he had come to enjoy his solitude. He had grown accustomed to it in recent times. It had been days since he had spoken to anyone, and even longer since he'd had the satisfaction of a half-way decent conversation. You just didn't find too many people that were capable of it in the outskirts.

He looked out across the carpet of debris that spread around him, and at the enormous mounds of hardware that rose along the perimeter of the clearing. There was so much for him to do here, such a diverse selection of electrical goods to toy with. He could spend his whole life here and not use the same appliance twice. He knew that he'd probably never come upon such an ideal location again, and the idea of others coming along and spoiling it for him made him sad and tired.

Bunch pulled himself up wearily and shrugged the damp blanket from his shoulders. He strolled over to a hill of refrigerators and stereo units - leaving the television to spit out its crackly dialogue behind him - and began to scale the wan and rusty slopes.

It was difficult at first to get a decent foothold, due to the smoothness of the surface and the moisture that remained from the previous night's downpour; but the higher he climbed the easier it became for him, until soon he was scrambling up with a nimble gait.

Half-way up, Bunch felt the long warm fingers of the sun lightly touch his clammy skin for the first time that day. He glanced over to the immense wall that had kept his private camp in shadow throughout the morning hours, and saw the bright and burning eye peering over the lip to see him. It felt good, but reminded him of the chill that enveloped him.

He continued to clamber up the slippery incline until he reached the summit and was able to see over the top of the wall. It was strange to see out into the lush, green gardens beyond, while behind him rolled lazy mounts of drab greys and sickly yellows. He often wondered if he had made the right decision in remaining behind the wall, or whether he should have taken to the gardens with the others.

He could remember when the wall had been built, when the world had been seized with a new conscience. It was like a wave of change spreading over the globe, with thousands abandoning their easy lifestyles in preference to a more "natural" alternative.

Large tracts of land were cordoned off by enormous walls, and into these was deposited all the scientific gadgetry of man's computer age. Moats of soft peat and refuse ran along the inside of the walls, making it impossible for anything to be removed from the areas. And even if it were possible, there would be no point to it. There was nowhere to plug anything in anymore, except for the special power sources that proliferated the enclosures.

But everyone that wanted to leave were free to go. Nobody was stopping them. Everybody had been given the choice of whether they wanted to live outside or inside the confines of the walls. Bunch had chosen the latter, as it was here that he felt the most comfortable - with the appliances he had grown up with.

As he gazed over the wall, Bunch saw a young couple strolling between the trees. It was a serene picture: their slim and naked bodies silhouetted against the rich green of the fields, a gentle breeze swirling leaves at their feet.

Immediately Bunch felt envious. He ran his grubby hands over the damp and



uncomfortable rags that draped his podgy figure; feeling foolish in them, but afraid that without them he would be left vulnerable.

After a while the couple ambled away, becoming obscured by the trees and bushes, and Bunch turned his attention to some distant activity he could make out through the cleft of a valley. He had seen it before; it was the tearing down of a city.

He could hear the far off rumblings of the buildings being levelled, and for a moment he suffered an unsettling sensation of having lost something personal. It was all so final. After this city had been demolished, all the remaining equipment would be dismantled and dropped behind the wall.

The idea frightened Bunch, and he suddenly wished he were outside the wall instead of in. There seemed to be so many more advantages outside; the freedom, the beauty, the abundance of food! It was so hard these days to come by anything nutritious, and he was constantly feeling fatigued and wheezy. He couldn't even walk for long stretches anymore without getting tired.

He considered approaching the authorities to tell them of his change of heart, that he wanted to live outside the wall after all. It wouldn't be too late. The final section of wall wouldn't be completed until the last of the buildings were torn down and *all* of the equipment was in the confined area. After that though, there would be no turning back. He'd be in for good.

The idea of leaving appealed to him, and he smiled to himself, contemplating how many days it would take to reach the unbuilt section...

Then from below, the sound of glass crunching underfoot, and his reverie was broken. He looked down to see an old and wiry man wander into the clearing. Suddenly both alarmed and annoyed, Bunch scurried down the slope, sliding clumsily on metallic sheets and waving his arms frantically as the old man encroached upon the television set.

'*Doa't*' Bunch yelled as the man prepared to yank the plug from the socket.

The man stopped what he was doing and looked up with a surprised and bewildered expression. He raised a two bar heater in front of him and grunted excitedly. Bunch snatched the heater and threw it as far as he could, pushing the beggar after it. The old man collected his heater and left the area disgruntled, mumbling under his breath as he hobbled away.

But Bunch knew now that his camp was no longer safe and private. The old man would soon return with others, all hungry for the power source. By night fall Bunch would be forced to give it up and move on once again.

The thought of going to the outside had all but left him. There was a certain security he found with machinery, a feeling he didn't think would ever leave him. And besides, there was no hurry for getting out to the gardens. He had at least another two months before the final section of the wall would be completed.

Bunch went over to the pile of video cassettes and chose another one to play. He found one with the remnants of a label, and from the faded writing could make out that it was a documentary on Africa.

He ejected the tape that was playing and discarded it on the ground, then inserted the new one. He picked up the blanket and wrapped it once more about his shoulders, settling back against the twin tub, watching with appreciation as the black and white landscape of Africa flickered on to the screen; with the thought of leaving nothing more than a vague and uncomfortable notion.

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #7

By Buck Coulson

There was a British fanzine awhile back in which a con report of an Australian convention mentioned that the bar closed at some point. In the next issue, readers sent in exclamations of horror, and one fan suggested that if any such thing happened at a British convention, there would be a riot.

I've only been to one British convention -- the 1979 Brighton Worldcon -- and I have no idea if it's typical. I haven't been to any Australian cons at all, but they can't be any less inviting to a US fan than Brighton was, in general. (I loved the con because I got to meet a lot of British fans that I'd never have been able to see otherwise, and it had two of the best program items I've ever seen in my life, but the areas set aside for fan relaxation were, in a word, lousy.) There was no "convention suite" and almost no parties, because of hotel rules about liquor. One can't, I gather, hold a fan party in England without liquor; nobody would come. There was a "fan lounge", with rock music blaring in it all the time. There were a couple of bars, also with loud music. The quietest place to talk was the hotel lobby, and one couldn't sit down there.

I go to conventions to talk to people. It's one reason why I huckster; at a US convention, the huckster room is the best place to meet people; nearly everyone at the con goes through it at one time or another, and one can make plans for later meetings if desired. (Of course, huckstering also pays our expenses, these days, but we were doing it long before we needed the profits, and before there were any actual profits. At first, it merely reduced the expenses a bit.) It's a place where anyone who wants to see Juanita or I can find at least one of us. For neofans, it can be a place of pleasant surprises. A couple of years ago at Millennicon, a couple of people at their first convention came up to the table and talked to Juanita; I was talking to someone else at the time. Then Lois McMaster Bujold wandered in, said she hated to eat alone, and invited Juanita and the neos to have brunch with her. (I suppose I was invited too, but someone had to watch the table.) Juanita said the neos were a bit overwhelmed; first con, and here they were eating with the GoH and a big-name author.

There are usually several parties at any US convention. These days, Juanita spends her evenings filking and I hit the parties -- and drop in on the sing now and then, as well. Mostly,

the parties are hosted by groups sponsoring another convention. Worldcon bidders are often there, industriously trying to sign up members, and other consoms will usually send a few people over to have a party and let prospective attendees know about their convention. Standard party refreshments are some sort of munchie -- pretzels, potato chips, cheese, raw vegetables for the fitness-minded, and various soft drinks. Occasionally beer is provided; ~~very~~ occasionally one might find hard liquor. Recently, various groups have been trying to provide something different in the way of refreshment; one group hosting an Indiana convention provided rumballs, fresh cider, home-made beer, and pumpkin butter to spread on crackers. Another had some sort of uncooked candy -- they called it fudge, but it wasn't -- made with the water replaced by pure alcohol, 200 proof. But the staples are cola and potato chips.

Convention suite staples are cola and chips, too, though Chambanacon and a few others pride themselves on lots of beer and some hard liquor. All free to convention members, though conventions are tightening up on underage drinking. Most have committee members serving as bartenders, and quite often anyone under drinking age gets a different-colored badge from adult attendees. Some cons still allow members to acquire their own drinks.

In just the last few years, most conventions have provided both a smoking and a non-smoking con suite. At first, the non-smoking section was pretty empty; lately attendance has been more or less equal in each. (I always check both; depends on where the better conversations are. Though actually, most of the best gatherings seem to occur in hallways.)

The amount of parties, of course, depend on the number of attendees; a really small convention might not have anything but the con suite. By the time you get 400 or 500 people -- fairly standard for a midwestern regional con -- you'll get a few individual parties as well. Size varies enormously. The con at Nashville, IN, last year, had under 200 people, as did Context, in Columbus, OH. On the other hand, Marcon -- also in Columbus -- had close to 2000 fans, and Windycon in Chicago had more than that; I don't know the exact figure but someone said 2700. (I think that's a bit high; a concom member had told me a couple of years before that they were trying to keep it under 2000 people because the hotel facilities couldn't handle anything much larger. Admittedly, the facilities were strained, last year.) Windycon had all sorts of parties, from an invitation-only group in Martha Beck's room to a meeting of Christian Fandom. I missed Martha's party because I couldn't find her room; it was in a part of the hotel I'd never been in before. I did look in on the Christians, but they were all enthused over right-wing politics and I didn't stay long.

US fandom is beginning to break up into subdivisions, all of which have their own conventions. Corflu and others for die-hard fanzine fans, several cons for filkers only, media cons, and Context and others for science fiction readers. Then there's the Midwest Space Development Conference for space-travel enthusiasts. (Interestingly, the spacers import filksingers for entertainment; Juanita and I had all expenses paid one year, Julia Ecklar has been to several, and of course Jordin Kare works in a space lab and filks for his own amusement.)

Incidentally, fandom may get its own astronaut in the near future. I talked to filker and former Australian Mitchell Clapp at Windycon and he said he'd just come from an interview with NASA. (He said the interview was very pleasant and the physical was very painful.) He has the right credentials; he's an Air Force pilot *and* one of the Bright Young Men in current physics. He also came to the US in the first place because it had the space program and Australia didn't. (He had dual citizenship as a child, and grew up in Australia, but had to choose as an adult and took the US.) I just hope he gets a tape produced before he becomes too busy to record.

Juanita and I go almost entirely to midwestern conventions; sometimes we'll make a Worldcon outside our own area, but otherwise anything beyond a 400-mile range of our house has to offer us inducements. (A surprising number do.) Over the past several years, we've made it to regional conventions in Tulsa, OK, Kansas City, Little Rock, AR, Oakland, CA

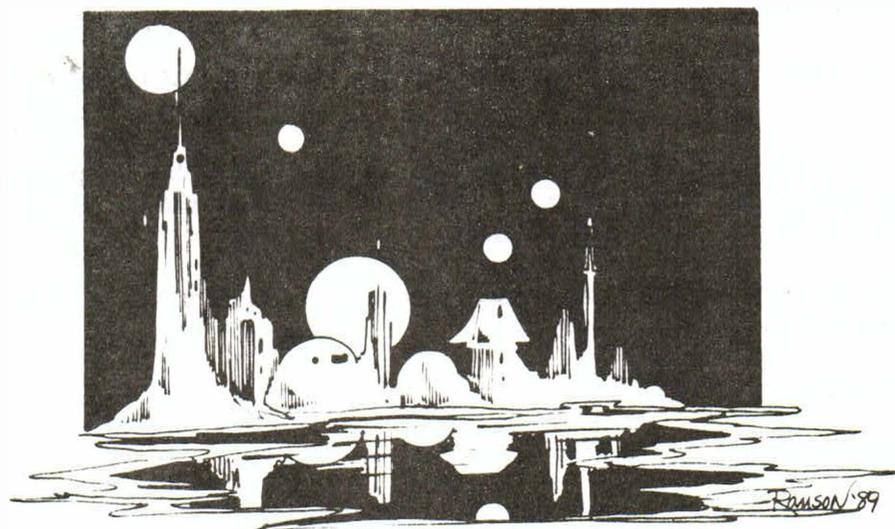
(twice for Juanita, once for me, since it was a filkcon), and Juanita has been to Denver. Next month we head for Birmingham, AL. So I can't generalize about conventions in the east -- we did get to one very small con in New York City -- or south or west. In the midwest I suppose we've attended between one and two hundred cons, over a 37-year period.

Possibly it's all in what one is used to; presumably the British *like* to scream at one another over rock music. They scream at one another enough in their fanzines, so possibly one aspect of their fandom affected the other one. (I wouldn't guess which came first.) Presumably there are fans in all countries who can't enjoy themselves unless they're getting sloshed; as far as I'm concerned, that group is diminishing in midwest US fandom, and I'm glad of it. The Australian fans I've met in the US all seem able to adapt to US-type fandom (well, all but one of them...) I've actually met more Australians in the US than I have British, which seems wrong, somehow; they're closer.

Ah well, enough of that. We were supposed to have a fannish Christmas, but it didn't come off. A group had intended to come down from Milwaukee on the Thursday before Christmas and stay until Sunday; Rose Eierman, Barb Riedel, and Barb's two daughters. But that day the temperature was -18F here, and colder in Milwaukee, and Rose's car wouldn't start. Then Bruce and two friends planned to be here Christmas day, but his car developed transmission trouble. John, Sandra and Marie Miesel did make it here on the 28th. So we had a Christmas exchange on Christmas Eve for just Juanita and I, and another on the 28th with the Miesels. The third will come when the DeWeeses get down from Milwaukee in mid-January, and a fourth whenever Bruce gets his car operating. Sort of pleasant; strings the holidays out a bit instead of having one great gift-giving bash. Christmas cards trickled in from 2 weeks before Christmas until ten days after; I'm not sure they've all arrived yet. I suspect Marie of presenting me with an extra gift; she had a cold when she was here, and I developed one -- or flu -- a couple of days later. Right now it's nice that there are no conventions in the near future, because I can't talk. I can whisper, and that's all. Otherwise, I'm pretty well over the infection, but I'll be happier when my voice clears up. I suppose I could rent out my present voice for obscene phone calls, but otherwise it's very inconvenient. May none of you out there ever have the affliction.

To close with the theme of the column: conventions are worthwhile because the *people* present; alcohol is irrelevant.

- Buck Coulson -



UNDER PRESSURE

by David Tanseg

Echo off...
Planetary Survey #37D25 - EOD/1
Ursa Nova System; Planet Yridian
2353:12:4 0650 hrs.
Go to...

Like a wart on an elephant's trunk the *Kurnell's* command module rode the massive fusion drive.

In his confined cabin Brash lay on the bunk, watching the 10cm TV screen fixed at eye-level to the shelf above. Comedy, drama, educational, there were enough programs to last an astronaut a hundred lifetimes in deep space.

A voice erupted from a concealed speaker: 'Brash! Anything good on the idiot box tonight?'

It was Miller, his team partner, from the other side of the oxygen-generating plant separating their cabins. One hour out of cryosleep and he was ready to party. Miller would already have swallowed one or three OP Bundy capsules by now.

'I was just getting interested in some poetry,' responded Brash. 'The Eighteenth Century Aussie visionary poet Erasmus Darwin.'

'Sounds great.' Sarcastically.

'What're you going to watch?'

'I thought I'd check out some science-fiction.' Bellows of laughter.

Miller was from Broken Hill, Brash from Weipa. For the last century NASA, ESA and ASA had sent only Australians as planetary surveyors and bridgehead colonists. They were the only suitable nationality, it was widely known, due to their lack of cultural blinkers and the fact they were used to wide, empty spaces.

'I've got something better than the telly, anyhow,' came Miller's voice. 'Switch my pic through to your screen.'

'Last time I did that all I got was a brown-eye.'

'No tricks this time - you gotta see this.'

Brash sighed and pressed a button on the arm console.

The voiceover of Darwin's poetry and the background of Sydney Harbour vanished. In its place -

Ursa Nova burned against the blackness of space.

Brash inhaled sharply. 'We can't be *that* close to it.'

'I hooked into the forward telescope. Maximum magnification. Notice the slight distortion due to FTL slipstream. We'll be there in five hours.'

'Meet you in the control room in five *minutes*.'

*** *** ***

A thumbnail sketch of Ursa Nova.

Approximate position: the same distance from Andromeda as Andromeda is from Earth, in a straight line.

A mega-giant, one-tenth of a light-year across, supporting a family of 100,000 planets, orbiting in all planes like the electrons of an atom rather than the "wheel-like" orbit of Sol's planets.

Ursa Nova's massive gravity had caught comets, nebulae and even a couple of Sol-size stars, all revolving about her in a complex pattern of orbits. A previous expedition had chartered dozens of planets. Most were either gaseous, or too hot, or too cold, or possessed a too dense atmosphere for colonisation. The current survey program aimed at identifying suitable worlds for the later bridgehead ships.

One Earth-type had shown signs of civilisation (the presence of burnt fossil fuels in an atmosphere profile) but had not been approached. It was towards that planet the *Kurnell* was now destined.

Planet Yridian.

Brash slouched in one of the twin command chairs, examining a crystal globe the size of

an orange. Inside the globe were two needles, a red one which always pointed to Sol, and a green one always pointing to Earth. The 3D compass was a tool for the Solar System, of little use so far out here except as a novelty.

Miller's fingers roved expertly over the control panels, guiding the massive ship through the cluttered complexity of the Ursa Nova system. The sensors in the *Kurnell's* nose cone gathered data from afar to assist Miller in his navigation. The large screen above them showed the space-scape of planets and stars ahead, while a plastic cube a metre on each side, winking inside with different coloured lights, tracked their progress toward Yridian.

Every so often Miller took a capsule from his pocket and swallowed it.

Brash put down the 3D compass, reaching for the electronic notepad. Resting it on his lap, he began to key a letter to his family, far away on a secure colony planet in the Formalhaut system, where one day he would retire and join them when he got sick of planetary survey.

The interim between cryosleep thaw and landfall was the only time a surveyor had for such personal matters.

Brash reached out a gloved hand and Miller deposited a capsule in it.

*** *** ***

The planet was surrounded by dozens of moons. Some were the size of Earth's moon, others scattered chunks like an asteroid belt. The spaceship was parked just beyond the orbit of the outer moon, one smaller than the fusion drive itself. The command module detached itself from the huge drive and threaded its way toward Yridian's surface.

In the control room the two men absorbed the data from the readouts as soon as it was analysed. Civilisation was concentrated on the one large island of the planet, with the smaller islands being few and mostly unpopulated. Atmosphere mostly like that of Earth, with no elements dangerous to humans.

The CM slotted into orbit just inside Yridian's nearest moon. As this was only 50,000 kilometres above the surface a low level scan was possible. At the end of the first day they knew a lot more about the new world. There was a species of humanoid beings that built cities and tilled the soil. While this precluded the planet from being colonised, there were still the prospects of trade and exchange of knowledge to be considered. It looked as though the former would be more important to Earth than the latter, for the Yridians were at a level approximating that of Europe in the Middle Ages.

At dawn on the second day Brash took the CM down to the surface. They made a quick sweep of the central continent, mainly for the benefit of the cameras to record documentary detail. Then they landed in the central plaza of the largest city.

This was the part Brash liked least. He popped another OP capsule at the base of the ramp, feeling a rush of giddiness as he stepped onto the damp stones of the plaza.

He wore no suit, no body armour, carried no weapon. He had to present a peaceful, trustworthy image to the locals, show he was humanoid like them. There was little relief knowing Miller was covering him with the laser from within the CM.

It didn't take long for the welcoming committee to arrive. From between the

cathedral-like buildings rising out of the morning mist on all sides there marched lines of troops. The sun had barely risen when they filled the plaza shoulder to shoulder. The main differences they had from humans were that they all were relatively tall and slender, with pronounced oval-shaped heads. They carried pike-staffs in a cautiously relaxed attitude.

The ranks opened to allow a procession of gaudily-dressed dignitaries. They walked up to Brash, looked him up and down, gibbered at him in their language. In accordance with standard procedures Brash selected the three most senior-looking honchos and indicated they should follow him into the CM. A room had been prepared on the other side of the airlock. Here the three Yridians were shown video pictures of Earth - of the planet from space, of the *Kurnell* leaving the blue atmosphere into empty transgalactic space, of green pastures, the Himalayas, roads and cities, Sydney Harbour lined with glittering towers dwarfing the old Bridge and Opera House, their tops lost in cloud... of helicar transporting people great distances with ease, of automated factories, communication networks and a nuclear warhead detonation on the dark side of the moon.

This last scene was replayed over a second time, the three visitors gaping and leaning forward. Brash observed them and mentally ticked an imaginary box numbered "Stage One".

*** *** ***

Four days of thirty-nine hours each later the two Earthmen were ensconced in the CM's tiny lab for the first officially-recorded conference. On the smoked plastic table between them lay their respective calculations and collections of data. Miller had been studying geophysical, climactic and life form aspects, while Brash had concentrated on sociology, language and psychology.

'Yeah, yeah, I think we've built up a rapport and sense of trust with our hosts,' Miller was saying, for the benefit of the corner camera more so than for his companion. He was drunk and his eyes were ringed with red.

'We are in the process of developing a working pidgin with the 'Ridians,' he continued in a stilted manner. 'Peter, I believe you know more about that aspect than me.'

'Yes, Gordon,' replied Brash, unconsciously imitating the other's self-conscious speech. 'Three of the local scientists have learned a couple of hundred English words, and I am able to use simple phrases in their language. This continent's ruler, who equates with a feudal king of old Earth, is very interested in us, as are all the people. They look forward to joining the Federation of Worlds, to letting us enlighten them about the nature of the universe.'

'On a more concrete note,' cut in Miller, 'I have made sample mineral surveys of the outlying districts. It looks promising at this stage. Untapped reserves of iron ore, silver, copper, gold and uranium.'

He fed the mineral survey into the recorder, providing the chance to pop another capsule while the camera was off them.

'Another interesting point regarding the planet - as we recorded in our initial survey there are a large number of moons. Ninety-seven in all, discounting those chunks of rock less than a klick across. Their orbits are on all planes, something which will make future surface-to-space traffic hazardous. Moreover, it appears some of the moons travel in unpredictable paths, influenced by the gravitational pull of whatever other body they might encounter. It is possible

the smaller moons are... fragments resulting from collisions between previously larger moon.'

He paused to gulp air. Brash saw with alarm he was beginning to slide from the plastic seat.

'One side effect of having so many moons is on the tidal pattern. In most parts of the central land island the difference between high and low tide is several hundred metres. Of course the tides are unpredictable... being linked to the aberrant lunar cycles. One lowland region shows evidence of past inundation, probably the result of an orbit shift by a more sizeable moon. The severe gravitational effect of all these moons on each other and the planet surface... had not been found on any other surveyed world.'

Brash cut in, discussing his areas of research, feeding Yridian psychological profiles into the recorder. This blocked the lens' view of Miller slipping under the table, allowed Brash to adjust his seat to the centre. The profiles ran their course.

'Thank you for that information, Gordon. While you're out doing some more work I'll take over the commentary. What you're discussed is very interesting, and I'd like to add something.

'Studies on Earth show a link, not just between the moon and tides, but also the moon and the mind. The effect of our natural satellite on human brains, which are composed mostly of water and float in a fluid sac, is a matter of fact. For centuries doctors linked madness or "lunacy", with the moon's cycles. They knew that when the moon was full the lunatic's condition was exacerbated. A more recent example would be the rash of psychotic behaviour in the 21st Century; still generally believed to have resulted from the accumulated mass of "space junk" in orbit.

'In studying the Yridian people I found many profile inconsistencies. For example, in the central museum there are many items of historical and artistic importance. One of the exhibits is a canvas resembling the works of our Cubist period. It was painted decades ago, and is only half-finished. It is surrounded by paintings of quaint buildings and portraits of nobles, and is as incomprehensible to the locals as it is to me.

'Then there is the case of Rid One - our nickname for the Yridian with whom we've had the most contact. Each day he arrives at the CM he seems to act differently: one day aloof, the next eager, the next almost hostile. He goes through what could be described as personality rather than mood changes.

'The Yridian physiology deserves a brief mention. They are pale-skinned. Their eyes possess the epicanthic fold, as a result of the considerable glare of Ursa Nova's light reflected off the many moons. Head scans show a large liquid-filled cavity around the brain. It is inescapable that the effect of the moons has been the overriding influence in both the evolution and history of the Yridians, even causing personality changes in them on a daily basis in accordance with the changing pattern of the moons overhead. It may be that Yridian brains are so attuned to their lunar cycles they may never be able to venture off the planet.'

Having completed the long monologue Brash turned off the recorder and put Miller to bed. Then he retired to his own cabin and got stoned.

*** *** ***

The Yridian's name was unpronounceable; Brash and Miller called him Rid One, which

didn't seem to offend him. On the fifth morning he turned up as usual at the CM to consult with the Earthman in the chamber just beyond the airlock. This morning was different in that he arrived alone rather than in the company of the others.

He sat across the table from a bleary-eyed Brash. He was clad in the fashion of the educated class, his elongated cranium covered with a fez, his long cloak woven with arcane mathematical symbols. His usually cryptic eyes were filled with alarm.

'No good thing,' Rid One said. 'You go. Leave us.'

Brash could see the Yridian was upset and agitated. Why was he demanding the Earthmen to leave?

'Hold on,' said Brash. 'Tell me what wrong.' He added an attempt to string together the few Yridian words he knew into a similar question.

'In city,' replied Rid One. 'All wrong. All people wrong. Head hurts. You go.'

A cold feeling of premonition crept upon Brash.

He activated the monitor on his chair's arm. The picture showed the plaza outside - people, troops running back and forth, pausing only to attack each other. One of the large buildings abutting the square was burning.

'What they - ?'

He had no time to think before Rid One launched himself over the table, fingers out-stretched for Brash's throat. The Yridian's cumbersome robe caught at the table's edge, slamming him down short and knocking him out.

Brash raced to the wall ladder, climbing two decks to the control room. Miller was slumped asleep in front of the consoles.

Brash shook him by the shoulder. Miller jerked awake, his eyes going to the monitors and grasping the situation instantly.

'The locals are going crazy. Rid One just attacked me.'

Miller hit the buttons to close the outer door.

'Seal the ship! Get to the armoury!'

They were too late. Four Yridians had scrambled into the CM before the door hissed shut. They found their way up the ladder and poured into the control room.

Brash found himself grappling with a crazed Yridian. From the corner of his vision he saw Miller unaccountably manipulating the telescope controls rather than assisting him. He threw his attacker back against the metal wall. In a fluid motion he scooped up the 3D compass and flung it at the second figure. The Yridian fell stunned as the ball hit his forehead, but the others were now upon him.

'Watch your eyes!' yelled Miller.

Suddenly the control room was filled with intense light. Brash saw the wisdom of his partner's action, in hooking the telescope into the large screen, centering on Ursa Nova and hitting zoom. The Yridians, blinded, threw their arms up in front of their faces, while Brash

dived forward to crash tackle them.

Together they carried Rid One and the other four unconscious forms to a small service hatch and dropped them the short distance to the plaza flagstones.

'We have to get out of here, ASAP,' Brash said. 'I'll explain on the way.'

Miller shrugged, having intended this course of action.

The two planetary surveyors strapped themselves into the command chairs. Within two minutes the CM had fired its four corner jets and risen from the plaza. Second later the city had diminished to the size of a scale model on the monitors and the craft was breaking through cloud layers.

'They must have gone crazy because of the moon pattern,' surmised Miller. 'Another personality change. Lucky we got out of there alive. What're we going to do now?'

He boosted the CM's main thrusters to full power, then plotted a course to thread the moon belts. Brash worked on the calculations for the quickest route back to where they had parked the fusion drive.

'I don't think that's right, about today's moon pattern being the cause of the Yridian's insanity. If what happened today was a regular occurrence why didn't we see any evidence of it having happened before?'

The CM emerged from the demarcation line of the outer moon's orbit, made a dog leg for the fusion drive. 'Docking time, nine minutes,' the computer chimed.

'Rid One seemed to blame our presence for the trouble. What else could have caused the disruption to their behaviour?'

The monitors showed the *Kurnell's* drive growing out of the shadows of space. On the screen it grew from the size of a pea, to an orange, to a melon, to a soccer ball. The CM slowed, manoeuvred into the docking position. The grey metal sides of the asteroid-sized drive filled the screens, their severe functionality broken only by the kilometre-high red lettering on the sides:

POETRY IN MOTION

A horrible suspicion dawned upon Brash.

But Miller beat him to actually voicing it. 'Hey, you don't suppose...' His finger pointed to the drive.

The computer took over the docking function and slotted the CM neatly into its niche in the drive's forward side.

The two men looked at each other for several seconds.

'Fire her up,' Brash finally said. 'Let's get out of here. McPherson's Planet is next on the survey list.'

FILE NOTE
PLANET YRIDIAN

FURTHER CONTACT NOT RECOMMENDED.

ON THE FIRST EPISTLES

By John J. Alderson

Any discussion of the earliest forms of writing must first take into account the medium on which the writing was done, and the means whereby the marks were put *on* or *in* that medium. One does not write on rock or clay with a goose-feather quill, or use a chisel on paper. So one may divide immediately the forms of writing which made a mark *on* the surface as distinct from those which made a mark *in* the surface. It takes no amount of reflection at all to realize that the former must have preceded the latter. I cannot place any modern people whose method of recording their information uses only the method of putting marks into the surface. Our Aborigines for example use both, but mainly they merely apply pigment to a surface.

However, one may appreciate that scratching, either on the ground, or on things like bone really come into the first category. It is a primitive method. But we must dismiss something like cuniform as an early method of writing because it is a sophisticated form of writing based on another written form. (This apart from the fact that it uses an older form of letter as its basis). Thus runes may be extremely early. A rune is a scratch made by a sharp point on a hard surface, eg a knife or spear point on rock or metal. Painted and written runes are a much later sophistication. My personal opinion is that a rune is based on an earlier 'written' alphabet, though so far I cannot prove this.

It would seem unlikely that painted pictureogram such as used by our Aborigines and the early Egyptians began on rock walls. With the Aborigines we know they also used bark paintings which are always destroyed after use. With the Egyptians we can only conjecture. The Chinese use of the brush on a paper or parchment is pretty sophisticated and its use of a stylish brush stroke is akin to the wedge used in cuniform, and also an adaptation of an older form.

The use of a knife or chisel to cut marks into stone or wood also reflects an older use of a drawn figure. But two of these ancient alphabets have an intermediate form, that is a finger or sign language. The best known as a finger or sign language is the Irish (Celtic) Ogam which is a series of strokes or notches out into the edge of a stone slab, though THE TAIN repeatedly refers to the use of wooden stakes on which Ogam challenges were cut out with a knife. On paper they are usually drawn either side of a line. This ogam alphabet is based on a written or drawn one... it is beyond reason that such a system could spring into existence first. The other

language which is also based on a finger language and was later carved with a chisel or knife is the Latin. The fact that both languages use the same alphabet current in northern Italy about five centuries before our era suggests they share a common origin. Both have older prototypes.

The stylus was used on clay and is a sophistication of the pen. and the pen, of course, was almost certainly a stick of charcoal. With the 'invention' of the goose-quill, writing came into its own. Unfortunately quills are used to write on very destructible material, paper or parchment.

This raises the question of the material on which our forebears wrote. Quite a few efforts at 'cave-art' still exist but it is hard to believe that these were writing except insofar as they convey a very limited message. Thus the very earliest Egyptian pictureograms convey little more than the name of the mortal they occur with.

The earliest artificial material that has been preserved, and that purely by an accident of climate, is papyrus which is of course a form of paper. The possibility of someone saying, Let's make paper so we can invent writing, is rather unlikely. The obvious and almost certainly the original material was skins, parchment; the Egyptians, not being herdsmen, would soon find parchment in short supply. But this brings us back to the nomadic herdsmen like Abraham, who had skins galore. So it is that when we get the earliest preserved writings from Western Europe they are written on parchment, with a goose quill... well, a quill of some sort. Any quill will write with a little persuasion.

One may dismiss such things as silk out of hand as the original writing material and suggest that writing originated somewhere where sheep and geese were common, which leaves us a lot of the world, but it rules out civilizations confined to river flats, eg Egypt. Petric, in his work THE MAKING OF EGYPT, confessed that the reading of the earliest signs of Egypt and their origin depended upon the study of the origins of writing. My own studies on the shape of letters and their meaning point to Western Europe. Well, tots for Scots.

- John J. Alderson.



LETHE

By Grai Hughes

With closed eyes she stared up into the sun until it hurt; somehow it soothed the ache deeper within. She felt the shadows of the bars on her face, and blinking, opened her eyes, and briefly glimpsed through the high narrow window the harsh glare of the sun, a white heat burning behind the grey-clouded sky; the silhouette of the creeper twined around the leftmost bar bearing its solitary trumpet shaped flower; its violet translucence, with the sun behind it, the only colour in the drab-grey room, before turning her head away.

She rolled onto her side but the fibre-glass bunk pressed hard on her hip and ribs and knee, the grey prison blanket provided neither softness nor comfort, and though scratching-harsh against her skin, she wrapped it closely around her and gripped the thin material tightly in fists at neck and abdomen as she sat up wearily, and stood.

She stepped the three paces to the door, three futile paces because the door was closed, and studied her reflection in the scratched and grimy steel of tray hatch. The bruise over her left eye had faded to a crimson blotch, and that reflected face seemed barely familiar, its lines so softened and blurred. Her face felt begrimed, as if she'd left make-up on for too long, but she hadn't been allowed make-up the timeless yet interminable week she'd been in here.

She pressed her cheek and temple against the cold steel, and felt the warmth of pain rushing into the bruise, then suddenly she turned, pressing her back hard against the door, gulping back an urge to cry, unable to bear the sight of her eyes, her face, the same confused eyes and face that had looked out at her from an unclouded mirror less than a month ago, yet now so different...

The eyeliner pencil slipped and she dropped it and dabbed at the too thick line in the corner of her eye with a tissue, laughing a little at herself, at how nervous she was. She hadn't been out on a date, except the occasional girls' nights with her small group of friends which didn't count anyway, since college, just before she married Michael. Then this rather handsome fellow had come to her door yesterday evening. She'd been looking into the long mirror in the hall having just finished the vacuuming and put the Hoover away in the closet, thinking how scrawny she looked now, like when she was a teenager, and how long it had been since she'd seen Michael, six or seven months, and how slow the time passed without him and how fast it went when he was back on leave, so that he might never had come home at all. How she wasn't even sure if she loved him or knew him anymore, how she just needed him back for some stability, some reassurance in her life. Was that why she'd married him, just because all the other girls, fresh out of college, were marrying the boys from the base, and she wanted so much to keep with her friends? And it had pleased her parents so, that she had married a soldier.

Then the doorbell chimed, and she realised how loud the war show on the TV was, how the religious messages and coke ads were even louder, she'd turned to go into the bedroom and switch the set off, but instead opened the door. And the handsome fellow was standing there, smiling, his eyes bright blue with a happy twinkle in them, how long had it been since she'd seen someone who's eyes said they were happy? Michael's were always bloodshot since he'd been to the war, storm clouds scurried behind the fellow, above the ill-lit prefab houses of this outskirts suburb. The sky had quickly darkened since she'd come home from the munitions factory.

His suit was rain spotted around the shoulders and the wind tousling his dark longish hair made him appear like some mystery man from some forties romantic movie. She had stood looking at him and smiling, aware of the dull pain of her fingernail bitten to the quick while turning the gold band on her finger thinking how loose it had become, too much hard work and poor nutrition. It slipped off and she closed her right hand around it and thrust both hands into her jeans pocket, suddenly thinking he was an officer, out of uniform, carrying a telegram that she dreaded to receive. But no, he was smiling and his hair was too long.

But he quickly went into a spiel and she realized he was a salesman, selling natural cosmetics door-to-door. She had graduated in Cosmetology in college, and preferred natural cosmetics, though they were so much more expensive, so she had invited him in and made coffee for him, and they talked about cosmetics and life in general and she found him silly and charming and foolish and she laughed a lot. She asked him what his favourite colour was, meaning the samples of blush he had, but he replied, 'The colour of a woman's skin, just above the hip, at the first subtle curving of her belly.' And now she found he talked silly romantic talk, about how he was in love with a girl who had been far away in England for more than a year, and how she reminded him of his distant beloved, the same autumn brown hair that catches much of gold and a little of russet and auburn, the same distracted blue eyes. And she found his voice soft and sure and gentle, shy and polite yet open and honest. Michael's had grown so harsh and guttural, full of swearing and vulgar expressions, his laughter too, had become cruel and savage, and even when he said, 'I love you.' it was violent and empty.

And the handsome man, Gary, had invited her out to dinner at Montgomery's, the best steakhouse in town, and it had been so long since she had been out for a decent meal with someone new that she was comfortable with and could talk to, and she so foolishly said yes.

After the door was closed and she heard his car's engine fading into the first muted rumblings of the storm, she realized again how the sounds of the war show on TV, or was it the news? had played it's staccato anger all the while he had been there, and she hadn't even noticed. She had meant to switch it off but had, completely, forgotten.

The door bell chimed and she quickly walked to the door, pausing briefly at the hall

mirror to wonder at how pretty, how teenaged she looked in the black chiffon evening dress she had bought especially and worn last when Michael came home, how angry but forgiving she had been when he didn't even notice, and how embarrassed she had felt in it when he had taken her out to a bar so he could drink with his buddies who were also on leave while she talked with the other wives and girlfriends, as if the men were still whoring it up on a three day pass in Portobello. And she remembered how roughly he had held her that night, saying something vulgar in Spanish and grabbing her, ripping the dress at the shoulder.

She straightened her bra strap under the shoulder that she had carefully restitched last night, patted down the skirt of the dress, flicked her wavy locks behind her ears and opened the door.

Gary looked at her and smiled and stepped inside saying how beautiful she looked, touching her closed hand gently so that she opened it as he stepped up to her, then commented that hands so delicate should not have to work so hard that they became even slightly roughened, and he placed a violet crepe wrapped box in her hands, and as she unwrapped it and thanked him for the expensive hand cream, rejuvenating mask and a few odd blushes and lipsticks and rouges he said something odd about wearing a new mask of happiness and she wondered if maybe she had been wearing an unhappy mask, pretending to love Michael for too long, and she said that she was very happy, and kissed him lightly on the cheek.

In the drab-grey cell her memory, from this happy moment suddenly shifted to one of terror and she remembered vividly and violently her interrogation.

Two local police, one the husband of one of her girlfriends, two MPs and two female prison guards stood close around her, breathing heavily down at her where she sat crying and near hysterical on a hard steel chair under the cold glare of a fluorescent tube caged in the ceiling.

'Did you screw him?' said the mustached MP right into her face.

She whimpered.

'Do you love your country?'

'Do you love your husband?' the MP shouted, 'How many times have you written to him in the past four weeks?'

'I... haven't.'

'And you say you love him, you slut. Antiwar, aren't you?'

They had cut her hair, not shaved it cleanly but hacked at it hurting her scalp, and this was all she could think about, and the blood and the stench of the men and the female guard with the bleached crew-cut still standing there with scissors in one hand the electric shears in the other, still looking at her with a reasonless mean look.

'No!' she choked out not even knowing what she was answering.

'You fucked him didn't you slut!' the other MP shouted into her face, and laughed. The guards sniggered, and Bob, her girlfriend's husband looked at her sympathetically but shrugged, to say there was nothing he could do.

'Come on, answer. You fucked him didn't you, fucking slut.'

'No.' Her throat hurt and she burst into dry sobs.

'You screwed the guy, you bitch, like a damned bitch on heat, admit it!'

They all started then, except Bob, so that the questions and abuse became like a chant in her ears and she kept crying no, no, no, until the female guard, shears still in her fist, slapped her hard, backhand across the face and she cried, 'yes, yes, yes,' in a weak voice to their continued shouts.

Bob shouted, 'Jesus wept!' and wrenched the guard away and said something about assault charges but she just kept mumbling yes, until she was empty and cried out.

'Verbal confession.' said one of the MPs, and she was taken to the cell, feeling guilty and dirty, to await trial.

They sat in a booth in a quiet corner of Montgomery's, laughed at the restaurant's World War II paraphernalia, and talked of cosmetics and politics, the war and life in general, while waiting for their steaks diane.

She asked Gary about the limp that made him grimace occasionally when he put his weight on his right leg and he said how his knee had been busted by the cops in an antiwar protest in 'Frisco during his student days, fortunately it made him unfit for military service when the mid-west fundamentalist fascist factions of our totalitarian bureaucratic democracy took power and reintroduced the draft and kicked every liberal thinker out of the universities.

She then admitted that she was married to a soldier, and Gary said how disappointed he was in her, and laughed and said he'd known all along because he'd seen the photo of her and the soldier on the sitting room table, and how it didn't matter because he only wanted someone to talk to who reminded him of his girl in England, and she said how she often regretted the choice she had made and how cruel she thought the new laws were, as well as being unconstitutional. And he said how the constitution was now meaningless except in rhetoric and propaganda, and that the eradication laws were probably the most blatant excuse ever for a political license to kill and control.

She had gone to the ladies' room, 'To powder your cute nose, no doubt.' Gary had said, and a friend of her's and Michael's, Nora Fray, was in there, retouching her make-up before leaving for a disco. She asked Sue who the cute-looking guy was, and Sue told her, and Nora Fay looked at her strangely and jealously and said, Don't you know you can get six months for that? in a half threatening way. And Sue replied that she wasn't some silly candy-mouthed harlot, she was just having dinner with the guy, and talking to him, there was no crime in that. And Nora Fay said you had just better watch out, a town like Lethe, grown completely around Jackson Army Base, people here love the army boys and gossip spreads and people watch. And Sue had replied angrily that she wasn't planning on running off with the guy, and at that moment she decided, if he asked her to, she would.

She heard voices outside the cell. The square of light, the hazy image of the window, bared and with the slowly flattened shadow of the flower, that she had been watching in its slow, time marking journey across the floor while the tumult of memory rushed through her, shrank and vanished into the wall, as the sun heightened overhead.

The leaves of the vine suddenly rustled, and the flower bobbed, and she realized some gardeners were going about their work outside. She leapt up and grabbed at the flower as the vine jerked more violently, but missed. She leapt from the edge of the bunk, throwing herself hard at the wall so that she hit it painfully and the window ledge cut into her ribs and breast as she snatched at the flower. She fell to the floor, sobbing, and opened her fist, her tears wetting the flower crushed in her hand stained by the flower's violet juices, crushed and limp, a disgusting dead thing.

Rewrapping the fallen blanket tightly around her, sobbing and rocking back and forth on the cold concrete floor, holding the flower gently in her cupped hands, again she remembered.

She stepped out of the ladies' room and saw some soldiers and MPs from the base who knew Michael, standing around her table, arguing with Gary, who tried to stand but was pushed back into the seat by two of them. She heard their angry shouts, her name and Michael's, but couldn't understand what they were saying or why they were shouting.

She called out, 'Leave him alone, he's a friend!' as she walked trembling over, but wasn't sure if it came out any louder than a whisper. An MP unclipped his holster and drew his pistol, motioning with it for Gary to stand. A waiter who had been standing nervously about ran off.

Gary grabbed at the MP's arm, and they struggled, and a quiet explosion sounded and the MP slumped over the table. The silence, haunted by the restaurant's jazz musak, was terrifying.

Gary dodged around the table, past the shocked soldiers. He ran up to her, looking pale, scared and unsure. She saw her reflection in a tear glinting in the corner of his eye, eyes which still seemed more concerned for the trouble he had caused her than the damnation he had brought upon himself.

He held her hand, firmly but gently, and she followed him, running out of the restaurant's suffocating atmosphere into the evening's clean stormy air.

Oblivious of the gunshot, a group of Christians sat on the steps of the Red Town Hall across the road, playing guitars and singing "Forget Yourself In Jesus." She had always wondered why the Germans who had founded Lethe had brought in tons of sandstone blocks all the way from Colorado to build their public buildings, and seeing the Red Town Hall, the Red Church and the Red Gaol turn to blood in the Floridian sunset, the evening coloured so beautifully, she almost forgot, it felt such an ordinary day.

But Gary let go her hand and ran a little way down the alley beside the restaurant, and stopped and leaned there, hands and forehead against the wall, and vomited. She walked up to him and put her hands comfortingly on his shoulders, and he turned around and saw her gently crying, and they held each other.

They heard boots stamping the sidewalk, heard shouts. The twilight's last bloody-glorious glow revealed them, and a soldier came stamping down the alley; they watched his reflection approaching in the wet bitumen.

'Let her go,' the soldier shouted. 'You're under arrest!' She clutched onto Gary all the tighter.

Another stood in the entrance to the alley and she heard him shout, 'Get out of the way!' and she buried herself into Gary's arms all the more, rested her cheek against his neck and shoulder.

She heard the gunshot crack and echo down the alley, felt Gary jerk away and then collapse, heavy in her arms. She felt his warm blood but not his breath as she dropped him.

The soldier grabbed her shouting, 'It's alright. He's dead. He's dead, it's alright!' as he screamed and screamed and tried to beat her fists against him, but he held her so roughly tight, his coarse bristles scratched against her and he stank so strongly foul of man's sweat and tobacco and whiskey and blood that she felt like gagging but instead gratefully fainted.

And her re-experiencing all played out, so that she felt drained and emotionless and empty, yet a little purified of the guilt that she felt, the horror and pain, she realized that she could never hold or bear to be held by a man again, that moment would always be there in her memory to remind her of the true horror of a man's touch.

Hard shoes clicked down the corridor beyond the door, accompanied by the jangle of keys. The footsteps halted outside and she heard the rattle of the key in the lock, the clack of the bolt turning back. She looked up at the window, saw the grey clouds patched with blue sky, no vestige of the vine's green stem clung to the bars. She stood as the door swung outward.

'Stand back from the door,' said one of the warders waiting there baton in hand.

'Morrison, Susan Jane, one-oh-nine-six-eight-six. Visitor. Walk ahead,' said the other warder.

She shuffled down the corridor past the steel doors with their riveted tray-hatches and closable spy holes, glancing at but not taking in the names and numbers and offences and dates on the cards in the slots beside each door. Clear-headed now, she thought of her own crime; moral treason. Wives of service personnel who committed adultery during wartime could be imprisoned for six months for subverting the morale of brave fighting boys away at the war. And the government had kept the southern war going for twelve years. Her public defender had assured her the charges would be thrown out of court, and he assured her that she could sue them for a fortune, it was just that the arraignment judge had died, who was scheduled for the bail hearings, after all these were trying times for the justice system as well.

She thought of the law introduced that affected Gary. Even though he was dead he was further punished. Murder, any murder, all murder, was punishable by death, and further by eradication. All public records of the murderer, from birth certificate to traffic tickets, dental records to Masters Degrees were destroyed. All possessions were forfeit to the state. The murderer was erased from history. A wife became never married. Children took the mother's maiden name and became "paternity unknown". Any works of art, music, literature, were destroyed, all copies were illegal. Notices appeared in the papers and on the news broadcasts for their recall. In decadent New York and Los Angeles a black market thrived in death works. Some second-rate artists had even committed murders and surrendered for execution in a vain attempt to immortalize their work. The ashes of all, paper, bones, canvas and flesh were dumped by the ton, anonymously in the sea.

President Abrahams said it was the moral balance needed in America, if so many thousands of our courageous fighting boys were dying anonymously in some stinking southern jungle fighting for peace, why should some foul murderer's name be remembered to corrupt the peace at home?

And she knew the war would never be over, that it had been raging all her life, since before her birth, that there were only occasional lulls when it moved from place to place, that it would rage always and everyone would just continue to ignore it, to forget about it.

The warders opened doors and clanged them shut behind her. Each closure jarred within her. She couldn't remember Gary. She could no longer picture his smiling face and concerned, friendly eyes. An image of Michael kept appearing as she tried, only not Michael; shadowy and camouflage green, laughing cruelly and saying, 'It's alright, he's dead. He's dead. It's alright.' She shuddered and grew frantic, trying to remember. What was his favourite colour? She felt in the grip of some insidious psychic eradication. Gary. What was his last name?

'Booth seven, don't touch the glass, speak through the phone,' muttered the warder.
'Nora Fay!' Her friend sat grinning, embarrassed, beyond her reflection in the glass.

Nora Fay's voice was harsh but at least familiar over the phone. 'Sue, you look terrible, Sue! My God, what have they done to you? I went to your house and brought you some make-up and a dress to wear when you get out and a few other things. I didn't know what to bring. The lawyers say as soon as a judge hears about this he'll unlock the door himself and kick the butt of the morons who put you here. They wouldn't let me give you the make-up or stuff, it goes into a property store or somewhere. The cows in here are probably pilfering the lot. How are you holding up? You look a mess, girl, are they treating you okay?'

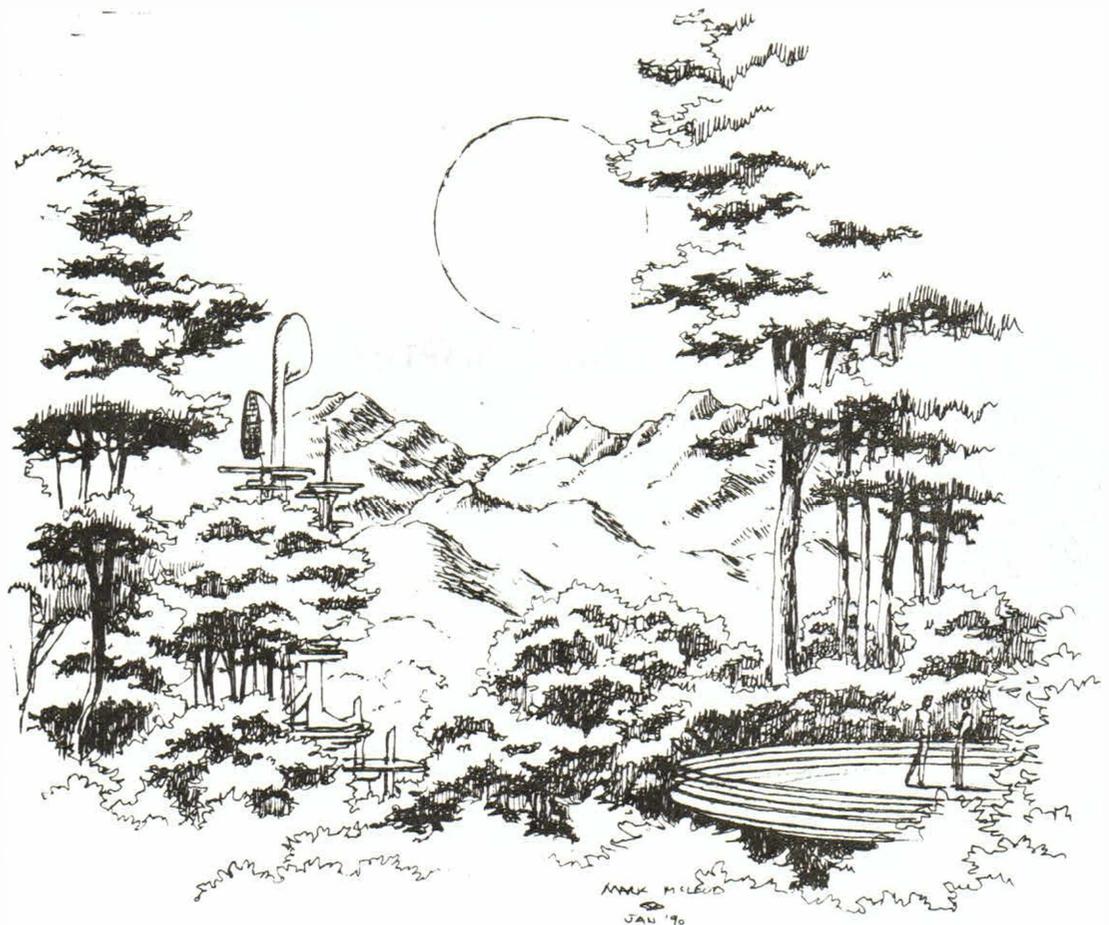
She didn't care about the make-up, she knew she would never paint on her face a happy mask again. She sat hunched forward on the steel bench, her hand tightly gripping the phone, white knuckles pressing red marks into her cheek. 'Nora Fay, this is important, no listen now, Nora Fay.' Her other hand she held tightly clenched at the neck of her grey prison shirt.

'Do you remember the guy I was with at the restaurant? You said he was cute. Do you remember what he looked like? Do you remember him, Gary?'

'Who?'

Her fists unclenched. She dropped the phone, and the flower.

end



PORTFOLIO

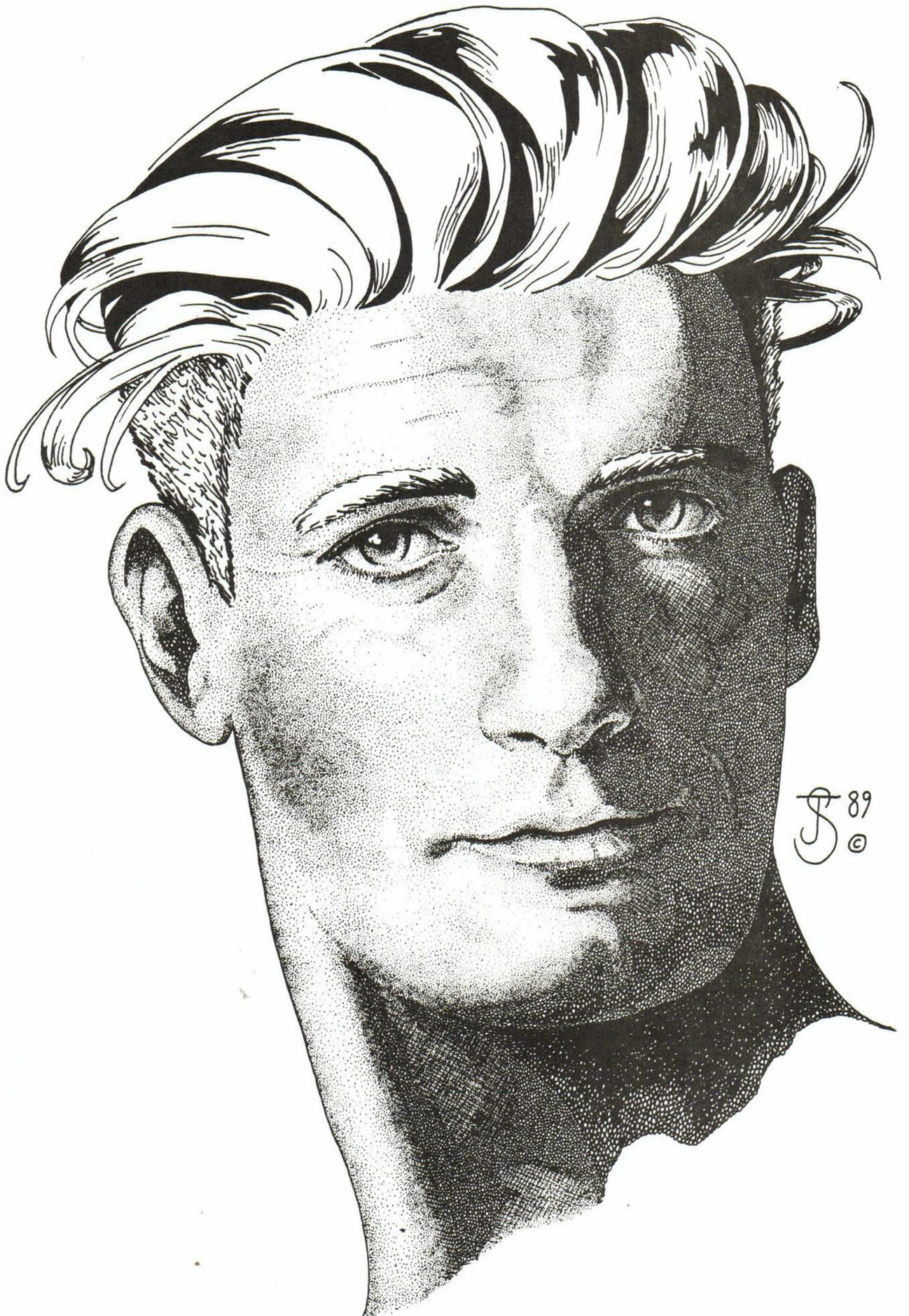
by Jozef Szekeres





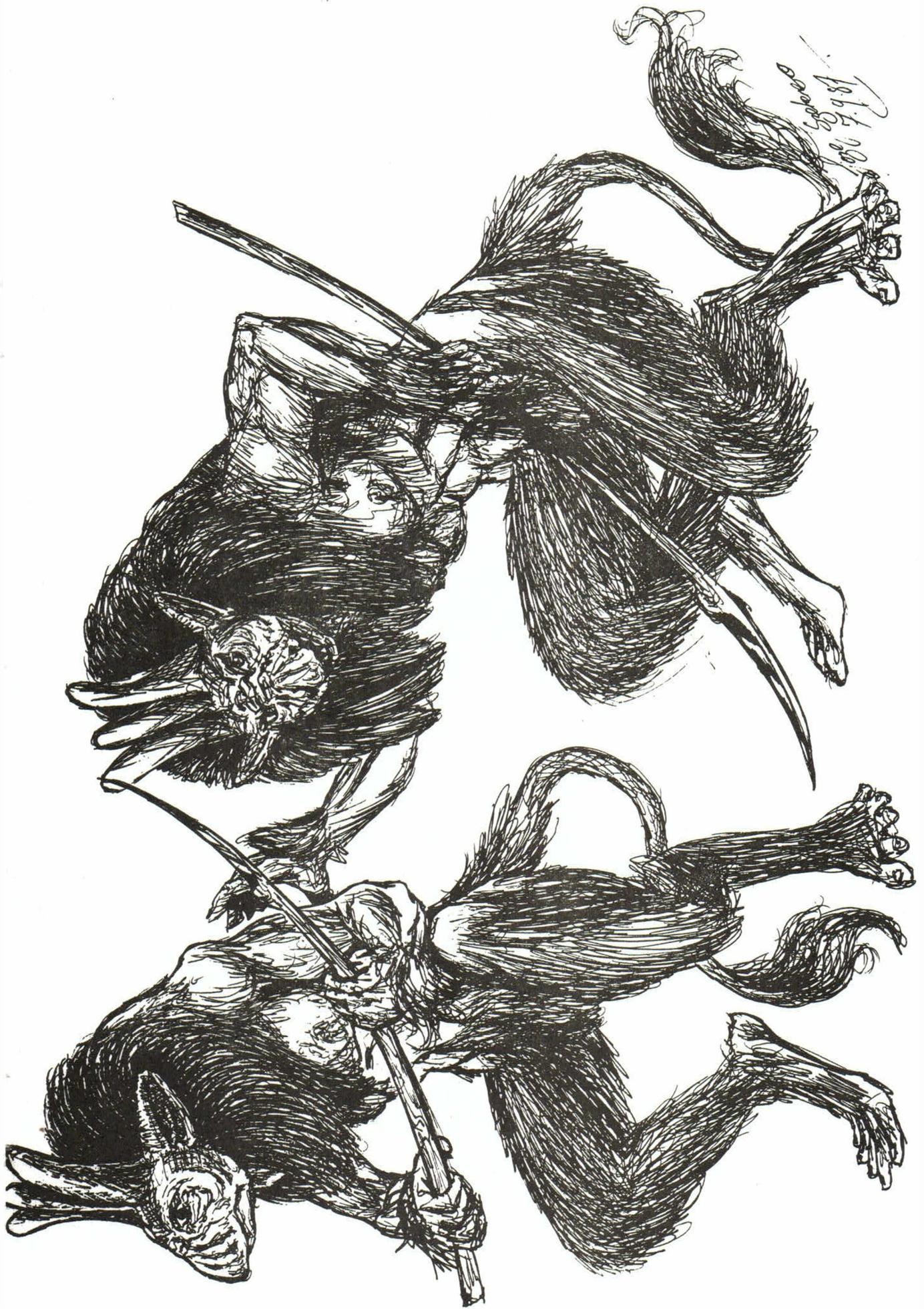




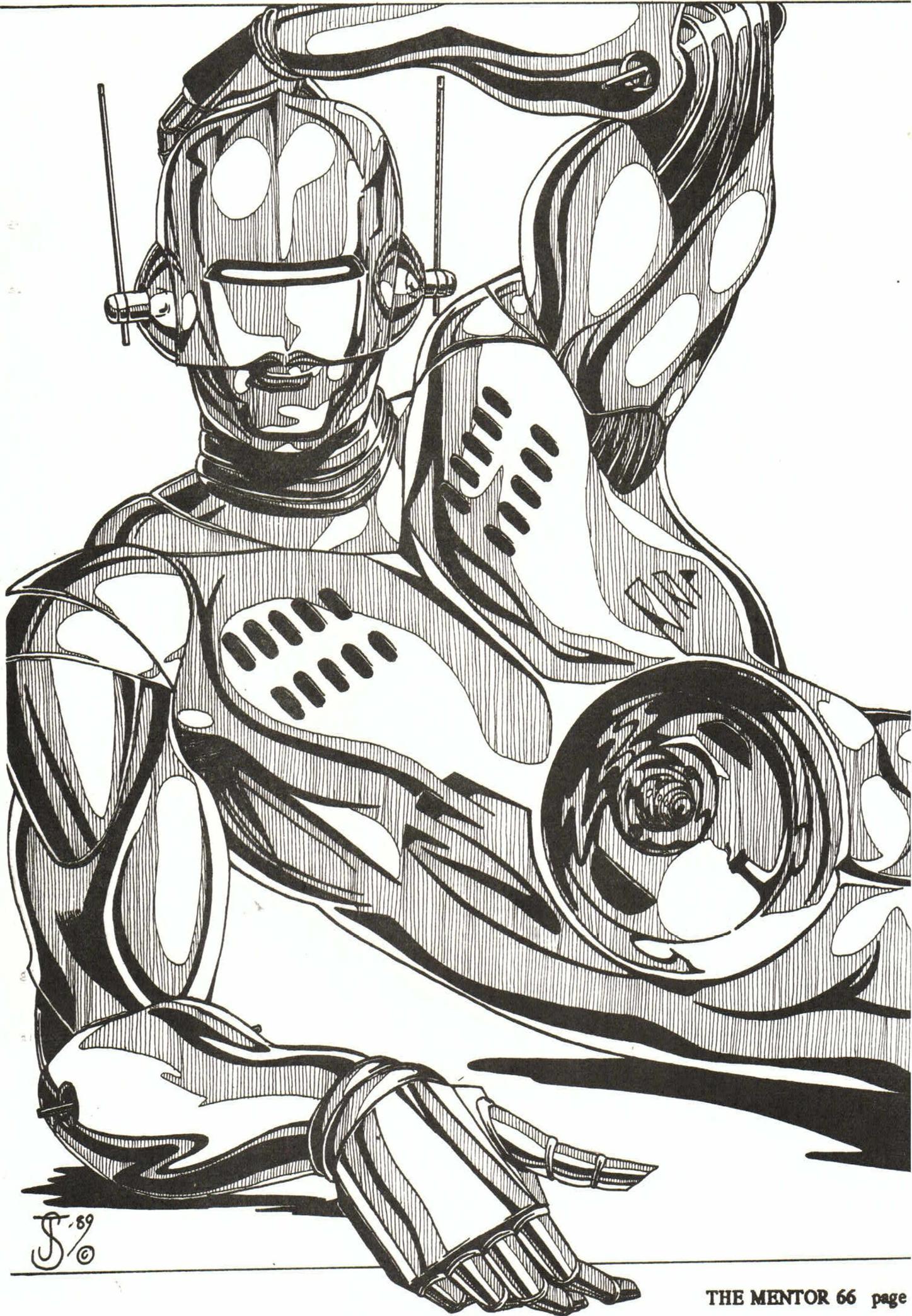












J. 89
©









Greetings.

This is my very first fanzine appearance, so this is quite exciting as well as scary.

Now that I have these anxieties out of the way, let me introduce myself. I'm a white caucasian, aged 19, that comes running to the names of Jozef, or Joz.

I studied composition of Music for a short time at the Conservatorium Of Music in Sydney, but found the school of thought was far more avant-garde than my interests; which are: the music for theatre, and film scoring.

I wrote a Christmas Cantata, having nine original tunes with accompaniment which was finalised into twelve songs including refrains. This was composed in 1987, between the ages of 16 and 17, and was performed by the students of the Central Coast Grammar School as a highlight of the Christmas Concert. I have movie scored for a final-year student of the Australian Film And Television School. My instrument is the Piano.

I danced competitively for four and a half years in some competitions as far away as Perth and New Zealand. If you've ever watched "That's Dancing", you'll know what sort of dancing I mean.

Presently, I am in the commercial field of animation. This is a most gratifying career choice at this point of my life. I am co-working on a graphic novel that promises to be exciting. By the way, I feel the term professional is often misplaced.

How was I introduced to this scene?

I attended once a year, a role-playing/wargaming convention by the name of the TIN SOLDIER CONVENTION. Recently, it has been retitled SAGA CON. At the 1989 running of this convention (my fifth attendance), I met an original t-shirt artist by the name of Mike McGann. It was he that enlightened me to the idea of many other conventions that I might find interesting. My first official attendance to such a convention was the Canberra con in June, 1989 - CONSPIRE. My decision to go was a very spur of the moment thing (due to studies), so I wasn't registered or anything. Though all this was quite new to me, the helpful convention staff and myself worked through this confusion.

My focus of interest was "the celebrity guest, Dudley Simpson" who scored the music for Dr Who and many other movies, and the art show.

I showcased "The Hybrid Nudes" - six large drawings of a set of seven (the first of the series which has been kindly reproduced as a centre-fold in this fanzine), and several other smaller works (including one oil and two acrylic paintings). The reception of these works were good. I was even nominated an equal third place which came as a surprise considering that I was a new face in the crowd, and showed non-convention related work.

It was there that I made friendship with Diana Sheridan (another talented, but shy artist) and acquaintance with Ron and Susan Clarke.

All in all, I had a wonderful and memorable time. This was the first true convention that I ever had the pleasure of participating in. I will gladly go to more.

- Jozef Szekeres

THE ALPHA EXPERIMENT

by Margaret Pearce

Lord Don Jur, the Great Overlord, was discontented.

It was the annual graduation ceremony, and the immense hall was filled by the awed, blissfully content audience. The only noise was the slight whisper of sound as the parents tiptoed up to the raised platform to receive the formal acknowledgement of their graduating children.

'A fine batch of hatchlings, and to your honour and credit,' praised Lord Dom Le Fir, the chief assistant to the Great One.

Lord Dom Jur gave the equivalent to a sigh, and swivelled his attention down to the huge hall. To each set of parents, the graduation was an exciting first, and the highlight of their lives, as they waited proudly to receive their allotted four children, two boys and two girls, confident of their health, intelligence, social and mental adjustment.

Lord Dom Jur should have been more satisfied! All the Overlords acknowledged him as the single saviour of the human race. They had all fought grimly to save the race from their folly, but it was he who rescued the humans from extinction, when their nuclear holocaust almost blotted them from the face of the galaxy.

The last five hundred years, a very short space of time by the Overlord's standards, showed solid and gratifying progress. It was Lord Dom Jur's genius which devised the nurseries to breed the humans back through the test tubes to their full potential as intelligent, independent galactic citizens.

Actually, there was no reason now that the genetic malfunctions had been corrected, that the human race shouldn't get back to doing their own breeding; but the nurseries were so successful in graduating the full grown galactic citizens, that the human race begged the Overlords to let the arrangement continue.

It was a lot more efficient and safer than the time consuming biological method, and it

spared the parents time and energy to get on with the occupation of pioneering and resettling the allotted planets, and the freedom to enjoy them.

Each newly bonded couple, as free citizens of the galaxy, were invited to leave their biological contributions with the computer banks. Twenty years later they came back to attend the graduation of their four children.

The machine-run nurseries grew the babies, nurtured them through their childhood ailments, adolescent problems, and educated, exercised and civilized them. The parents took delivery on graduation of well adjusted, trained and educated citizens, and spent an enjoyable few months getting to know them, before they moved off to join in the fascinating and exciting business of building and settling planets.

The drawn-out ceremony reached its end. Lord Dom Jur glowed a gracious acknowledgement, and the voices raised in one last chant of awed praise, and then the hall was cleared.

'I am dissatisfied,' Lord Dom Jur confessed, as he shimmered to a more comfortable state.

His assistant was puzzled.

'You have bred out disease, mutations, weakness, and mental instability, and lengthened the life span two hundred years. There is no war, nor crime, and no anti-social behaviour. What more could you have given the human race?'

Lord Dom Jur moved his energy cloud irritably. 'We have bred no original thinkers, artists, writers, sculptors, or even original builders. Everything they do is from a traditional pattern or way of life.'

'An appreciation of culture is bred into the products of our nurseries,' Lord Dom Le Fir pointed out. 'They are all aware of the intense richness of their cultural heritage, and copies of their literature, paintings, and sculptures are readily accessible, and greatly admired, respected and copied.'

'There is some ingredient missing in the nurseries,' Lord Dom Jur fretted.

His assistant was silenced. Who would dare contradict the Overlord? He had taken the miserable remnants of the damaged, mutated race, and bred them to the heights of physical and intellectual perfection.

'I shall study the problem,' Lord Dom Jur decided.

The mightiest mind in the galaxy scanned the sparse Earth records for a few decades, and reached a conclusion. 'There seems a common denominator for the creative ones. They were close bonded to their biological mothers for the first few years of life.' He made a decision. 'Set aside a small nursery as the Alpha experiment. Allow one mother for each batch of ten children.'

It became an easier decision to make than to fulfill. All the women approached for the honour of mothering ten children for five years declined with many sincere regrets. They all had too many commitments on their time. As none of them were dissatisfied with the products of the nurseries, they felt it unnecessary for Lord Dom Jur to disrupt their lives because of his passion for experimenting. He had caused the human race to flower into an age of greatness. What else was left to achieve?

Lord Dom Jur wasn't dismayed by their reaction. Their behaviour patterns were predictable, considering their nursery bred backgrounds. Although he could reprogram them to do the task, he didn't feel it would duplicate the conditions he wanted.

'Scan the Earth planet for some biologically created females patterned to rear children in the old manner,' he instructed.

Lord Dom Le Fir paled at the magnitude of the task set him. Earth was a thriving and pleasant metropolis, filled with the well adjusted citizens from the nurseries. For many years, his enquiries for a natural born female who was a product of traditional rearing was unsuccessful.

Eventually, someone remembered the Green Land. A very small country which had been isolated behind a forcefield for so many years, its existence was only a passing reference in one of the very early computers.

'If the inhabitants haven't all murdered each other by now, any survivors would be born by the old method,' one of the Elders hazarded. 'The records say they were a race which resisted the nursery breeding, after the area was repopulated.'

Lord Dom Le Fir scanned the records. The tradition of aggression had somehow infected the new inhabitants, so they threw off the Over-Lordship, and slipped back to a state of savagery and ignorance. They split into factions and fought each other. They bred in a biologically inefficient manner, with each generation slipping further and further back into barbarism.

Their tolerant neighbours, despairing of ever civilizing them, and tired of coping with their aggression had thrown a forcefield around the island, and left them to their own devices.

Lord Dom Le Fir, readjusting his molecules to that of a personable young man, and dimmed his brightness to a low shimmer, trudged the island to search for females who met the desired requirements. His courteous requests brought shrieks of mirth and lewd comments from the women, and physical illtreatment from the black browed menfolk.

'He tempts for a female to do the bidding of the Off World Gods,' they jeered. 'We obey and worship no Gods but our own, as become a free people, so go back to your God and tell him so.'

They physically illtreated his human form so much, that his molecular structure started to disassemble. An old crone shuffled over to rescue him, wielding a vigorous axe to clear a path through to him.

'The poor man is but a soft priestling! Go fight someone more worthy of your brawn. He could be the same age as my youngest,' she shrieked at his attackers, who dispersed very quickly.

'You have raised children, honoured lady?' Dom Le Sir asked hopefully.

'Ten sons have I suckled from these withered breasts, and raised them to despise cowardice and love honour more than life! None would have illtreated a priestling unable to bear arms. Good sons, all then of them were, and gave their lives freely to the Troubles.'

Dom Le Fir brightened, and his radiance shone forth illuminating the hovel. He had found his key to the Alpha experiment! The crone answered to the name of Allanna.

She held her lean body straight and proudly, and under the tangle of grey hair, her black

eyes gleamed recklessly. Her face was wrinkled and ravaged with a thousand passions, and scored into lines of strength and headlong self will.

'If I restored your youth and energy as a gift, would you be prepared to put five years of your life to raising ten children?' Dom Le Fir asked.

'Aye,' agreed the crone, her eyes sparkling. 'Children are my only and my lasting love. I would tend, care and love them for you, forever if need be.'

Lord Dom Le Fir closed around her, and shimmered her within the second into the Great Overlord's presence. She formally reaffirmed her willingness to act as host mother to ten children. Lord Dom Jur was delighted.

'It will be a small experiment, the Alpha experiment, but let the nursery of ten be isolated from the others, so we can be sure of the results of our experiment.'

The nursery was set up. With the poisons of age removed, and sundry other molecular rearrangements, the crone transformed into a slim, intense, black-haired, black-eyed woman, with a skin flushed to a wild rose pink.

In deference to the fact she had only raised sons, the babies were all boys. They were of genetically approved parents, of equal intelligence and strong unmutated stock. In fact, they were donated from some of the cream of the gene pool.

Dom Jur was more and more pleased with his assistant's choice. Allanna was an ideal patterned foster mother. She nursed the children, sang to them, and danced them around the flower strewn meadows. She taught them strange prayers, and told them blood-thirsty stories of heroism and treachery.

'They are livelier than the others,' Lord Dom Le Fir reported.

He took a fascinated interest in the Overlord's latest experiment, as he had been privileged to find the one human being prepared to help complete it. He spent much of his time watching them.

The children laughed a lot, and to Dom Le Fir's horror, they cried a lot. Some of them even screamed! Nursery bred children were grave and contented. Although they laughed seldom, they never cried, and screaming either in temper or pain was unknown.

'Don't interfere,' the Overlord warned. 'Somewhere, hidden in the human upbringing, is the secret of producing creativity!'

The boys loved Allanna, and clustered around her all the time, even when they should have been listening to their educational tapes. Some of them had nightmares if she wasn't around during their sleeping period, so she shifted her bed into the sterile environment of the nursery, to be with them during their sleeping as well as their waking hours.

At the seventh year, when they had to transfer to the intensive educational block, there was trouble. Ten little boys gathered in a sullen group and refused to move. Pink cheeked technicians hovered around them, trying to coax.

'But you are going to learn such exciting things from now on, because you are all growing such big boys. You want your parents to be proud of you, don't you?'

'We're gonna stay with our Mum, they chorused, clutching at Allanna's long skirts.

The technicians eventually had to physically manhandle the small boys across to the educational block, followed by the shrill curses of Allanna, who screamed and hammered at them trying to drag the boys back off them.

In the educational block, the uncooperative small boys pulled out the chords, and broke all the cassettes, and short circuited the memory blocks of the big computer.

'One of the little horrors actually kicked me in the shins,' one of the technicians shuddered, as he showed the damage to Lord Dom Le Fir. The technicians had never experienced violence in any form, and were totally at a loss to handle it.

The Overlord was intrigued. A lot of aggression was being programmed into the boys, but where was it coming from? Allanna seemed a model mother, and her affection, love, pride, tenderness and fierce loyalty hovered over the boys like a visible cloud.

'There is to be no interference! The women will have to go through the educational sequence with the boys. The Alpha experiment must continue.'

It was a solution, and the nursery was nearly as peaceful as most of the others. Allanna learnt of mathematics, science and technology, and the humanist principles most in keeping with civilization as it had evolved. She learned to handle tools, transport, and the intricacies of preventative medicine.

'What do we do with her?' Lord Dom Le Fir asked as the time for the graduation ceremony approached.

The Overlord was mildly surprised by the question. 'Send her back with our most gracious thanks for her time,' he suggested.

Lord Dom Le Fir was uncomfortable at this solution. Allanna had changed from the passionate old crone he had found in the primitive little island. She had her youth, it was true, but there was now a tigerish vitality and intensity sharpened by her forced education that made her very different from all the other humans nurtured through the nurseries over the past several hundred years.

The half expected explosion didn't eventuate, however. Allanna stood straight and tall, and waited until he finished his speech of thanks and dismissal.

'I am grateful to the Gods for their gifts,' was her reply. 'And I would go home as soon as my sons graduate.'

There was a ripple of interest at the graduation, as the ten boys came down the steps in twos, their stranger sisters eyeing them off from the corner of their eyes, as they walked beside them. The boys exuded the same aura of tigerish vitality as Allanna, and moved down the steps with the same repressed tension and grace in their stride.

If the great Overlord's experiment was successful, these boys had been chosen to be the most valued of the human race, hopefully carrying the destiny of potential greatness.

The first four young adults marched down to the waiting parents. The girls stopped, but the two boys kept on down the steps until they reached Allanna. There was a murmur of disquiet as the two boys lifted their hands and gave their symbolic acknowledgement of belonging.

Two by two, the rest of the boys walked past their own parents and down to Allanna, and gave their ritual greeting also. Soon Allanna stood straight and proud, surrounded by her

ten boys.

The biological parents of the boys milled around, arguing bitterly. Allanna lifted her head as though it had a crown on it, and looked them down with a disinterested contempt. The boys just waited.

Lord Dom Jur saw the boy's faces were etched in the same lines of disdain, self will, pride and bitterness as Allanna's. This gave them a very family resemblance to her.

The graduation finished, and the other parents left with their children. The parents of the ten boys still waited, bewildered and unhappy. The great Overlord assured them that they could attend the computer banks again, and collect another batch of sons in another twenty years. He also reassured them the boys would be nursery bred next time, so the parents and their daughters left, comforted.

The boys marched out with Allanna. In the huge parking area, the spacecraft were building up power for their long haul back to their home planets. The boys marched to one of the biggest of the spacecraft. It belonged to an important Planetary Head.

'How rude!' murmured the Planetary Head, shielding his wife as they were shoved aside.

They then watched in disbelief as men, women, aides and pilots were thrown bodily out of the craft. By the time Lord Dom Le Fir came drifting up, the spacecraft had lifted, and accelerated in a lamentably inefficient take-off, and was streaking for Earth.

'Let them go,' the Overlord commanded. 'This is still the Alpha experiment, and I don't suppose ten boys and one woman can get into much mischief.'

Sophisticated Earth was mildly amused when the woman circled her home island and broke the forcefield. They replaced it, turned their attention to more pressing concerns, and promptly forgot about the Overlord's experiment Alpha.

Ten years later, the boys crowned Allanna as Queen of the small green land. Five years after that, the newly united land was split, as the boys started fighting each other. Three of them exiled the other seven.

The seven broke the forcefield with ease, and having armed their followers with more deadly weapons than the bow and the spear, swept out to conquer the biggest metropolis on Earth.

At their request Allanna, now a heavy-set woman in her middle years, flew down to be crowned Queen. The other three sons still ruling the small green land, promptly gathered their followers with their even more lethal weapons, conquered the second biggest metropolis on the other side of the planet, and declared over the shocked media that Allanna was now their new Queen and absolute ruler.

Allanna deserted the first metropolis, and flew across for her coronation. The boys left ruling the metropolis on her behalf, promptly put their whole territory on a war footing, and built bigger and better missiles, and bombarded the second metropolis.

Allanna fled for her life back to her small island. Her foster sons didn't even notice. The second largest metropolis, full of sophisticated, worldly and well balanced citizens, incensed at having to defend itself twice in the one decade, threw itself wholeheartedly into preparations for a war of retribution.

In another corner of the galaxy, the machines registered the nuclear upheaval, and Lord Dom Le Fir timidly disturbed his Overlord from his meditations.

'The whole planet has gone mad,' he lamented. 'It's like a contagious disease! What shall we do?'

Allanna was long since dead, but her followers had splintered into a thousand sects and cults who fought to the death with joyous abandon under her banner. All the magnificent and pleasant cities were bombed to rubble, and the tolerant sophisticated and well adjusted citizens regrouped into small feudal communities.

'Interesting,' mused the Overlord. 'They have invented lethal weapons, and more and more agonising ways of putting each other to death, and shortened their life span, but their art, architecture and poetry flourishes.'

'That miserable Department of Propaganda,' his assistant sneered. 'Why is suppression of correct facts creative?'

'It is still creative,' the Overlord reproved him. 'They have invented new ways of dying, and new lies to die for, and new epics to glorify their victories, and new buildings to commemorate them.'

'Temples and tombs, and catacombs of death,' Lord Dom Le Fir almost snorted. It had been his duty to investigate the damaged world much too closely.

'Still,' the Overlord decided, 'It seems a high price to pay for creativity. The Alpha experiment is a success, but close the planet to outside traffic. The rest of the galaxy is not yet ready for some of the creative arts!'

His chief assistant, Lord Dom Le Fir, did as he was ordered, but his resentment and guilt remained as he flung the errant planet into a more remote time continuum.

Admittedly he had found the only woman on Earth for the Alpha experiment, but he hadn't tempted her! He was only obeying orders. So why did the Earth-born hate, revile and blame him for their mess?

He, Lucifer, one of the Lords of Light.

THE END



The R. E. R. Dept.



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

I was delighted to read that the Russian "fantastical writers" are organized and feuding! Sounds almost like the silly squabbles I have read of in US fandom in the 30s. From what I have read of their stuff, they are about 50 years behind us in style and content as well. Or maybe something is lost in translation...

Buck Coulson is probably right about the mimeo paper. I am still using the 88 reams of fiber paper I bought from Quill a couple of years ago, but they don't offer it anymore in their catalogs. Bud Webster in Richmond says that a company called Memeo has plenty of the harder paper used in Gestetners and ABDicks, and a local friend says that his church had on loan as a demonstrator a new \$7000 ABDick mimeo - this gizmo has the stencils on a roll, and stores the used stencils on another roll. It is all automatic, you give it a camera-ready original and it cuts and leads its own stencil. But I've never had much luck with Gestetner, though I have several, and so I am saving the fiber paper to run apazines with my aging RexRotary machines, and the latest IT GOES ON THE SHELF is xerox - the new local OW place does double-sided collated and stapled for about 3c a page so it really makes no sense to do long-run stuff on mimeo. But Webster also says that the Richmond company has spirit masters in pin-feed format for dot-matrix printers!

Good to hear from Mae Strelkov! The Machen book she mentions is the Guinevere and Lancelot that Mike Shoemaker and I edited and I published in Jan '87, a collection of long-unseen stories and essays by Arthur Machen, with Steve Fabian art. I sent Mae one at once - she had illustrated my first Machen book - and then, when that was lost, another through her linguistics friend in NY, apparently also "lost". I didn't know about the postal strike - usually when there is a postal strike, our PO finds out about it and begins to refuse mail to that country, as it would only pile up until it overwhelmed the storage facilities. I will try again through NY.

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

I'm not sure how to comment on a fanzine that isn't full of sexual determinism; I've been getting too many English zines lately. Lessee... I think that fanzines may well have passed their peak attraction for science fiction fans. The cost of mailing is undoubtedly a factor, but the increase in conventions -- at least in the U.S. -- is the major one. Fans no longer see any reason to spend their weekends putting fanzines together in order to make contact with other

fans, when it's much easier to go to a convention. And not all that much more expensive, these days. Contact was the major reason for fanzines with a lot of fans, including me. Not that I ever published one; Juanita did that, and she did it because she enjoyed publishing. YANDRO ceased when she became too busy with pro writing to do the work of fanzine publishing. I'm still writing columns for other people's fanzines because I still like to meet people by mail. (And size them up before getting close to them; avoids problems.)

I recall Bruce Pelz going off with the group of singers that our group of singers referred to as "drunken orcs" because of their Tolkien proclivities. If he says he personally was singing Silverlock songs, I'll take his word for it. Some Gilbert & Sullivan, too, as I recall. (It wasn't so much the Tolkien songs that we objected to, but that they were *interminable* Tolkien songs. Tolkien himself was a rotten poet, but some of these people were worse. Bruce was actually a pretty good singer.)

At one time, you could make points in fandom by having a first edition of SILVERLOCK. (I know; I had one.) Of course, you had to have read it, as well. Nola should contact Ed Meskys about his SILVERLOCK COMPANION, which explains all the references. The more references you recognize, the more erudite you can claim to be. It's a perfectly good story if you don't recognize any of them, but it's more fun to realize what Myers was doing.

A lot more books I haven't read. After bogging down in BATTLEFIELD EARTH, I didn't even begin the dekology. Hubbard was a good pulp writer; got a few real classics into print. But BE was a typical pulp novelette, stretched well beyond the breaking point. The idea of something 10 times as long was much too much. I'll take Hubbard's TO THE STARS, or the just-reprinted FINAL BLACKOUT.

JULIE HAWKINS, 26 Third Ave, North Katoomba 2780.

I read SUMMER OF 92 and it brought back memories. When I first started writing I wrote several stories like this one, all narrative. The various editors sent them back with the same response: "A great outline for a story but not a story in itself." I can now understand what they meant and this story left me with the same impression.

The idea is a good one, as long as it only stays an idea and isn't prophetic, but I think it would have been better with dialogue of some sort to break up what I felt was heavy reading. Not heavy in the wording but in the political sense. I got the impression that the author has a grudge against other countries that claim to be our friends and that if this did happen we'd be completely on our own. Who knows, maybe he's right.

Overall the story is well written and the idea is good but it tended towards being boring because it was all narrative. It could be made into a good story, perhaps a novel, if it was extended and true characters introduced. As an editor told me: "A story is more readable when there is someone to read about."

I enjoyed reading THE REVIVAL and the religious connotations that could be attached are thought provoking. The story was fast moving and kept me interested, something a short story should do. The scientists in the story are also realistic: "if this experiment fails we've got another specimen."

R'YKANDAR KORRA'TI, 252 East Loudon, Lexington, KY 40505-3636, USA.

A little more on why many U.S. 'zines are offset; the one I print (LOW ORBIT) is offset for two reasons; 1) I think it looks better, and 2) because that's the cheapest way to do it. Photocopying would cost just about twice as much, would rub off, and all those other bad

things. And as Buck Coulson mentioned, mimeo paper is hard to find - I haven't seen any at all since I stopped publishing SCENARIO (how's *that* for an unknown 'zine?) back in 1984, and it was hard to find then. This was in Massachusetts, for whatever that's worth... in fact, if I recall correctly, the last issue of SCENARIO was by necessity printed on the wrong type of paper, and we had all sorts of problems with pages sticking together as they ran through the machine.

Skel: I don't know what life is like elsewhere in the U.S., but Lexington has six-days-a-week, once-a-day mail service. I can't imagine why some areas would be without Saturday runs, since the guidelines are nationally set (or so I understood). Maybe the local management someplace is trying to cut a few corners improperly.

Ron: would you mind printing a couple of non-letter type things for me?

1) I've got a copy of GEOS for the Apple //e and //c. It was sent for review about a year ago by mistake - I only review Amiga, MS-DOS, and Comodore 64/128 software - and Berkley Softworks didn't seem to want it back, so I've still got it on my hands. First request from anybody who will pay shipping gets it (Apple computers just don't seem to be very popular locally); the shrink-wrap is broken and it IS a review copy, so it can't be upgraded. Whoever wants it should contact me; my address is above, and my phone is 1 (United States)-606-255-0097. PLEASE DON'T send money; I'd rather make arrangements first, and besides, I'm telling other people about this too; it might be gone by the time you read this.

2) I'm desperately looking for fan/SF/fantasy news columnists from Australia, Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., and other places outside the U.S. and Canada. If you know anybody who might be interested in doing a regular column in exchange for free copies of the 'zine in which it appears, please contact me.

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

Reproduction. Hmmmm, well, I certainly have nothing much to say about that. I am still using the ditto machine I bought back in 1977. I am still using the same IBM Selectric One typewriter I bought at the same time. And I have had four neo-fans, in the year 1989, refer to my zines as 'mimeo'. Spirit duplicating is almost a dead art in USA fandom that many newcomers have no idea how that funny purple color was formed, and think of it as some sort of strange mimeo ink.

I have often been asked when I will upgrade. After all, about the only thing going for my reproduction equipment is a) it is *cheap* to operate and b) it is paid for.

Right now I have a cash flow problem. And in the next few months I face a medical operation for \$2,400, the need to buy a new automobile, income taxes, and paying off my African vacation that will take place next March/April. So... no new toys for fannish purposes in 1990.

However, I may have one big change in my fannish life. Starting 13th January 1990, I will have Saturday and Sunday off at the Post Office. This means I now have weekends free to do what I want. Which may or may not be Science Fiction conventions. I suppose I can attend the local ones again, but I am not sure about out-of-town cons. More likely I plan to return to over-the-board Chess Tournaments, since the LA area features quite a variety of these weekend events. But there is also the Sierra Club, and its host of activities on weekends. No matter what is offered, I'll find a way to overdo it and over-extend myself, I'm sure.

JOHN TIPPER, PO Box 487, Strathfield 2135.

I guess this is my first loc to anyone for quite a while, certainly my first for 1990 and definitely my first to you for about 20 years! Sue sent me the last couple of issues but I must admit that I really only read the reviews (always good to see) because the contents were a little...er.. unusual and not really to my taste.

THE MENTOR 65 is different, though. I've read David Tansey's stories elsewhere so was happy to attack THE SUMMER OF '92 immediately. David writes in a matter of fact style which I find quite readable and I really enjoyed this dark story.

Personally, I've always considered that any attack on Australia would have to come from "those up to the north west", and must admit that I never thought of David's scenario. His story raises a couple of points I'd like clarified by readers:

#1. Does the old ANZUS treaty (or whatever replaced it) not require the US to come to our aid immediately an aggressor sets foot on our shores?

#2. Would Indonesia have enough *refined* aviation fuel to power the required number of aircraft movements in such a short time? Sure, they have reserves of oil, but most of the crude is exported and they could never afford to buy the refined product back, so it would have to be "donated" by "external powers" hoping for "the victor's spoils".

#3. Have any books appeared on the subject of an attack from the north? Or, would such a book be regarded as "racist" by the powers that be? Would the author find himself up before some obscure tribunal, or would he just disappear from the face of the earth?

If we don't hear from you again, David, we'll know why! I, for one, would be interested in reading a continuation of your story.

What *is* under Parliament House, anyway? And why does the Commonwealth Bank have huge-bunker-like structures in each state? (Those of you in Sydney can see the one on the northern side of the railway line between Strathfield and Burwood. I watched this building go up each day, and the series of walls would have to be several metres thick, supposedly to protect the sensitive computers from magnetic interference, as sustained in a nuclear attack.)

Buck Coulson's article was highly entertaining. I'm a train travel fan from way back, although I wouldn't recommend our own XPTs. (For those of you overseas, a copy of the Britrail HSTs...) My most enjoyable trips was from Mount Isa to Brisbane via Townsville several years ago. It took three days, but the luxury and quality of food and service was fabulous. Highly recommended, so long as you're not in a hurry, and don't mind the bumps from the crude narrow gauge track, especially on the Mt. Isa-Townsville section.

TERRY BROOME, 101 Malham Dr., Lakeside Park, Lincoln LN6 OCD, Lincs, UK.

How I wish for a word-processor! I envy you your duplicators and computers!

Surprised to see that the "experts" on the TOMORROW'S WORLD XMAS QUIZ this year included two sf writers (hardly experts on science!) - Douglas Adams (BBC trots him out at every opportunity) and Diane Duane, who looked and sounded like a few of the American fans living in Britain I've seen around at conventions.

Still not happy with your book reviews. A review, in my view, offers critical comments on the books mentioned, whereas a preview tells you of the plot and that's all. No doubt the previews would still be useful to the Australian fans, but such information is of limited use even to them. For example, you make no critical distinction between Blaylock's work and the work of authors like Morwood or Cole, so that I, for one, would have no idea of how well our tastes

coincide - how would I know from your previews that I would enjoy Blaylock more than Cole? I could pick Cole and thinking Blaylock no better, never read a Blaylock novel. What information you do give I can usually find on the back-cover blurb of a book in any case. But, suppose there are fans out there who do not have access to book reviews or catalogues, and would thus find your previews of a certain news value? But then I wonder why you tend to favor books which would sell well anyway. What IS clear is that you seem to prefer undemanding fiction, and lean towards fantasy rather than sf. But I would not know this much had I not read some of the books you previewed. What might be more useful to readers is a list of *forthcoming* books with three-line plot summaries/brief comments, making it a NEWS service rather than a review column, or getting contributors overseas to review books that are due for release in Australia, so you get a proper review of a book in advance of its appearance and need only add the publishing details of the Australian editions. Either or both of these solutions would improve the usefulness of your column, enable you to cover more books, and give you more time in your own reviews, or with your other work.

Actually, I like "hard" sf stories most of all; fantasy comes probably last, after space opera. A *lot* of fantasy these days is not well written and is formula stuff - more so than the sf. Of course there *is* some good fantasy - and I say so when I review it.

I like undemanding fiction? I don't know about that - it depends if the *story* is good - which is why I still read sf after twenty-five years.

All the books I review are sent by the Australian distributors when they receive review copies, which could be several months ahead. However, they ask that the review not appear before the release date. You will note, though, that I *do* list forthcoming books (when the distributors tell me ahead). Since Australia is in the UK copyright region, nearly all the books are UK editions. And not all those released by the UK publishers are distributed in Australia. - Ron.

Sue Cartwright's story, though well-paced, failed to grab my interest on the first page, essential to any story (though not to its success - a good percentage of INTERZONE stories suffer the same faults) - she needs to brush up on her dialogue, which wasn't very naturalistic and the description is a little awkward, self-conscious. These faults suggest she wasn't in touch with the story or the characters on an emotional level (which is why people tend to write better from experience). But I think it's a case of her not having found the right idea for her talents yet, and given that she should do very well.

Fascinating report from Russia, I was half-convinced it was a lampoon it was so unreal, almost fictional. I wish I could write as well!

Enjoyed Buck's latest American report. Shooting a dog to kill it rather than injecting an overdose of anaesthetic may be quicker, but it's also more violent. I'd prefer to feel like I was going to sleep than be shot, much gentler way to go. Buck's casual violence is startling! Not to mention the mess it would make. But he does seem genuinely fond of his pets, which is more than can be said for many "animal lovers" who may give their dogs an O.D., but only after a wretched life. I've been tempted to buy filktapes, but with no idea of quality control (a front room recording is probably too rough and ready for my tastes), I've resisted. If hotels can be persuaded to play filktapes over their speakers or in lifts rather than the usual lift music during conventions there might be a better awareness of what filktapes are all about.

Skipping over the poetry, which I found melodramatic and cliched, and THE TRANSMITTER, which began well and could almost have been an article, but which quickly devolved into a 50's pulp-type thing, I came across the loccol.

Though it struck me that you're quite conservative in your tastes, in regards the books you read and the stories and poetry you publish, as if you yearn for the '40's and '50's sf scene all over again. So perhaps my comments for more sophistication would be at odds with your

basic policy.

Again - I review all the books I receive for review, and the things I publish reflects not only myself but the basic wants structure of Australian sf readers. I publish THE MENTOR for myself and for those sf and fantasy readers just finding fandom - neofans, if you like. - Ron.

Pamela Boal's right in that there's nothing wrong in using tired, old plots, but I'm a perfectionist. I think you're short-changing yourself and your readers if you don't try to strive for the best, and that means striving for something only you can provide, a unique style, a style that is most definitely you and no-one else. Originality will make your work stand out and be remembered where others will be forgotten. And what makes a story original is a combination of plot, themes, concerns, approach and so on, which may individually be old hat, but made original by the way you mix them together. Examples are LIFE DURING WARTIME, THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN and TALKING MAN, which takes old ideas, icons, images, themes and so on, but which are nevertheless unique to the authors because of the treatment the authors have given them. It could be that by using these familiar frameworks to explore ideas, they've used themes to explore concerns close to them, and this might be the secret. That you dress a story up by using it to explore things you are concerned about, and that's what gives a story its unique stamp.

Mae Strelkov is very nice about the criticisms I made of FUGITIVES. I don't think I realised english wasn't her native or main language, or I'd've been more careful in wording my observations!

More phallic art from Steve Fox - I thought spaceships resembling tumescent penises had died with the pulps, but maybe he's trying to spearhead a renaissance! Ranson's art on p.28 was superb, best of the issue.

My third attempt to reply to Steve Sneyd's loc. To sum up the comments I made in regards the factual errors of his loc, I'll point out that it hardly contained a true statement of affairs, being seriously wrong on five major points, but people should refer back to my loc in THE MENTOR 62 to see what I mean. Steve also needs to learn the difference between a criticism and a review, which are worlds apart. I made eight points in response to his loc which are harder to sum up. I believe criticism should not be restricted to professionals, I don't have the same biases Steve has towards Stephen King, I made my comments in the belief Julie Hawkins would benefit from them. I do accept that I may have been too thorough and disheartened her, but it was a choice between mentioning only two or three faults in summary which would be more socially acceptable and an in-depth criticism which would be of more help. Right or wrong I chose the latter course, but I feel Julie is quite capable of defending herself if she thought I was unfair. As for publicly humiliating Julie, this was not intended and could not have been my responsibility, because I have no power over what is and what is not printed in THE MENTOR - only the editor has that power and responsibility. He could just as easily have posted my comments to Julie privately. I assume he printed them for two reasons: (a) they were comments on THE MENTOR as well, of course, so had direct relevance to the fanzine (b) he was interested in seeing what response my comments received from other people. The same could be true of Steve's loc, which did everything Steve said I did (and didn't) - ie make unfair, inaccurate and blatantly false statements, and brought up a topic of no relevance to THE MENTOR at all, namely my own fanzine/loc policy. One must question Steve's apparent chivalry in this light - I don't think he was looking for fair play at all, but used Julie Hawkins as an excuse to insult me. In which case he had insulted Julie in a manner I consider far worse than I may have done, because he was dishonest about it.

In regards my fanzine/loc policy, it basically boils down to a very common practice among some professional mags and papers - that is, anyone writing locs the editor can print will receive a free copy of the zine the locs are printed in. I pointed out to Steve that, owing to the

brevity of his loc, which was less a letter than a *note* (hastily scrawled on the back of a postcard) I might not be able to use, it, so to ensure a copy of the next issue he would *probably* have to write a *letter* of comment, ie 2-3 paragraphs, not two sentences. I did point out that he might receive a copy anyway, but he would have to do this to make absolutely sure. The policy is so strict because I'm unemployed and will not probably have to reduce the print run of the next zine, and it is meant to discourage lazy responses, however positive, so I can better target the fanzine for a better quality of feedback, which - in the past - has been abysmal, various people feeling they don't have to do much or anything to receive the next zine. I feel that 2-3 paragraphs is small price to pay for a 118+pp fanzine which has taken several years to write and will cost several hundred pounds to copy in the same numbers I did the previous one. In addition, I did say that anyone who received the first issue of the current series can receive the second even if they don't loc it by paying for the cost of running off their copy (which stands at about 5 pounds I think). This is the fairest I can be when lack of money means *someone* has to be taken off the mailing list. The irony of this is that I had an extra page or two spare and filled them up with the short puffs and criticisms I received from several people, including Steve, which qualifies them for a free copy of the next issue anyway.

Finally, Steve suggested I was so critical of Julie's story because of pique or jealousy or some other crazy notion because I can't write fiction or stories myself. His comments on my fanzine were as follows: "Very powerful writing, structured and segued in such a skillful way that it hauls the reader irresistibly on. Keep adding chapters and the point's going to come where you've got a very viable autobiographical novel on your hands." On of my fictionalised autobiographical accounts appeared in another fanzine and received similar praise. But, before this sounds too much like I'm blowing my own trumpet, all my work has received the full gamut of responses, from "professional" to "abysmal". I was in a writers' circle for a number of years and do still write fiction. It might not be very good, but I've always accepted criticisms where I feel they're valid and have been grateful for those who supplied them, because that's the only way I'll improve. I hope Julie recognises this, too. It hurts, yes, but that doesn't mean the criticisms are wrong. I still have a long way to go, myself, but that doesn't invalidate my comments to Julie on her story. I don't perceive writing as a competitive event. And whether I'm good or atrocious myself has no relevance to Julie's own skills, or my criticisms of them. You could say that I should tidy my own backyard before criticising others', that I should prove myself first, but if everyone was so selfish we'd still be living in the stone age, because we all have faults and often the only way to see them is for someone else to point them out, even if they're the same faults. In the real world, we can't afford to be so childish as to ignore each other's faults because we have them, too. If we wish to improve each other, the sf genre, ourselves, the world, we need to show each other where we're going wrong. I can't see anything wrong in this as all. How we go about it is a different matter, but Steve didn't criticise me for that, he criticised me simply for making criticisms. A more hypocritical stance I've yet to come across.

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

Terry Broome kindly sent me a copy of the response to my loc he has sent to you - nothing could be more tedious than something like this matter droning on ad inf, but he has so totally misinterpreted my intent that I should at least make 2 brief rejoinders (which I have also sent to him direct).

(a) It is *because* I think his own writing is powerful and valuable that it seemed so pointlessly negative his directing so much effort to overkillwise blowing away someone else's writing, instead of getting on with his own.

(b) I mentioned the business of his fz, *not* because I was sulking over not getting on, but to allow readers of THE MENTOR, if my loc was used, to be aware of any prejudice that might've crept into it - a "health warning" if you like.

Reverting to #64, Sue Cartwright's tale was a genuinely "enjoyable nightmare" if that isn't too much of a contradiction in terms - and she elegantly resisted the temptation to provide an explanation for the mirror - I always find it appealing when a writer gives the reader "mind space" to come up with his/her own speculations.

Wonder if that M. John Harrison reprint (THE COMMITTED MEN) is available over here - must try to track it down. His latest book issued here, CLIMBERS, is "something completely different". The story of a couple of years he spent rock-climbing and as part of a hill rescue team while living in a Pennine valley (dale) a few miles from here - not read it but heard Harrison himself read extracts at Stamford, lines that last year at the Lit Fest/Small Press Con there. "Dusk was gathering, to use the odd but true cliché", as he read and it was a real experience of being hypnotised by a story teller, voice coming out of this ever-shadowier figure, while the people he talked about seemed to move into the room around him.

Wonder also if the "Mana" of eyebrows (re Strelkov's amazing worldwide exegesis) explains the odd belief that people whose eyebrows meet are werewolves? When I was a kid, for some reason I always wanted eyebrows that did that - ie meet - doubtless these days any hair transplanter could do it at the drop of a hat, but the idea dropped off my "wish list" ages ago!

The article on the Strugatsky row had the mysteriousness of a fragment from Dostoyevsky. One bit I particularly didn't grasp was who did the searching? Security services presumably, but then why did readers assume it was the Strugatskys? Hopefully by now glasnost will have brought out a true story, though as history of any kind is usually simply a set of rival/ contradictory accounts, East & West, maybe that's overly optimistic.

Coulson's comments about sales from past YANDROS are very intriguing - one fanzine at least must've taken the trouble to register copyright in far more casual times.

Most, if not all Australian fanzines send in their Copyright copies to the government agencies, and have since at least the '60's. - Ron.

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

After mountains of work I've finally got the new STICKY QUARTERS done. It's a biggie - 64 pages, 300 copies. While printing it up I got to thinking about going offset. It's getting harder to find mimeo supplies - even mimeo manufacturers like Gestetner & A.B. Dick have closed local warehouses. Twiltone doesn't exist anymore - the only paper that could be mimeod without slipsheeting. If you can imagine slipsheeting and de-slip-sheeting 64x300 sheets you can see why I idly thought about using some other form of printing. Commercial xerox or offset is too expensive (roughly 4c an impression). I'm tempted to buy my own offset press but am put off by reports of its complicatedness and need to get someone to develop the masters. So I'm staying with mimeo for now.

SQ19 was my first zine produced on computer - an Atari ST with one meg memory. I used my old daisywheel typer as the printer - because I wanted to cut stencils directly. After looking at some of the dot-matrix printers being used to produce fanzines I think I'll stick with the daisywheel for a while, despite its slowness. So many of these dot matrix printers lack the resolution to produce letters that are not ugly. Sad to say MAC's and Apples are the worst. They look pretty good with a laser or inkjet printer, but D&M is hell.

Oh, I don't know about that. This zine and the last issue is produced on an Apple //e with a 9 pin Imagewriter dot matrix printer. A lot depends on the software.

I bought my own second-hand offset press (and platemaker) for a total of \$1,900. They had

just been rebuilt. I set up a co-operative of about ten people who each put in \$100. The press was a table-top ABDick, and I sold it about a year later for what I bought it for and got a two-ink roller model, which is what I am using now. I am sure that if you looked around you could find a better price in the US. As to using it, it isn't much more complicated than a motorised mimeo. The only thing is, the machine prints at about 5,000 sheets an hour, and when things go wrong, they go wrong *fast* and you have to be alert and know what to do: ie stop the machine, first. - Ron.

Putting down a pet, as Buck Coulson had to do, ain't easy. Then I'm the type who gets emotionally attached to livestock. I think I've heard the song OLD SHEP (tho maybe not the Red Foley version). A similar experience can be had by watching OLD YALLER, a Disney film where our heroic dog has to be put down in the end.

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

It's interesting enough to read a fanzine from Australia, but how often does one read a fanzine with contributions from Argentina and the Soviet Union?

Andrew Lubensky's article on the Yui Medvedev vs the Strugatsky brothers controversy was my favorite article in your latest issue. I have enough background to follow the dispute a little bit - I've read several books by the Strugatsky brothers and one by Medvedev (well, in English translation). Medvedev is basically a second-rate Soviet science fiction writer, so THE MENTOR readers who want to sample him will have to track down a copy of THE CHARIOT OF TIME, put out in 1988 by Raduga Publishers of Moscow. (As a rule, the best Soviet sf writers are the ones translated by commercial publishers in the West, people like Arkady and Boris Strugatsky and Kiril Bulychav. Second tier Soviet sf writers such as Medvedev and Vladimir Mikhaouovskiy, who had little hope at earning royalties abroad, are published in translation by the Russians.) Anyway, Medvedev's work, to judge from the three stories reprinted in THE CHARIOT OF TIME, is marked by virulent nationalism. The main story in the collection, a novella called THE CUP OF PATIENCE, is about a plot by evil Americans to sow radioactive waste from a military base in Italy. In contrast, most of the best Soviet sf writers are internationalist and don't target particular nationalities for abuse.

When did you try to send the copy of FOOTFALL to Boris Zavgorodny? I wonder if the Soviets have relaxed such censorship recently - I've read that you can mail copies of the Bible to the Soviet Union now. It seems like it would take a lot of manpower to maintain a list of forbidden books and search parcels to keep them from being delivered.

Yes, and the 5,000 people the East Germans reportedly had searching and reading mail no doubt did a good job of it. - Ron.





REVIEWS



CURRENT SF and FANTASY RELEASES.

THE LONG DARK TEA-TIME OF THE SOUL by Douglas Adams. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1988. 247pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

A good novel to start off this month's review column. **THE DARK TEA-TIME..** is the second Dirk Gently novel to be published. I didn't know that this was a Dirk Gently novel until some 20 pages into the book (not having read the cover blurb). Throughout the novel Adams is logical as to what happens - that is, things progress logically (which one can see by the time one has finished the novel).

Said novel starts off at Terminal Two of Heathrow airport where Kate Schechter was trying to catch a plane to Norway. This was proving to be as her day had started to be - trying. From the moment when the neighbour who was going to look after her cat had died, she had the hint that things were not going to be easy. This feeling followed through to the time when she missed the plane and narrowly missed on being maimed when the airline desk blew up and through the Terminal roof.

What this had to do with a rather gruesome killing and Odin and other Norse Gods I'll leave up to any venturesome reader of this jolly humorous book.

THE ABYSS by Orson Scott Card. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1989. 352pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

THE ABYSS is a major motion picture release by 20th Century Fox and is directed by James Cameron. This novel is the novel of the movie. Card wrote the novel at the same time the movie was being shot and he made sure (he says in the Afterword) that it reflects the movie. I haven't heard of the movie being released yet, so I presume it is still coming.

The novel opens with the USS Montana being destroyed by an alien probe returning to a deep sea trench in the Caribbean after destroying a Soviet satellite that would have pinpointed

where each submarine was, surfaced or underwater. The aliens thought that this would help the humans stay away from the brink of war - the opposite, of course, was true. When the US authorities found out about the Montana they commandeered the Deepcore - the first undersea oil drilling rig, since it could be mobile and it was only about 80 miles away from the site. The Navy placed on board the Deepcore a select band of military personnel that would ensure that the Montana was blown up (with one of its own nuclear devices) if the "enemy" looked like getting hold of its secrets. And all the time the aliens looked on.

I wish all novels based on movies were like this - excellent sf; and I will make sure I see the movie, too!

WOLF'S BROTHER by Megan Lindholm. Unwin trade pb. dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1988. 236pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

The sequel to **THE REINDEER PEOPLE**, this novel is written in the same style with an easy-to-follow storyline.

Kerlew was growing up and he and his mother were still with the tribe. Their problems were still with them, however - Carp, though old, was still limber enough to cause them trouble. Joboam was still trying to find his place as a leader of the group. Then an event took place that threatened their very livelihood - the reindeer started coming down with a fly born plague.

This type of novel was given public impetus by the like of Conan Doyle and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The modern day novels are much like the older ones, with sometimes better characterisation. If you liked **THE REINDEER PEOPLE** you will want to read the sequel.

THE SUCKING PIT by Guy N. Smith. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1975. 158pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Guy Smith has written about 80 books, most of them horror. Though a slim volume, **THE SUCKING PIT** has most of the attributes of the British horror story - a Hanging Wood dating back to Cromwell, a bog in the centre of it that has been taking murdered people to its depths since at least an early era, a band of gypsies intent on serving their Master, depraved sex and violence and women lusting after men's bodies.

The writing is clear and simple. The plot is not complicated and it makes an hour or so's easy read. There is a quote from Stephen King on the cover: "The all-time pulp horror classic title"

Need I say more?

FOSS POSTER PORTFOLIO by Chris Foss. Grafton, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1989. A\$27.95. On sale now.

Well, this is something you don't see much of from a UK publisher. In this large folder (30cm x 45cm) are ten of Chris Foss's colour works - covers from some of his latest books. Each is about 60cm x 42cm and is in full colour.

The text says the artwork illustrates **BAD DAY AT RED ROCK QUARRY; NIGHT BANKER; METEOR CITY; RB; LA TOWERS; ARMAGEDDON; ICEBERGS IN ORBIT; EASTER ISLAND; THE GREAT GUN OF LATMOS** and **THE ETERNAL FOUNTAIN ON QUATARN**. You will certainly have seen several of these on covers - RB, for instance, was used on the hardcover of **THE ROBOTS OF DAWN** and the drowned **LA TOWERS** was recently used on another sf novel.

Foss has his own distinct sf style with his detailed sf ships and machines; indeed all of these, with the possible exception of **METEOR CITY**, feature them. If you have a wall that looks a little bare, then these will look good on it. My personal favourites (for my office wall...) are **ARMAGEDDON** and **THE GREAT GUN OF LATMOS**.

DRAGON PRINCE by Melanie Rawn. Sidgwick & Jackson trade pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1988. 574pp. A\$16.99. On sale now.

Quite a large volume this, and quite well wrought, also. It will join that volume of Dragon Dreams along with others that have been published before - and will continue to be read for some years to come.

What Rohan's father wanted was not what his son turned out to be - he was a fighter all right, but not of dragons. He was also quite bookish - he actually read somewhat and his father and mother, both quick tempered people, were aghast. How could this son be theirs? Rohan's future wife was studied in the magics and had made the subject of Sunlight and Moonglow one of her conquests, as she would make Rohan.

It was later than she found that the High Prince and the Lady of Goddess Keep were Rohan's enemies and she was determined that her husband would prevail. Quite good fantasy.

ABDUCTIONS by Edith Fiore. Sidgwick & Jackson h/c, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1989. 342pp. A\$35. On sale now.

The sub-title of this book is "Encounters With Extraterrestrials". Edith Fiore is a clinical psychologist who, using regression techniques, has found that there are many people who have been kidnapped by aliens in UFOs.

First off she gives a list of ten Most Common Signs of Abductions. These include "waking up with unusual bodily sensations" and "appearance of mysterious marks on the body". There are seventeen chapters dealing with, from the beginning, the appearance of UFOs through history. She then goes into depth interviews with her patients and their reply to her questions, while under hypnosis. They describe what happened to them in mostly clear terms, though they do seem to leap to some strange conclusions as to what the aliens are doing and why.

If you are into psychic awareness and the secrets the government are keeping from the public, then you will find this book of interest.

ETERNITY by Greg Bear. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1988. 399pp. A\$15.95. On sale now.

The cover of this novel is striking - it is a size halfway between trade pb and ordinary pb and shows a rocket on a launchpad with an sun in the background with enormous promontories flaring out into space. The book is, of course, the sequel to EON.

The story opens with some of the main characters in the earlier novel. Patricia had gone through a Gate to a world that was much different to the Earth she had left and she spent a lifetime looking for a stable Gate to return. She left a grand-daughter whom she had taught as much as she could. Gary Lanier and his wife Karen were growing apart - she had longevity treatments but he had refused them. Various people on the Stone were still alive - Olmy was deep into researches that would ultimately bring a confrontation with the alien Jart. The humans that had disappeared down the Way before it was closed were thought lost - until one of them appeared with a fantastic story and a plea.

This is one of the better "hard" sf stories to be released in paperback this year. *Recommended*.

KING OF THE MURGOS by David Eddings. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1988. 444pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

I missed this when it came out several months ago - I read the third volume, DEMON LORD OF KARANDA, when I realised that I had missed one volume. Each book is complete in itself, but it is better, since it is a series, to read each in sequence.

In this volume, the small group of Garion, his wife, his grandfather and his grandfather's daughter and several others are still trekking around trying to catch the kidnappers of their baby son. They have started out several months behind, but the Orb, set in Garion's sword, can tell him which way runs the trail. They have many adventures on the way, as when they again meet the Snake Queen, from who they escape and end up in the temple one being when they manage to penetrate a Gromlin temple where they meet the King of the Murgos, who turns out to be not a strong king, but does hide some secrets.

I have read that at least one reviewer thinks these novels drag - they do not, though there is talk in an every-day manner, there is also action.

ANOTHER ROUND AT THE SPACEPORT BAR edited by George Scithers & Darrell Schweitzer. (C) 1952 - 1988. 248pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

I suppose it must be hard after the first volume sold so well to read through all the index cards to find enough stories set in a bar for a second volume. Of course two of the stories were written by the editors. And, of course, most of the bars are of the US type, with "booths".

The stories in the collection have quite a wide range, both of type and time, from stories of demons, to a bar set in penthouse, from which aliens descend to the earth. The stories are: **THE FAR KING** by Richard Wilson; **THE ALTER AT MIDNIGHT** by C. M Kornbluth; **PRINCESS** by Morgan Llywelyn; **THE SUBJECT IS CLOSED** by Larry Niven; **THE PERSECUTOR'S TALE** by John M. Ford; **LONGSHOT** by Jack C. Haldeman II; **FINNEGAN'S** by W.T. Quick; **THE OLDEST SOLDIER** by Fritz Leiber; **THE ULTIMATE CRIME** by Isaac Asimov; **ALL YOU ZOMBIES** by Robert A. Heinlein; **THE IMMORTAL BARD** by Isaac Asimov; **ANYONE HERE FROM UTAH?** by Michael Stanwick; **COLD VICTORY** by Pohl Anderson; **C.O.D.** by Jonathon Milos; **PENNIES FROM HELL** by Darrell Schweitzer; **NOT POLLUTED ENOUGH** by George Scithers; **WELL BOTTLED AT SLAB'S** by John Betancourt and **THE THREE SAILOR'S GAMBIT** by Lord Dunsany.

There are some good ones, such as the classic **ALL YOU ZOMBIES**, and some lightweight ones, such as **NOT POLLUTED ENOUGH**, but all in all a pleasant hour or so's reading.

NEW MOON by Midori Snyder. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1989. 280pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

I nearly did not review this book. I had quite a pile of sf to review and then I came across this volume one of The Queens Quarter. Then I rifled through it looking for the main points when I came across a scene that struck my liking with its description. So I put it back on the pile for reading.

NEW MOON is a fantasy, set in a country, Oran, that had been invaded some two hundred years before when the Queens of Earth, Air, Water and Fire had fought between themselves. The official version was as above, but the remaining Queen, of Fire, spoke to her closest co-horts, that they other Queens, her sisters, had been destroyed by herself. The country was on a downward decline; even the peasants were complaining of the yoke of oppression of the Sileans who always seemed to get much more than they deserved. The action switches between the Readers in the nobility to the gutter urchins and gangs and the discovery of another with the ability to control fire in the same way as the Queen could. The psi abilities were thinly spread through the Oran population, and the Queen and the invaders continued their plot by killing any who showed these abilities. *Recommended*

NEMESIS by Isaac Asimov. Doubleday h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 364pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

This is the first edition of a new Asimov novel, the first non series sf novel since **THE**

GODS THEMSELVES.

The novel is smooth and well written, and there are several threads that weave their way through to their conclusion. Asimov could, though, have left mention of this out of his Prologue - it makes it look as though he were writing down to his readers.

The scene is Earth in the 23rd Century; there are space colonies escaping from an overcrowded earth and it is on one of these that the ability for hyper-assist travel is found. This is the coming in and out of hyper-space several times a second, to travel to the stars. When the colony which discovers this departs for an undisclosed destination - the nearest star to the Sun, Nemesis, found by that colony hidden behind a cloud some two and a half light-years from Earth, Earth puts all its effort into a working FTL starship. They come up with it - true hyperspace travel, not the hyper-assist requiring enormous amounts of energy. The first experimental superluminal ship departs to explore the vicinity of Nemesis. The ship reaches Nemesis and finds something totally unexpected orbiting the red dwarf.

DOUBLE PLANET by John Gribbon & Marcus Chown. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1988. 220pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

DOUBLE PLANET refers to the Earth/Moon system. The novel is a "hard" sf novel in that it deals with people and hardware; in this case, space hardware.

The Earth has been through a trying period with it barely surviving an atomic war. Most people are still alive, but the economies of the world are stretched trying to cope. The ReUnited Nations is headed by a powerful man whose plans no-one is game to cross. It is to him that Kondraitieff, the chief science advisor, comes to try to persuade him to ok funds to send an expedition, using the old shuttles, to a new comet that has been found entering the Solar System for the first time.

The expedition sets off, but there are mishaps, both physical and political, that threaten its mission. And then the commander tells the expedition members the real reason for the expedition...

Good solid sf adventure.

KEEPER OF THE KEYS by Janny Wurts. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1988. 306pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Book two of the Cycle of Fire, volume one being **STORMWARDEN**.

KEEPER OF THE KEYS opens with two fishermen discovering the body of a sick boy washed up on a deserted beach. They take him into their care; he is Jaric, whom his enemies are searching for. He is the Keeper of the Keys, the Firewarden's son. His father had been driven insane with his attempts to train himself in the Cycle of Fire - it mastered him, instead of him it. Now the keys passed onto his son. The keys also keep the Mharg-dragon's bound; if the demons escape, they could cause havoc. There is a female enchantress in the early part of the book - described as pretty and black haired - as is the boy. I won't tell what happens when they both meet.

Janny Wurts writes quite well - her language is clear and easy to understand. If you liked volume one, then this naturally follows on.

THE WIND'S TWELVE QUARTERS by Ursula Le Guin. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1975. 303pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

I didn't think that I had read any of Le Guin's short-fiction before; but reading the Copyright notices in this volume of short stories I see that I must have: those that appeared in **FANTASTIC**, **AMAZING** and **GALAXY**, for instance.

Re-reading those stories I found that I did at least remember the stories, not the least reading them in the magazines. The contents are: **SEMLIE'S NECKLACE**; **APRIL IN PARIS**;

THE MASTERS; DARKNESS BOX; THE WORD OF UNBINDING; THE RULE OF NAMES; WINTER'S KING; THE GOOD TRIP; NINE LIVES; THINGS; A TRIP TO THE HEAD; VASTER THAN EMPIRES AND MORE SLOW; THE STARS BELOW; THE FIELD OF VISION; DIRECTION OF THE ROAD; THE ONES WHO WALK AWAY FROM OMELAS and THE DAY BEFORE THE REVOLUTION.

There are outstanding stories in the above; APRIL IN PARIS, THE MASTERS, THE STARS BELOW and the last story, THE DAY BEFORE THE REVOLUTION. A good addition to the sf reader's library.

MONA LISA OVERDRIVE by William Gibson. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1988. 316pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

MONA LISA OVERDRIVE is the final self contained novel in the Cyberspace series; the previous two volumes being NEUROMANCER and COUNT ZERO (both out in Grafton pbs). You don't have to have read the previous two volumes, but it helps. The novels are self-contained, but to get the most out of the plot the information in the other two make things clearer.

Mona Lisa is a girl of the lower strata of American society - about the only thing going for her is that she looks somewhat like the most well known vid starlet, Angie. There are several groups of people that are brought in at the beginning of the novel - a Japanese girl who is the daughter of a Japanese industrialist who flies her off to England where he considers she is safer; a dropout called Slick who is building several machines/sculptures in an old factory, and an old "cowboy" (programmer) who owns the building; a woman who does various jobs, including assassination, and the Count of the previous novels, who arrives at the factory hooked up to life support apparatus and a biochip, in the company of Mona Lisa. When the groups come together all hell breaks loose.

Worth reading.

Philip Jose Farmer's THE DUNGEON series: THE BLACK TOWER by Richard Lupoff; THE DARK ABYSS by Bruce Colvolle and THE VALLEY OF THUNDER by Charles de Lint. Bantam pbs, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1988, 1989. 339, 310 and 262pp plus illustrations. A\$8.95. On sale now.

This is a peculiarity - a series of his own devising, overseen by Philip Jose Farmer, but written by others. The story takes place on a planet in a multi-levelled dungeon. Clive Folliot is looking for his lost brother and one of the things he has that he hopes will help find him is his brother's diary. In the first volume he enters the dungeon and is soon battling cyborgs, dwarves and aliens who have been captured and transported there for some hidden purpose.

The second and third volume continues his (and his companions who has joined his expedition) journey and they battle serpents, spiders, dinosaurs, giant worms, shark people and cave creatures.

If you think this sounds much like a Dungeons and Dragons game (without the dragons) you wouldn't be far from the truth. My son loved it - a good buy for early teens.

ROLE-PLAYING MASTERY by Gary Gygax. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1987. 176pp (incl appendix). A\$12.95. On sale now.

This is a good introductory book to the Role-playing fan. In it Gary Gygax (the founder of TSR and co-creator of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS) goes into the basics of how to create your ideal character, improve group dynamics, help your group accomplish its goals, assess your opponents and build more exciting campaigns.

The chapters are: Role-Playing; The Foundation of Fun; The Master Player; The Master GM; The Group; More than its Parts; Rules: Construction and Reconstruction; Searching and

Researching; Tactical Mastery; Designing your own Game; Mastery on the Grand Scale. The appendices give addresses of Organisations and regional groups (UK); annual conventions (mainly in the USA); professional periodicals; games and products and a glossary of terms.

I am sure that if you are just starting off into role playing games this volume will be a great help with background information.

TAU ZERO by Poul Anderson. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1970. 190pp. A\$9.95. On sale 1/3/90.

A shorter version of this novel was serialised in GALAXY as TO OUTLIVE ETERNITY in 1967. It is another "hard" sf novel, describing the maiden voyage of the starship Leonora Christine on its journey of exploration to one of earth's neighbouring stars. The ship is a bussard drive ship - picking up hydrogen as she jets along - and so the faster she goes, the more opportunity she has of acceleration, as she does not have to carry much fuel, except for maneuvering. Everything is going well until she hits a small, dark nebula with a more dense composition than she can handle. She is damaged, so much so that she can't decelerate.

The novel deals both with the physical side of things, as well as the psychological side of the problem/s well. Poul Anderson won a Hugo for this novel and it is easy to see why. With a crew of fifty, the cast is small enough to give some insights into quite a large number of people and the way they handle things. If you haven't read it, this is the time to get your copy.

THE CHILD GARDEN by Geoff Ryman. Unwin Hyman h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1989 388pp. A\$34.95. On sale 23/2/90.

In this future world in Britain the climate is semi-tropical and the landscape has changed because of this, and because of the damage caused by the previous century's problems. London is surrounded by a "barrier reef" of genetically engineered coral to keep out the rising waters (even though an event in the novel is a very dry season). Viruses are also genetically adapted to do many things - to control other diseases, to educate people and to control them. The viruses are one of the bones of contention in the novel. The heroine is one of the few who is resistant to them (in fact, she has the ability to control her body so that she can kill them, which she has done in early childhood). Her lover is also immune to them, she is a "polar bear", that is, a human who has been genetically altered to live in the Antarctic without much else than her bare skin.

The background of the novel is quite well done - the English live like poor asians in the heat, growing rice in paddies and have almost entirely adapted, mainly because of the "re"-education programming by the viruses. It is not an easy book to read; I took it in small doses, but overall I found it quite enjoyable.

THE CONGLOMEROID COCKTAIL PARTY by Robert Silverberg. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1984. 284pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

An anthology with a cover illustration that actually is from a scene from one of the stories! The stories included are: THE FAR SIDE OF THE BELL SHAPED CURVE; THE POPE OF THE CHIMPS; THE CHANGLING; THE PALACE AT MIDNIGHT; THE MAN WHO FLOATED IN TIME; AT THE CONGLOMEROID COCKTAIL PARTY; OUR LADY OF THE SAUROIDS; GIANNI; THE TROUBLE WITH SEMPOANGA; HOW THEY PASS THE TIME IN PELPEL; WAITING FOR THE EARTHQUAKE; NOT OUR BROTHER; THE REGULARS; JENIFFER'S LOVER and NEEDLE IN A TIMESTACK.

The above stories are (C) 1980 to 1984, so they are some of Silverbob's later output. They are a mixture of fantasy (THE REGULARS), science fiction (OUR LADY OF THE SAUROIDS) and horror (HOW THEY PASS THE TIME IN PELPEL). However whatever genre they are, they all have the author's unique touch - one can see the results of his travels in

several of the stories (THE FAR SIDE OF THE BELL SHAPED CURVE and HOW THEY PASS THE TIME IN PELPEL). There is some interesting speculation in communicable diseases (THE TROUBLE WITH SEMPOANGA precludes AIDS) and the mores of the far future (The titled story). Silverberg writes smoothly and makes each word tell (as he mentions those in a short story must, in the introduction).

If you haven't read this volume, I can recommend it.

REACH FOR TOMORROW by Arthur C. Clarke. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1956. 166pp. A\$8.95. On sale 1/3/90.

The copyright page of this volume shows some interesting information. The stories in this collection were first published separately in US magazines from 1946 to 1953, and this anthology was collected in 1956. Yet the first British publication was not until 1962, and the first VGSF edition in 1989. Which shows the reader where the main interest in sf lies, even for (ex) British authors.

There are two Prefaces to the twelve stories, which make the stories themselves all the more attractive; RESCUE PARTY; A WALK IN THE DARK; FORGOTTEN ENEMY; TECHNICAL ERROR; THE PARASITE; THE FIRES WITHIN; THE AWAKENING; TROUBLE WITH THE NATIVES; THE CURSE; TIME'S ARROW; JUPITER FIVE and THE POSSESSED. They are all well written (they would have to be, to have withstood the passage of nearly fifty years of publishing) and are a good collection of Clarke's writing abilities. There is, as with Silverberg, sf, fantasy and horror.

REACH FOR TOMORROW is one of those anthologies that has withstood the stresses of time and if you don't have it in your library yet, get this now.

FOR LOVE OF EVIL by Piers Anthony. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1988. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Book six of the Incarnations of Immortality. In the author's note at the end of the novel Anthony writes of how he has juggled the needs of the three types of readers of his series - those to whom this is the first book, those who are reading them as they come out, and those who are reading them one after another as a series in sequence. He says that he wrote more for the former than the latter readers.

This volume concerns Parry, an apprentice and musician. He is falling in with Jolie, a village girl who comes to his house with a problem, but she dies violently. He goes on and becomes rich and powerful in the ways of magic and then becomes an inquisitor. Ultimately he is undone by a demoness and finds himself a Master of Hell, some of the rules of which he changes...

Anthony is turning out many novels per year - there are forty-one listed on the acknowledgements page - but for one who is doing so, they are not hack work, even though they must be, perforce, written quickly. They are an enjoyable and easily read fantasy series.

ARROW'S FALL by Mercedes Lackey. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1987. 319pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

ARROW'S FALL is book three in this series, the first being ARROWS OF THE QUEEN and the second being ARROW'S FLIGHT.

The setting for the series is Valdemar, a country ruled by a king or queen that had some extraordinary gifts. The political situation was that the country was ruled by the royalty and the laws were run by Heralds, both male and female, who had Companions, intelligent horses who had telepathic contact with their humans. The Companions were trustworthy and loyal to the ideals of the country. They did not allow their human companions to stray from the true path. The monarch was also an ex-herald, so that the country usually ran ok.

The present heir was Elspeth, who had been a brat in her younger days, but her human nurse managed to get her straight. The nurse, Talia, was also the Queens Own Herald and had been sent to a neighbouring country on a diplomatic mission. Here she had been captured.

Lackey writes quite well, and tells the story smoothly and with feeling for the characters. Her insight into the motives for the younger ones is good, and she handles those of the children well. For the fantasy reader.

UNICORN MOUNTAIN by Michael Bishop. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1988. 348pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

This is a new one - a novel about unicorns set in present day USA. It is pretty much a novel of today, and follows the lives of four people up to the meeting of a band of unicorns and their lives afterward. One of the four was dying of AIDS, Sam was separated from his wife and child, Libby is divorced and Paisley, Sam's daughter is also having personal problems. How their lives are changed with their meetings with the unicorns and the realization that the unicorns had their own (fatal) problem is shown in the progression of the novel.

The story is quite complex, but Bishop writes well and the whole lot holds together. Whether the reader believes in the reason behind why the unicorns are there at all, and the reception of TV signals from another world with details of what was wrong with the unicorns and the search by the four for ways to try to find a cure is quite well formulated.

A different novel for those fantasy minded; I don't really know if one can bring unicorns into the present day world - though Bishop has tried.

INDIGO: BOOK FOUR NOCTURNE by Louise Cooper. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1989. 291pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

The Indigo series by Louise Cooper is slowly continuing, much like the series by Jack Vance. In all, Indigo releases seven demons into the world and when they killed her family she became unable to die; her job to destroy the demons else they destroy the world (or at least the humans). She has so far dispatched two of the seven, and this volume tells of her journey with Grimya the she wolf to destroy the third, and also to find and rescue the young Esty who had been kidnapped by they knew not who.

Cooper writes an engrossing fantasy, and her followers (and the readers of the Time Master trilogy) will want to buy this book. For others, they will find that the prologue captures the essence of the three earlier books in the series (NEMESIS, INFERNO, INFANTA) and enables the new reader to pick up the thread.

A well-written novel with a well described landscape.

SHE WHO REMEMBERS by Linda Lay Shuler. Pan trade pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1987. 420pp. A\$18.99. On sale now.

This novel is in the tradition of CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR and THE VALLEY OF THE HORSES. It is set in Southwest American in 1270 AD and the author has obviously done a great deal of research in writing it (there is a four and a half page bibliography) and it shows also in the clear and concise way the reader falls into that world. Pan has also done a good job with the actual physical presentation of the book - it is hardcover quality (stiff white pages) and is printed and bound by Richard Clay Ltd, UK) and except for the paper covers, would be a hardcover.

The story follows Kwani, a young girl who is thrown out of her tribe, the Anasazi, because of her witch-like blue eyes. She wanders about and comes across Kokopelli, a traveller who looks after her and trains and guides her. She attempts to join the Eagle Clan and enters into the cities built into the cliffs of ravines. When she hears of the blue-eyed Thorvald (a viking who has been lost in the western continent for years) she goes off to find him.

Eventually she returns to Kokopelli for the birth of her child. There is magic in the plot, as there usually is in these novels written of the far past for modern audiences - though I am sure that even if the ancients thought magic existed, it did not necessarily have to exist. Though in this novel the magic exists in all woman-kind...

FIGHT FOR THE STARS by Adolf Hitler. Adelon pb, dist in Aust by Adelon Publishers. (C) 1950. 378pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Adelon is reprinting some of Hitler's best sf, which had been mostly written between 1948 and 1953. His other novels scheduled for release are **THE BUILDERS OF MARS** and **THE MASTER RACE**. They have been out of print and unavailable for almost twenty years. Although he did some good illustrations before he began writing, his novels are some of the best space opera available, and are as good as Hubbard's **FINAL BLACKOUT**, for instance.

FIGHT FOR THE STARS concerns his usual Van Vogtian-like heroes, who don't appear to have any flaws at all except for some slight inability to see things as ordinary mortals see them, and then in retrospect. The plot begins when an interplanetary liner is set upon and destroyed by a huge ship manned by mutant pirates. The government quickly builds an avenging battleship, crewed by Earth's finest and captained by one of the best, though offbeat, officers in the fleet. They find and destroy the pirate ship and asteroid base and are returning home when they receive a sub-etheric message that horribly repulsive aliens are attacking and landing on Earth. They speed off to the rescue.

Superior space opera.

AT WINTER'S END by Robert Silverberg. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1988. 491pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

With a page count of nearly 500 pages, this novel is value for money, and even if it was not all that good, it still would be. However, it is good (in my opinion)? It does remind one of Aldiss's **HELLICONIA** series - it is set on a world with extremes of climate, is a large book and is written by one of the better sf writers in English.

The scene opens in a "cocoon" set underground. The people living there have been there for at least 700,000 years, living for the day that Winter ends and they can leave and take over their destiny as the Earth's masters. They have books of lore that give them a historical perspective and also some indication of what will happen in the future. The coming of the ice-eaters forces them from the maze of caverns that penetrate the mountain (judging by them, some of their ancestors were more venturesome) and they soon stand surveying the vast, desolate landscape outside.

Silverberg has written a novel that is at least as outstanding as **LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE** and readers will find that it has, though full of adventure some deeper questions asked and answered.

T. A. R. O. T. by Piers Anthony. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1979 1980. 601pp plus index. A\$16.95. On sale now.

This novel was first published in three volumes: **GOD OF TAROT**, **VISION OF TAROT** and **FAITH OF TAROT**.

Planet Tarot is a fairly newly developed planet and has one claim to fame: animations, which appear in distinct regions and can kill. The planet was settled by religious cults. Brother Paul, of the Holy Order of Vision, was sent to Earth as the best representative to find out, among other things, the origin of the Animations, and the nature of the God of Tarot (the planet). It was called Tarot because a member of the original crew was looking at a Tarot deck when the first animation was seen. It was a figure from the deck. Many of the subsequent animations were based on the tarot.

When I first reviewed the three volumes in THE MENTOR 43 I said that I would not be surprised if the novel (FAITH OF TAROT) would not be a Hugo contender and said it was *Recommended*. Of Anthony's many series, this is one of the best.

THE PILLARS OF ETERNITY and THE GARMENTS OF CAEAN by Barrington J. Bayley. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1978, 1982. 414pp. A\$10.99. On sale Now.

These are the first novels by Barrington J. Bayley that I remember reading. I probably have read some of his short stories in NEW WORLDS, but they don't spring to my memory.

The two novels in this volume are separate entities. THE PILLARS OF ETERNITY concerns the voyages of Joachim Boaz as he tries to find Meirjahn, a planet lost in a cloud of stars. The planet had been found before by an expedition, and had been lost again. The expedition had brought back jewels that captured images from past times, and released scenes from past (and future) events. The government had seized the jewels and had destroyed them as a threat to its stability. Boaz was determined to find the planet and conduct experiments that would enable him to pass back into time and undo a certain event.

THE GARMENTS OF CAEAN concerns the clothes manufactured by a race of clothes conscious people whom, the government of the Ziode Cluster are convinced, are planning to take over said cluster. The truth was far more startling and horrible.

Bayley writes space opera with a verve and wit that does not hide the messages and truths that lie in each story. For the thinking reader who likes space opera.

THE FALL OF CHRONOS and COLLISION WITH CHRONOS by Barrington J. Bayley. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1973-79. 397pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

Two more novels by BJB, this time about time travel. I find that he writes sf that has a coherent background and they are well-thought out. These two are over ten years old, but, being about the vulgarities of time, they have not aged.

THE FALL OF CHRONOS is about an Empire that had ensconced itself over several "nodes" in the wave of time and has come up against their descendants, whom they are engaged in a time war with. Chronos is the capital of the Empire, which exists in node one, near the beginning of the empire. The time wars raged back and forth, each side determined to be victorious.

COLLISION WITH CHRONOS also has as its central premise time consisting of waves; though in this case the earth is about to be caught in a "rip", with two time waves, one from the future, one from the past, about to come together and threatens to obliterate all life from earth. The human "present" is governed by a white racist government that is bent on exterminating all deviants from True Man.

Good, solid sf adventure, with a bit of philosophy thrown in.

RETURN TO EDEN by Harry Harrison. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1988. 400pp incl appendix. A\$10.95. On sale now.

With this last in the West of Eden trilogy the reader returns to the world where the dinosaurs still roam. The meteor that struck the earth millions of years ago and helped create the conditions that wiped the dinosaurs out did not strike this earth - both dinosaurs and man both roamed - the dinosaurs over the bulk of the planet, the men over most of North America.

RETURN TO EDEN has the same cast of characters as the previous novels - Kerrick and his wife and tribe, and the dinosaurs, including the breakaway sect the Daughters of Life, which the majority of the latter hated as they refused to kill or give or take orders. Vainte, she who hated the humans most, had returned from exile and was determined to destroy both the humans and the Daughters. I found this trilogy one of the better works that Harrison has put out - it ranks with the original DEATHWORLD novel. *Recommended*.

DISTANCE; THE FEVER; WHERE IS EVERYBODY; THE MONSTERS ARE DUE ON MAPLE STREET; THE LONELY; MR DINGLE, THE STRONG; A THING ABOUT MACHINES; THE BIG, TALL WISH; A STOP AT WILLOUGHBY; THE ODYSSEY OF FLIGHT 33; DUST; THE WHOLE TRUTH; THE SHELTER; SHOWDOWN WITH RANCE MCGREW; THE NIGHT OF THE MEEK; THE MIDNIGHT SUN and THE RIP VAN WINKLE CAPER.

If you've seen THE TWILIGHT ZONE on the TV (and who hasn't) and you liked the series, this is a good opportunity to get the collection of some of the stories that made up the plots. The reader can see Serling reciting the Intros and Epilogues...

THE SHINING FALCON by Josepha Sherman. Avon pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 341pp.

The shining falcon of the title is really a shape-changing Prince, who, on a flight over a forest, is brought down by an enchantress who intends him and his kingdom harm. The forest is not the usual forest - it is inhabited by ancient beings that had been sleeping for aeons. The woman who had brought him down, however, had quite a bit of magic in her power and she was determined to kill him by using those powers.

When the Prince found himself falling he thought that his end had come; however, there were other humans in the forest, one such was Maria, the daughter of a lord who had been (wrongly) accused of dastardly deeds. She nursed the Prince back to health and, through adventures with robbers and others. Maria manages to escape from the forest too, and with the aid of some peasants who love the Prince, she goes after his cousin who she hopes will aid him in his struggle against the enchantress.

Quite well written fantasy.

ON MY WAY TO PARADISE by Dave Wolverton. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 521pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The first two chapters of this novel were published in L. Ron Hubbard's WRITERS OF THE FUTURE contest. They won a prize, and in the novel form they make great sf adventure.

The time is several centuries from now. The South Americas are still dominated by rival factions fighting both between countries and in countries. A doctor is approached by a woman who is obviously from space and she pays him for his services with a crystal computer memory chip. Her husband, high in the military government, sends assassins after her who succeed in driving the doctor off planet. In the meanwhile she dies of tissue rejection and he takes the medically assisted body with him. The ship he escapes to is going to a Japanese dominated planet, though they too are fighting between factions on the planet. The samurai on the ship are training ten thousand South American mercenaries in a hope of winning the war on their planet, Baker.

This novel is adeptly constructed and the science is well extrapolated and appears, to this reader, believable. "Recommended".

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED BOOKS:

THE SIRENS OF TITAN by Kurt Vonnegut. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1959. 224pp. A\$9.95. On sale 1/3/90. The classic novel by Vonnegut about the message from Tralfamadore which they sent to earth. An early version of Life, the Universe and Everything, plus the Answer.

IN OTHER W.O.R.L.D.S by A.A. Attanasio. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1985. 222pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. Commencing with the discovery of Carl Schirmer's blasted bathroom with a mirror showing a strangely distorted image of Carl's face and going on

to the discovery of the interface with another universe, this is mind stretching sf

PRELUDE TO FOUNDATION by Isaac Asimov. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1988. 461pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. The hardcover did not come out that long ago - if you missed it, buy this! The prequel to **FOUNDATION** and the series. Well written and at least as good as the three main **FOUNDATION** books, this novel is a must for your library.

MARCH RELEASES:

COLLINS/ANGUS & ROBERTSON: **THE DOG & THE WOLF** by Poul & Karen Anderson
PORTAL by Rob Swigart

PENGUIN: **SHADOWDALE** by Richard Awlinson
THE AMTRAK WARS 5 by Patrick Tilley

ALLEN & UNWIN: **THE ARCHIVIST** by Gill Alderman



GETTING PUBLISHED AND PAID

For those writers who would like some cash remuneration for their published stories (but not necessarily comments), the following magazines may interest you.

NEW EYES, edited and published by Robert Luxford, of Box 300, Mortdale NSW 2223. It is published about every six months and is distributed through various bookshops in Sydney and the markets. He pays \$20 for stories and plays, \$5 for poetry, \$10 for articles of two pages or more and \$5 per A4 size artwork.

THE CANBERRA SF SOCIETY Inc has a current short story competition, with a deadline of July 1. The two categories are a) science fiction/ science fantasy/fantasy and b) horror. Stories are to be less than 10,000 words in length. In the sf/sf/f category 1st prize is \$50, 2nd is \$25 and 3rd is \$10. There is one prize in the horror of \$50. The society reserves the right to publish the story in their newsletter. Their address is: PO Box 47, Civic Square, ACT 2608.

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DISTANCE; THE FEVER; WHERE IS EVERYBODY; THE MONSTERS ARE DUE ON MAPLE STREET; THE LONELY; MR DINGLE, THE STRONG; A THING ABOUT MACHINES; THE BIG, TALL WISH; A STOP AT WILLOUGHBY; THE ODYSSEY OF FLIGHT 33; DUST; THE WHOLE TRUTH; THE SHELTER; SHOWDOWN WITH RANCE MCGREW; THE NIGHT OF THE MEEK; THE MIDNIGHT SUN and THE RIP VAN WINKLE CAPER.

If you've seen THE TWILIGHT ZONE on the TV (and who hasn't) and you liked the series, this is a good opportunity to get the collection of some of the stories that made up the plots. The reader can see Serling reciting the Intros and Epilogues...

THE SHINING FALCON by Josepha Sherman. Avon pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 341pp.

The shining falcon of the title is really a shape-changing Prince, who, on a flight over a forest, is brought down by an enchantress who intends him and his kingdom harm. The forest is not the usual forest - it is inhabited by ancient beings that had been sleeping for aeons. The woman who had brought him down, however, had quite a bit of magic in her power and she was determined to kill him by using those powers.

When the Prince found himself falling he thought that his end had come; however, there were other humans in the forest, one such was Maria, the daughter of a lord who had been (wrongly) accused of dastardly deeds. She nursed the Prince back to health and, through adventures with robbers and others. Maria manages to escape from the forest too, and with the aid of some peasants who love the Prince, she goes after his cousin who she hopes will aid him in his struggle against the enchantress.

Quite well written fantasy.

ON MY WAY TO PARADISE by Dave Wolverton. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 521pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The first two chapters of this novel were published in L. Ron Hubbard's WRITERS OF THE FUTURE contest. They won a prize, and in the novel form they make great sf adventure.

The time is several centuries from now. The South Americas are still dominated by rival factions fighting both between countries and in countries. A doctor is approached by a woman who is obviously from space and she pays him for his services with a crystal computer memory chip. Her husband, high in the military government, sends assassins after her who succeed in driving the doctor off planet. In the meanwhile she dies of tissue rejection and he takes the medically assisted body with him. The ship he escapes to is going to a Japanese dominated planet, though they too are fighting between factions on the planet. The samurai on the ship are training ten thousand South American mercenaries in a hope of winning the war on their planet, Baker.

This novel is adeptly constructed and the science is well extrapolated and appears, to this reader, believable. "Recommended".

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED BOOKS:

THE SIRENS OF TITAN by Kurt Vonnegut. VGSP pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1959. 224pp. A\$9.95. On sale 1/3/90. The classic novel by Vonnegut about the message from Tralfamadore which they sent to earth. An early version of Life, the Universe and Everything, plus the Answer.

IN OTHER W.O.R.L.D.S by A.A. Attanasio. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1985. 222pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. Commencing with the discovery of Carl Schirmer's blasted bathroom with a mirror showing a strangely distorted image of Carl's face and going on

to the discovery of the interface with another universe, this is mind stretching sf

PRELUDE TO FOUNDATION by Isaac Asimov. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1988. 461pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. The hardcover did not come out that long ago - if you missed it, buy this! The prequel to **FOUNDATION** and the series. Well written and at least as good as the three main **FOUNDATION** books, this novel is a must for your library.

MARCH RELEASES:

COLLINS/ANGUS & ROBERTSON: **THE DOG & THE WOLF** by Poul & Karen Anderson
PORTAL by Rob Swigart

PENGUIN: **SHADOWDALE** by Richard Awlinson
THE AMTRAK WARS 5 by Patrick Tilley

ALLEN & UNWIN: **THE ARCHIVIST** by Gill Alderman



GETTING PUBLISHED AND PAID

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Sydney Fans present

SYNCON 90

The 1990 Sydney Regional Science Fiction Convention

6th - 8th July 1990

at

University of Western Sydney - Hawkesbury

(formerly The Hawkesbury Agricultural College)

THEME

The Science of Science Fiction

Guests of Honour

Ron and Sue Clarke

MEMBERSHIP

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includes accommodation (single room), all meals,
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\$130.00 per person
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children under 3 free

Non Residential

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Please Note: Any residential memberships may be secured with a \$30.00 deposit. All residential memberships should be received by 1st July 1990.

For memberships or more information please write to

SYNCON 90
GPO Box 429
Sydney 2001

VOLGA-CON

(8-14 September 1991)

AN INTERNATIONAL SF MEETING BY THE VOLGA

The Science Fiction club *THE WIND OF TIME* and the youth organisation *ATOM* announce the creation of the Volga-Con organisational committee.

Volga-Con

it's

- seven unforgettable days of energetic floating on the Volga river

it's

- new and old friends in joint activities, talks from morning till night and from night till morning.

it's

CYBERPUNKS ON THE VOLGA
THE YOUNG WAY IN SOVIET SF
SOVIET SF AND FANDOM'S HISTORY IN BRIEF
and other discussions and reports.

it's

- a combined Con by sf clubs from cities situated along the Volga

it's

- rounds of poetry, folksong performances, a story contest, critics galore, auctions and costuming; and a Big Universal Banquet to cinch it all!

The planned number of official attendees: 300 participants, including GoHs from different countries.

We welcome fans, writers, artists, critics, journalists, editors, publishers - in short everyone interested in the SF&F field!

We're sure that your personal participation will make Volga-Con a better place to come to.

Send your inquiries to:
USSR 400066, Volgograd-66
GPO, Poste Restante
Boris A. Zavgorodny
Volga-Con

or phone:

Volgograd, USSR Ph.: 34-74-62, 34-74-64, 34-44-09, 34-86-56, 34-74-13