

THE MENTOR 68



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THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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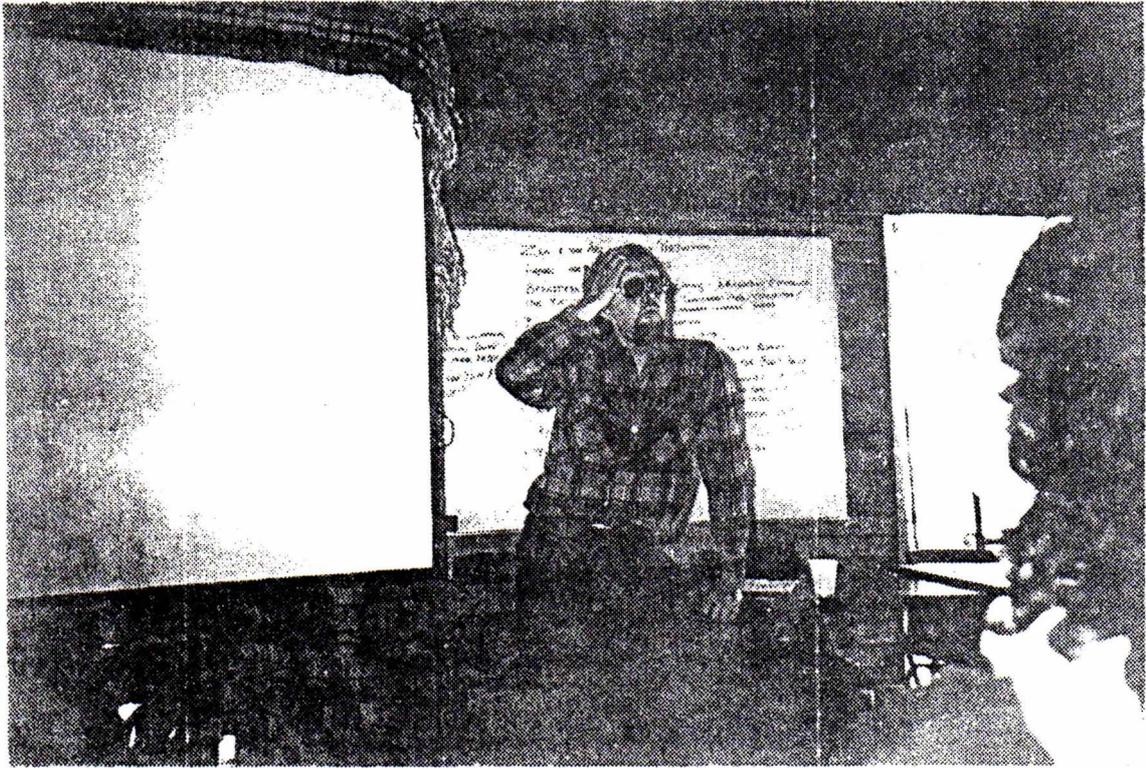
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EDITORIAL



SYNCON 90

It has been a long time since I went to a Syncon. It must have been all of thirteen years ago. That Syncon was held in Sydney. Syncon 90 was held at the old Hawkesbury Agricultural College at Richmond, about 60 km west of Sydney. The College was founded in 1891 and stumbling over the cobblestones at 11 pm just goes to show that Uni conventions still have a better atmosphere than hotel ones.

Susan and I were the fan GoHs, and we had been told that the attendance would only be about 60 people. That suited me just fine. I hate crowded cons, and still think that the early Melbourne cons (1966-68) and the early Syncons (1969-75) were the best of the bunch. Which is one of the reasons I didn't go to the two Melbourne Worldcons.

Anyway, Susan and I tootled down through Penrith and across to Richmond on that Saturday, July 7, 1990. The Friday night, July 6 I had a meeting of the Blue Mountains SF Group, so I didn't go to the get-together on Friday night at the con, but bright and early (about 10 am is early for a Saturday - I'm tired of getting up at 5.30 am weekdays, weekends I sleep in! - and, since the quick way (30 minutes) down another escarpment of the Mountains had been obliterated by a landslide some weeks previously, we had to drive the long (one hour) way around.

When we arrived there was Gary Luckman, the Con organiser, at the first speed hump

putting a sign up announcing the Con to all, and driving slowly up the half-kilometre long entrance driveway (and going over the speed-humps in 2nd gear), we arrived at the car park, filled to overflowing with three cars other than our own. We locked up the Vanette and entered the short walk to the reception area, Susan with her camera and hat and me with the Super 8 projector, film and my hat. We were introduced around to the rest of the Syncon committee, including Karen Warnock, and after setting the projector down underneath the rego desk, wandered into the room where fans were putting together the "aliens", using various small vegetables and jelly lollies.

I left Susan at the table making "Edible Aliens" with bizarre sexual organs and moved around the chairs, blackboard and table for our GoH talk that afternoon. When I finished that I spoke some more with Gary and others of the Committee, before joining Susan in constructing interesting aliens. Susan went off and brought me back a hand-made cup with a skinny dragon as a handle, its claws and snout hooked over the brim. Since she was out of cash, I bought another for her, with a different colouration. We went off and looked at the artwork and posters and ordered a copy of the collectors edition by Peregrin Books, a collection by A. Bertram Chandler, which is to be released shortly

After a hot lunch in the cafeteria we both gave our speeches. I gave reminiscences of the early (60's) activities of Sydney fandom, illustrated by my Super-8 movie of the events ('Is that John Foyster without a beard?') and Susan talked on being married with children in fandom. The rest of the day went quickly and, after dinner, everyone partook of the Trivia Quiz and Wynne Whiteford read out aloud one of his early published stories. Susan having come down with a cold, we retired early

The Sunday was a very quiet day and was the relaxacon part of proceedings. As Susan has mentioned in her article further on in this issue we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

CURRENT TALKING POINTS IN AUSSIE FANDOM: THE "DIMARS"

Some twenty years ago the first "Ditmars" were awarded. A prominent fan at the time told me that they were named "Ditmar" after the fan, Ditmar Jensen, who paid for them to be done.

For the past twelve years or so, these awards have been awarded by the fans in Melbourne (that is, the names of the contenders, especially the fiction contenders, were nominated by Melbourne fans). There are several reasons behind this - they were first given out by Melbourne fans, and the "umbrella" organisation later made to award them was created by the same Melbourne fans. Back at that time both Sydney and Melbourne had approximately equal fan activities going (with more fanzines coming out of Faulconbridge than the rest of Australia combined), but the Sydney fans were more interested in club activities (the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation).

From the fanzines coming out of Melbourne lately it seems that only about 37 people bothered to vote in the "Ditmar" awards, with 34 in the fanzine award (THYME #79). (In 1975 we got a 70% response rate).

Because of this, the Foundation running the awards is running a campaign to make fans more aware of this award and more hopefully interested, by getting them more involved. The big problem is that all but one (I think) of the Foundation board are Melbourne fans. I would like to see one from each State; otherwise it will remain a Melbourne award, even though to overseas fans it appears to be an Australian award.

- Ron.

SILENT VOICES

BY SHANE DIX

Amorphous like water, he floated above the room. Thoughts and feelings passed from him in tiny wisps, leaving him forever. Slumped in an armchair below him was the skin he had occupied for so many years, now sallow and wrinkled. In its hand was clutched a book, a spindly finger set between the blue cover to mark a page. But he couldn't remember what it was he had been reading. That wisp had already gone.

Down the hall he could hear his wife washing the dishes. He wanted to reach out and be with her, to touch her and talk to her, tell her of the feelings that were quickly slipping away. But when he tried to leave the room he found that he couldn't.

There was a light nearby that was holding him back; a light that didn't shine so much as speak. The words it spoke were vague and distorted, but he knew that it was calling to him, insisting he go to it. And it was close too, somewhere within the room. All he had to do was turn to it and it would be there, waiting to take him away to the promise of its warmth.

But he couldn't go. Not yet anyhow. Not without seeing her one last time. He had spent so many years with her, sharing so much together. How could he just leave all that behind?

He searched for those precious memories of her -- fearing them to be already lost -- and found them in the guise of minute pinholes of darkness. There were millions of them, hundreds at a time flaring and dissolving at the touch of his probing thoughts.

He looked again at the skin, ignoring the demands of the light. He tried to see the pathetic figure with some compassion, but soon realised that compassion was something he no longer had a need for. He could only watch with indifference now, unable to employ the emotions he once had access to.

He searched for anger and resentment, but couldn't find them. He searched too for laughter, but that had also abandoned him. Everything he ever was had been stripped away. Even the love that had bound his life to hers would eventually be taken away from him, and there would be nothing he could do to stop it.

All that would remain would be the blue book that the skin now held. In there was his every thought, his every feeling -- all scribbled down to faithfully record his life.

He wondered what he had been reading before he'd slept. What memories had he been dwelling upon?

He dropped through the soft layers of the room, slipping into the skin that had become so familiar to him over the years. It was cold now, and dark. There was no longer any movement, and the silence was crushing. He felt his way into the hand that held the book, then relaxed the muscles that had stiffened. He heard the book drop to the floor with a muffled *thud*.

It had fallen open, though presumably not to the same page he had been reading earlier. He

hovered above the pages that had begun to yellow with age, and read the entry that presented itself to him:

She has left me, taken to the sky and flown away. I can't help wondering whether I shall ever see her again. I feel so lost, so empty without her...

The simple words overwhelmed him with a flurry of flashbacks, causing a thousand pinholes to flare and die, never to return. It hurt, but there was pleasure in it just the same. It was a warm kind of pain that embraced him, and it reminded him that no matter what, he wanted to see her this one last time.

The light was stronger now, as if gaining strength from his reflections. He looked into himself, away from the brightness of the voice, and found himself staring into the pinholes of darkness that led to those hidden moments of his life. He took refuge down the one he felt appropriate, hiding there from the insistent light...

The skin was mobile again. He could see everything that was happening, feel the movements and hear the sounds. But he had no control over the skin. He was only the observer, intruding upon a moment that was no longer his own.

He was at an airport, standing with a woman that he recognised as his wife. But she was so *young*! They were holding each other, close and tenderly, and he thrilled to the touch of her body next to his once more.

He could sense that the skin had become unnerved by something, a strange sensation of having experienced the event before. It was unsettled by this, and he knew that he was responsible for its agitation. He couldn't remain there too much longer without incurring some kind of damage.

Just a few more moments...

'I'm frightened,' she said. 'You might find someone else while I'm away.'

'Who'd have me?' the skin joked, but he felt it burn from the sadness it suppressed.

It was true what she said. Anything could have happened during the time she was away. But it hadn't. He wanted to give the skin the assurance it needed, offer it a glimpse into its future.

But the time had come to leave. He didn't want to, but he knew he had no choice. He was comfortable here, warmed by the sadness that filled the skin. But he couldn't stay. He didn't belong

The room was as he'd left it, awash in shadows and untouched as if he'd never even been away. He could still hear his wife down the hall in the kitchen. She dropped something and he heard it shatter against the floor. Then, silently, without complaint, she began to clear up the mess. It made him want to be with her all the more; made it that much harder to leave.

The book was still open at the same page. He read it over once again, but tired of it quickly and found the need to move on. But he had no means of turning the pages.

He concentrated his attention upon the book, wisps of himself straining to touch the weightless paper. Then into the room -- summoned by what strength he could gather -- blew a soft and gentle breeze that lightly ruffled the edges of the pages before flipping them over.

He tried to read the words scribbled before him, though most of it was illegible. Still, what he could make out was enough to rekindle some memories. Instinctively he dropped through a dark pinhole and fell down the cold shaft, warming at the far end to the sensation of rebirth.

And close behind him was the light, chasing him down.

'We have to stop meeting like this,' he heard the skin say, whispering so as not for the others to hear.

He sat in the skin, the hair that covered it bristling with the feeling of having experienced everything before. His presence there was strong, though the skin was anxious enough with its circumstances to worry about anything else.

He was in a church, his wife beside him, her cream dress filling him with pride and love. They stood together in the chancel, the priest behind them addressing the congregation. They stood there, nervous, holding one another's hand as if it were their only support.

But the moment quickly faded and slipped away as he drifted back along the dark shaft. He couldn't stay any longer. Not here. Not in this pinhole.

Outside he heard his wife walk past the door. He wanted to call out, but he didn't know how to any more. His presence here was a passive one, no longer allowing him to be a part of what was around him. The need to cry out fell from him in a tiny wisp that was quickly smothered by the emptiness, swallowing it forever.

Why didn't she come in? Just once! Just so that he might see her this one last time. He couldn't avoid the light indefinitely. His time had come. He would have to leave sooner or later.

It seemed so unfair though. He had spent his whole life with her, collected so many memories with her. He had never been as close to anyone else as he had been to her.

And still the light beckoned, stronger now than ever before. More demanding. He had to go, but not without taking one last look at her face.

He fell randomly through a pinhole, fleeing down the shaft to whatever awaited him. He found himself lying naked beside her. The warmth from their bodies generated a certain calm into the room that denied the rest of the world. It was nice here, lying so close to her. He wanted to reach out and kiss her, to love her, but he knew that the choice was not his to make.

'Don't ever leave me again,' he heard the skin say, then suddenly remembered so clearly where he was. 'I couldn't stand that.'

'I won't,' she said.

'Never?'

'Never.'

'That's a long time, you know.'

'I know,' she said, and moved in closer to him.

'Would you like to spend that time with me as my wife?'

She paused for a moment, the light from the digital clock playing upon her features. Then carefully, almost inaudibly, she whispered, 'Yes.'

But the light had found him and quietly brought him back to the room. He could hear her singing to herself now in the adjoining lounge. The knitting needles chattered as they worked frantically to finish the jumper for their grandchild.

He felt so helpless, so torn apart by his circumstances. He knew he had to go on, but what harm would it do to see her just once more?

The light was insistent now, its voice commanding and severe. He must not linger, it wasn't right. There was nothing further he could do in here, only bring himself more torment and pain. Then in the voice of the light he heard a promise, a silent promise that was more of realisation than of words. And in it he saw the truth.

He turned slowly, seeing for the first time the peace that the light offered. He looked through it, down the tunnel and beyond the room; beyond his wife and the life they had shared together. It was time to go now, and he did so without regrets, knowing that someday in another life they would somehow meet again.

THE END



THE DANSE MACABRE

BY ALAN STEWART

Danse Macabre, the 29th Australian SF Convention, was held over Easter but it seems to have been going on a lot longer. Perhaps being an organising committee member with all the associated meetings, phone calls and conversations makes it feel that way.

The con hotel was the Diplomat Motor Inn, St Kilda, Melbourne, scene of the successful Conjunction last year and Eastercon in 1987. Strangely enough two more national SF conventions will be held there later this year. Dr Who early in November, and Huttcon, the Media SF Convention later in the same month. Overflow accommodation settled in the Spaceline across the road and two other nearby hotels.

Registration was at the old motel reception area at the rear of the Motel. There was a foyer area for sitting and talking with the huckster's (Consulate) room and main program (Embassy) room immediately adjacent. The other ground floor program room was the Diplomat which was part of the Restaurant near the front real motel reception desk. Upstairs were the art show, video room and fan lounge in adjacent suites on the first floor. The ball room (Ambassador Room) which was used for the major con items on the Saturday and Sunday was on the second floor and accessible via stairs near the art show or the lift next to motel reception, if it was working. Once you had visited each room once, you could usually find your way back, although that first trip could be tricky without a guide.

Hucksters in attendance provided a variety of material with Merv Binns (Merv Binns Books), Justin Ackroyd (Slow Glass Books), John Gasper (Galaxy Books) and Alternate Worlds for printed material; Barb and Geoff (Peregrine Imports) with their prints; Nanoo from Sydney who sold masks and brooches; and Kaye Morrissey, Peter Forbes, Edwina Harvey/James Allen (Huttcon) and Kathy Kerrigan/Patricia Anderson (Suncon) dispensed various fannish items as well as con memberships and information.

Before the con I managed to see something of our Professional GoH, George R.R. Martin and his companion, Parris. At a meet-the-fans night on Wednesday in a North Melbourne pub, Parris was plied with too much Coopers and suffered a reaction to the yeast in it which meant she was unable to attend dinner the next night. George and Parris were also interested in Australian Rules Football so we turned up at the Hawthorn/Essendon encounter at the MCG on Sunday. LynC, Justin Ackroyd and myself went in to claim reasonable seats while Clive Newall kept watch outside. We were in the south-east pocket area, two rows from the fence, and were joined by Clive, George, Parris, Phil Ware and Stephen Boucher about thirty minutes before the big match. Unfortunately George and Parris decided to barrack for Essendon (much to my disgust as I follow Hawthorn) and even bought awful red and black souvenir things on their way out. Parris took some photos when the action was near us, and was pleased with the Football Record of the match as she planned to take it back for a friend who is a Dermott Brereton fan as it contained a photo of a freckled ten year old Dermi. They then headed off to Tasmania, which involved a lot of driving due to incorrect assumptions when booking their accommodation. Friday morning saw them return by ferry to be met by Phil Ware, one of the few Committee members with a car, who was also supposed to be opening registration at the time. This overloading of Phil, and the possibility the ferry might be late, had been missed in our planning discussions. Another football aside concerns Weller, a fan from the US and member of ANZAPA, who attended Danse Macabre, and managed to see six AFL games in the two weekends she was here. She is a footy fan and videotapes matches replayed in the US.

ASSY ROOM



Merve Binns and Holly Onee

The con actually kicked off for me on the Thursday night when we started to set up at the Diplomat. Getting the keys to the rooms and setting up Hucksters tables was no problem, but the Diplomat-supplied stages for panels left a bit to be desired. There was only about three centimetres allowed for chair movement before you would fall off the staging. With some rather large panelists in attendance this was not safe, so Roger Weddall and myself ended up moving staging from room to room, and even from floor to floor, in order to get everything set up. No panel or participant collapsed over the course of the convention so we managed it all right.

Upon registering, the con member received a badge and conbag which contained such gems as a program book, trivia quiz round 1, ESP test, guide to St Kilda eateries, Melbourne public transport information, visitors' guide to Melbourne, video program sheet and various club and zine flyers. Marc Ortlieb and Karen Small were the mainstays of registration, and David McDonnell had provided personal envelopes for all program participants detailing when and where they were on. An added bonus was a computer and terminal set up by Apollo Zammi and Glen Tilley which cycled through an information series including the location of nearby bank auto-teller machines, and was available if anyone wanted to advertise a convention, party or sf group. It was also convenient for listing program changes as well as the blackboard.

Personally, I didn't see that much of Friday's items as I was Day Marshall. This consisted primarily of wandering around the corridors and haunting the registration foyer area spotting forthcoming panelists and making sure they knew who they were appearing with, where the panel was and how to get there. Thanks to all the willing volunteers who were spotted lounging around and agreed to help in signposting routes, running messages or just acted as convenient information sources for locating someone. Checking that the technical staff would have equipment in place was fairly easy as Andrew Murphy and company seemed to have it pretty much under control. Borrowing glasses and jugs for panels, and even a ladle for Angus Caffrey's DUFF race preparation were just part of the job. The only major hiccup on the day involved the GoH, sigh. At about 11.30 am I thought it would be a good time to remind George about the 2 pm opening ceremony, but he was not to be found in his room, the bar, Hucksters, panel items or registration area. By about 1.15 pm I finally found the right person to ask and it turned out that he had gone out to lunch along with the GoH liaison and others. Aaaaagh. At about 1.30 pm Eric Lindsay (our Fan GoH) and Alan Wilson, who were also appearing at the opening, turned up to advise they had ordered a la carte, but George and other committee members were still in the middle of a Chinese banquet! Anyway, Eric and Alan kicked off the opening and managed to survive until 2.20, when I announced that George's reading would be postponed until the Saturday and a book signing would be held at a specified time (after checking with the Hucksters). When George returned at 2.55 pm, he agreed to my changes and never missed another scheduled appearance during the con.

Highlights of Friday, gleaned from chatting to people and brief look-ins, included a weapons sale/report by Robert Jan and Ken Haesler; Terry Frost, Michelle Muijsert and Cath McDonnell supplying tips and anecdotes on how to enjoy the con; a serious discussion on writer's workshops between George Martin, Bob Gerrand, Lucy Sussex and George Turner and Aphelion books, with Bruce Gillespie, launching George Turner's first collection *A PURSUIT OF MIRACLES*. Friday evening saw a difficult choice between watching the films *OUTRAGEOUS ANIMATION* and *20TH TOURNEY OF ANIMATION* or entering the team scrabble competition. I chose the latter, and with the help of fellow team members Roman Orszanski, Justin Semmel and Chris managed to win, despite setting up Jack Herman's group with a 75 point zinc play, and they got the blanks! Thanks to Dennis Callegari for running the event and Muffett who donated the travel scrabble sets as prizes. All of the four teams ended up winning at least one set.

There didn't seem to be much party action Friday night, so I caught up on a couple of *ST:TNG* episodes in the video room. *CONSPIRACY* was supposed to start the session but audience consensus agreed on fast-forwarding to the interesting bits then onto the second season. I can't remember the name of the next episode shown, not very memorable apparently, but after that was *MARK OF A MAN*, recommended by Stephen Boucher as it was written by Melinda Snodgrass, which was quite interesting. I missed all the rest of the video program which

apparently featured high lights such as the appearance of a three-masted schooner during stock storm footage in a LOST IN SPACE episode, and the early morning take-over to show George and Parris some BLACK ADDER episodes not seen in the US. Other nice items I wouldn't have minded seeing include episodes from season two and three of RED DWARF, Doctor Who stories GHOST LIGHT and SURVIVAL, and old classic stuff from THE AVENGERS, OUTER LIMITS, etc. Congratulations, Richard Freeland, on a nice program, which always seemed to have at least five people, sometimes a jam packed thirty, in attendance. I must try to borrow some of these episodes sometime.

On Saturday, first up was Melbourne's answer to Fit For Fandom and the Fan Olympics, the "DUFF Race" with Angus Caffrey as MC. Initially the teams had to receive a nomination from a BNF in the form of a playing card and then fund raise by carrying washers from one end of the hall to the other. Later they demonstrated their partying ability by trying to eat whipped cream floating in a vile concoction while holding a drink in one hand, and another event consisting of stuffing a team member into one of a limited supply of sleeping bags. Overall, I think the "Gerald Smith" team won, and the "Race" was deemed a qualified success, in need of some refinement.

One of the surprise hits of the Convention, Stellarc, a performance artist currently resident at Ballarat TAFE college, gave his first talk in the afternoon on "Re-Designing the Body: Post-Evolutionary Strategies". Part of this presentation consisted of slides from previous exhibitions on an artificial third arm and himself suspended from fish hooks (a few rather green audience members at this point). Unfortunately other commitments prevented my attendance at either of his talks, but various comments indicated he was well worth hearing. His second talk on the Sunday was very well attended.

Other notables from Saturday included Lewis Morley and Marilyn Pride's MISSION IMPOSSIBLE slide show describing some of the things they had made for the show, the working conditions and some of the professional "tricks" used to turn Australian cities into overseas ones; a panel on STAR TREK, which I moderated, featuring Cath Ortlieb, Richard Freeland and Jan McNally with Stephen Boucher as the devil's advocate heckler. Generally we managed to cover various aspects and it wasn't just an 'I hate Old/New Trek' event but a lot of thoughtful comments from panelists and the audience. George Martin's GoH speech and the auction were two reasonably attended items, as was Aphelion's sort-of launch of Terry Dowling's collection RYNOSSEROS and not just for the free champagne and nibblies. Unfortunately the book wasn't ready, but we got to see the cover by Nick Stathopoulos.

Saturday evening went into the masquerade with its "Mardi Gras in New Orleans" theme. The hall was decorated with a silhouette of the FEVRE DREAM paddle steamer and three booths, arranged by Ted Andrews, which featured munchies, Alan Wilson and his amazing -knock-down-the-coke-tins stand and "Madam Wodger Wedall" as a fortune teller. All silver crossing Wodger's hand went to DUFF. Angus Caffrey officiated as MC in a pirate costume, complete with artificial shoulder parrot, and did a good job. His inspired challenge to Lewis Morley to assemble a plastic space shuttle kit went well, and good on Lewis for completing it. Apparently some contestants didn't manage to assemble their costumes in time, but there ended up about eight entries, I think. The categories were chosen by the judges (George, Parris, Eric, Wendy Ratter and Nick Stathopoulos) and the winners were, as read out at the closing ceremony, to the embarrassment of the calligraphist, "Most Polished won Ken Haesler", "Ian Gunn won Best Performance" and "Cheap Frills won Gail Adams and Wendy Purcell". The costumes were respectively Armoured Klingon, a Ghostwriter in Disguise and dresses from the film DANGEROUS LIAISONS.

Later that night the Sydney In '92 party kicked off in the fan lounge, and the Melbourne '92 one started out in Beky Tully's room (interestingly enough across the hall from George and Parris's room, and next to a bunch of Queensland swimmers including Hayley Lewis). Highlights included Karen Pender-Gunn reading extracts from GALACTIC GIRL, and the left-over masquerade munchies were handed over to the two parties. Melbourne's effort was kicked out of the room due

to complaints to management and ended up in the registration area where they were joined by remnants of a failed Spaceline party. This expulsion was a bit rough as many fans had their early morning slumber disturbed by orchestra members, such as trumpet or tuba players, practising in the next room.

Sunday was the second "big" day of the Con and started off with my own talk entitled HAMMEROIDS, which dealt with encounters between earth and celestial bodies; simultaneously with Kerrie Hanlon, Wendy Ratter and Nick Stathopoulos trying to describe what makes a good costume. The program was double stranded on the Friday and Monday, but with the ball room available for the other two days there was usually three different items to chose from. The only things unopposed were the opening and closing ceremonies, both GoH speeches, some early morning items and the awards and masquerade, although the video, and sometimes a film, ran during the banquet. Sunday continued with highlights such as theatre sports, with a disappointing two team turn out; a discussion on the Vampire As Hero with George Martin, John Flaus, Jack Herman and Stephen Boucher; the infamous Business Session against the First and Last Words trivia panel; the Fan GoH interview; Ian Gunn's Pun Panel; Stellarc's second talk titled "Prosthetics, Robos and remote Existence"; theremains of the auction (or is that auction of the remains?); "Why Aren't Horror Movies Scary Any More?" with Paul Harris trying to control George Martin and John Flaus; and Roger Weddall's Living Fanzine which unfortunately wasn't recorded on audio or video and in fact has just appeared as LHYFE, a printed fanzine! Then in the evening the banquet and award presentation followed by a dance. Such a jam packed fun day that I must now go into details.

In the order above, results of the business session were that Sydney In '92 narrowly beat Melbourne '92 by 39 votes to 27. Rod Kearins then announced their hotel. I can't remember the name but there were a lot of groans, and handed out a Progress Report 0 on which *both* Professional and Fan GoHs names were misspelled. The bidding committee sensibly agreed to change their date to Easter 1992, when it was pointed out to them that HongCon, the leading contender for the 1992 Media Natcon had already advertised for the Queen's Birthday weekend. This is billed as the Art of SF Con and will feature Michael Whelan and Nick Stathopoulos (the latter much to SunCon's consternation as he was their back-up Fan GoH when Leigh Edmonds pulled out), and the committee can now stand up in Orlando when bidding for the 1995 Worldcon and say 'We just ran the Australian Natcon'. Whether that is a great boast or an embarrassment is yet to be seen. Melbourne's bid, CONJUNCTION 3, a relaxacon, will still go ahead sometime in 1992, but will probably not have the four Fan GoHs (no Pro GoH) originally planned. The other business of the meeting resulted in one modified amendment to the Constitution and each Natcon will now be awarding up to five "Australian (Ditmar) Awards" instead of up to five "Australian Science Fiction Awards". This meeting was very well attended, with over 70, unfortunately to the detriment of the fun Last and Worst Words panel (David McDonnell reprised this panel to late night loiterers in the registration area) and George Turner's Awards talk which had to be rescheduled to the Monday, when he kindly agreed to return.

The Pun Panel consisted of myself, Roger Weddell, Richard Freeland and Wendy Ratter attempting, in turn, to contribute a pun, wordplay, or even just use an associated thing in a comment, on themes suggested by Ian Gunn. Any previously used words, either from other panelists or the audience, were disallowed. Michelle Muijert was so good at interjecting she ended up on the panel! Paul Harris and John Flaus, from FILM BUFFS FORECAST on Melbourne's 3RRR radio station also interviewed George Martin, but I didn't hear it broadcast. This would have been interesting as I had to disturb them, in the art show room after hours, to get some cups for the fan lounge, and they decided to leave my interruption on the tape as typical of Con happenings. Other media related things at the Con included a trio with video cameras from the ABC filming as research for a forthcoming production which will use an SF Con as part of the background.

The banquet was a smorgasbord affair with an initial hot macaroni casserole type dish with rice, followed by cold meats and salad, then desserts and coffee. Everyone went through pretty

fast and I think enjoyed it, apart from some run-ins with waiters who disapproved of non-house drinks appearing on tables. Talking with George Martin during the meal I found out he had a particular interest in Ned Kelly. Having grown up in North Eastern (Kelly Country) Victoria I was able to pass on the family "legends". My great-grandfather on the Wood side owned a hotel at Pioneer, between Everton and Markwood, where Ned is supposed to have drunk. My great-grandfather on the Steward side had a bushy red beard and people kept telling him he looked like Ned. After Kelly's capture at Glenrowen, great-grandfather rode to Benalla to get a look at him on his way to Melbourne and decided that they weren't really alike. I have posted off a copy of THE INNER HISTORY OF THE KELLY GANG, and some fanzines, to George surface mail and it will be interesting to see if I hear anything further.

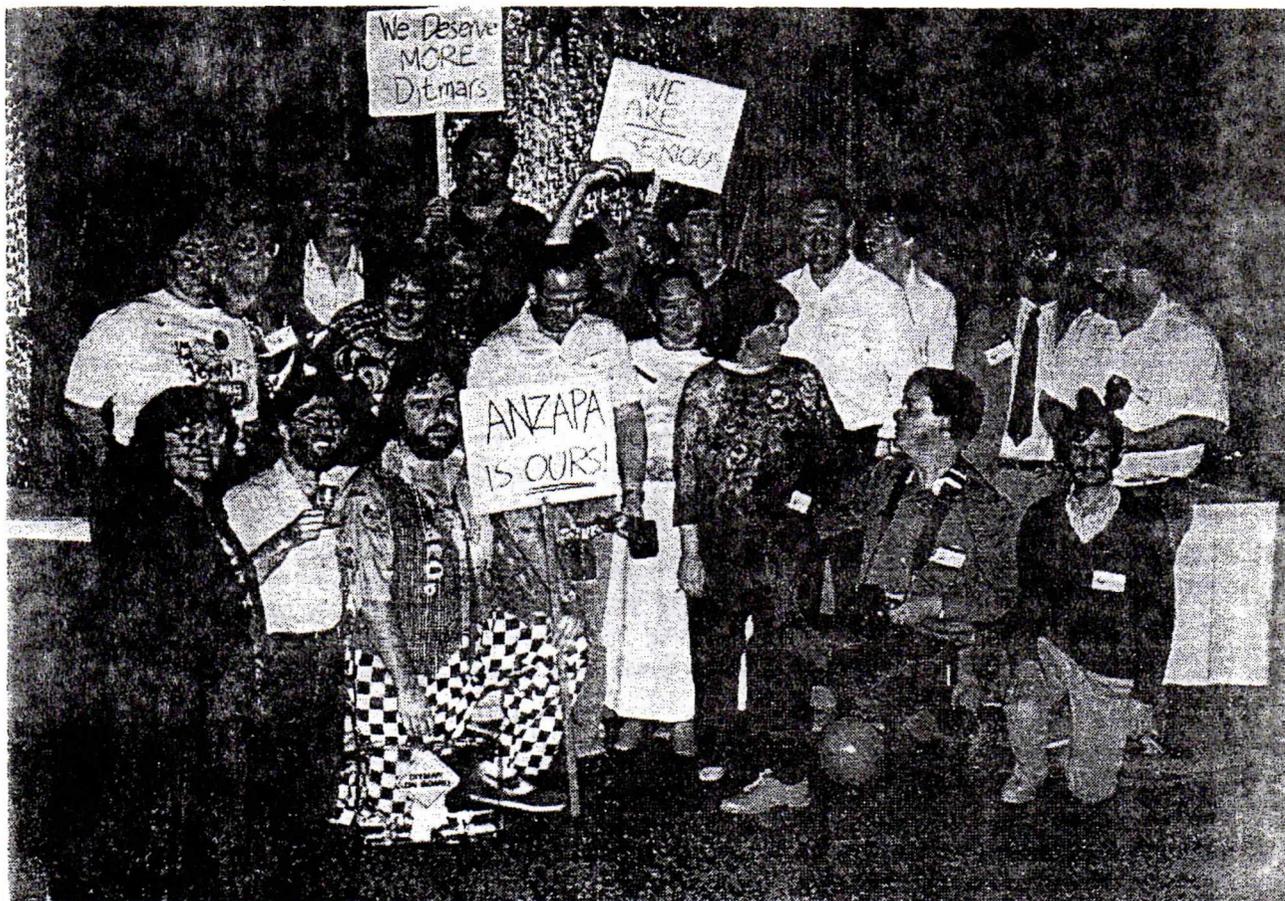
After the meal, the "alternate Banqueters" and others were admitted to the hall. A lot of my friends, so called "New Wave" fans, came in all dressed up and carrying placards. I tried to borrow one from Craig Macbride, who refused to relinquish it, to carry up on stage just in case ETHEL won. A nice touch in the interim was Danny Heap and Ian Gunn playing badminton using placards and a balloon. Anyway, Marc Ortlieb MCed the event, and even had champagne to celebrate "21 years of Ditmars". He embarrassed several audience members by reeling off statistics such as who had won the most Ditmar/Anthelings, who had received the most nominations and even who had received the most nominations without winning! First cab of the rank was Best Australian Long Fiction, which went to Wynne Whiteford for his novel LAKE OF THE SUN. Terry Dowling took out Best Australian Short Fiction for his story THE QUIET REDEMPTION OF ANDY THE HOUSE. In the fan awards, I received Best Fanzine as editor of ETHEL THE AARDVARK, Ian Gunn won Best FanArtist, and there was a tie for Best Fanwriter with Bruce Gillespie and Ian Gunn joint winners! Bruce had two speeches prepared, for if he won or lost, about the "New Wave" and "Boring old Farts", but simply had to announce the result of "New Wave 1: Boring Old Farts 1". There was no William Antheling Award this year as the nominations were too widespread for a final ballot to be prepared. A nice touch was small awards, constructed out of glass like the main ones, for each of the nominees.

After the Awards, the current members of ANZAPA present posed for a group photo to cries of 'Elitists' from Jack Herman in the background, and former member Peter Burns snuck in. Danny Heap was toting around a wheeled wooden model of Constantinople the Brave, Phil Wlodarczyk's three-legged cat cartoon character, for most of the night.

Monday saw the concluding items such as a Doctor Who panel with Richard Freeland, James Hutton, Peter Lindeman, Beky Tully and Simon Tarry commenting on 26 years of the good Doctor; the Trivia Quiz final: questions by Alan Stewart, compered by Karen Pender-Gunn, in which Dennis Callegari, the lowest scoring finalist on the written Part 1, defeated the highly fancied Garfield, Peter Nicholls and Tim Reddan; George Turner's talk on Awards; the Ditmar Forum where anyone could comment on what went on and was given out last night; the Future Cons session where organisers of forthcoming Australian Conventions could advise on what's coming up; and a Wildcards/Beauty and the Beast Question and Answer session with George R R Martin before the Closing Ceremony.

Of course there were lots of other panels and items apart from those detailed here, not to mention the informal get-togethers in restaurants and around the foyer. A couple of games of Rail Baron and Scrabble even developed in the fan lounge. Further awards and prizes should be mentioned. Congratulations to Dennis Callegari, whose short story HIGHWAY OF CROSSED DESTINIES won the short story competition, sponsored by the Australian SF Foundation, over Stephen Dedman's SMILE NO MORE, which came in second. The art show had many and varied entries from Nick Stathopoulos's professional album and book covers, through paintings and cartoons, though Edwina Harvey's cutesy book-sitting dragon and spaceman lamp with the bulb as helmet, to a banana nailed to a cross courtesy of Fred X. Overall winner was Nick Stathopoulos, with Craig Hilton (Rats of Underworld cartoon) and John Grosso (sculpture) commended. In the art auction on Monday Edwina's dragon went for a high price, well over \$100, and even her astrolamp went well. I think she has since taken orders for more of the same.

Anyway, despite the missing GoH, and cleaning up after the hucksters turned the fridge off and exploded the soft drink bottle we provided for them, I enjoyed Danse Macabre and will probably consider being a Committee member again, some time.



ANZAPA MEMBERS. Back row L to R: W.A. Weller, Karen Pendergunn, Roger Weddall, LynC, Clive Newall, Terry Frost, Phil Wlodarczyk, James Allen, Bruce Gillespie, Alan Stewart, Marc Ortlieb, Rod Kierins.

Front Row L to R: Jean Weber, Eric Lindsay, Ian Gunn, Richard & Sue Hryckiewicz, Womble, Gerald Smith, Peter Burns.

THE KING AND SON

TRANSLATED BY PETER BRODIE

Many years ago, in a part of Cornwall not much visited by other folk, there lived an old king with his son, who was of an age to go out and seek after a bride. One day, the king bade his son to visit him in his rooms and said to him, 'It is time for you to go out and seek your way, rather than have it come to you, for such is our custom since first our ancestors settled here.'

The son, who would not be called a prince until he had made his own way, said that he agreed with his father, and that he would set out at once to find his fortune.

Calrig, for that was his name, went out of the castle at first light the next day, riding a good horse and supplied with meats and wine to see him good for some days.

On the first night of his journey he rested beneath a tree heavy with golden fruit. As Calrig reached up to pluck some of the fruit a gnome, wearing bright clothes, appeared and warned him of taking the fruit, saying that a curse would be upon any who ate of the fruit before they had done a great deed. Before Calrig could reply, the gnome disappeared in a swirl of smoke.

Calrig still wished to eat of the fruit in order to supplement his simple fare, so did so, thinking no more of the gnome's warning.

The next morning was bright and cheery and Calrig travelled on in a good humour. The countryside was lush and green with many tilled fields. In one of the fields sat a maiden, fair of face and body but in much distress.

Calrig stopped his horse and went over to the maiden, hope welling in his heart that his quest for a bride may have already come to an end. As he spoke to the maiden, however, she turned into a crow and flew off towards the West. On the ground, where the maiden had sat, was a silken scarf of many hues. Calrig took it up and thrust it into his girdle, saying to himself, 'mayhap this will bring the maiden back, for surely she has been enchanted and has given me a sign that I can release her.' So saying, he mounted his horse and rode on.

After he had ridden for several hours there came to his ears sweet music, such as he'd never heard before. When Calrig looked for the source he found it came from a lake, wreathed in fine mist, that lay nearby.

As he approached the lake the music welled up stronger and the mist parted. In the middle of the lake small lights that shone even above the sunshine wove to and fro and from this the music came. Calrig peered hard and the music stopped suddenly. The lights came towards him and he saw that they were fairies, all spun light and glow.

One of the fairies stopped short of his face and asked him in a tinkling voice what he wanted.

'To seek a wife and my fortune', Calrig replied.

'Then look towards that road beyond the ridge, Calrig Fortuneseeker,' the fairy replied, then all of the little creatures darted towards the middle of the lake and disappeared beneath its surface. A small glow lit up the depths for a moment then faded. Calrig thought he heard laughter.

Knowing that you should always heed the advice of fairies if it is freely given, he mounted his horse and rode on til he came to the bridge, which looked old and treacherous. Keeping trust still, Calrig was about to cross when an old woman came up to him and made the sign of the cross, then said to him, 'You have been consorting with evil beings, take not their advice.' She promptly vanished.

Calrig was of two minds, yet he still felt that the fairies had spoken true so went across the bridge. He found no danger and it held him and his horse quite firm until he reached the other side.

Upon starting along the road again Calrig noticed a tree much like the tree that had held the golden fruit he had eaten on his first night but it was barren. On the topmost bough a bird rested but it flew off and had disappeared from sight before he could make out what kind of bird it was. Calrig saw that the day was going and that there was a soft hummock of grass beneath the tree so he decided to take his rest for the night there.

In the morning, Calrig found that the tree had born fruit, golden and ripe like the other tree. As he was about to take some for his breakfast the gnome appeared again and gave him the same warning about taking any of the fruit. Since nothing had become of the previous warning Calrig ignored the little fellow and ate of the fruit. The gnome disappeared, muttering foul curses.

Some time later, as he was riding his horse along a little-travelled path, something that gleamed in a cleft of a tree took Calrig's eye and when he approached he saw that it was a wondrous sword, wrought with fine jewels and with a bright sharp blade. There was also a scabbard lying with the sword. It too was covered in fine work and made of the finest leather.

Calrig dismounted and went over to pick up the sword. He found that he could not, try as hard as he might. He strained and fought to wrest the blade from its place in the tree cleft but it wouldn't move. With some surprise, Calrig found that the scabbard was easy to remove and he buckled it on his girdle. With a despairing glance at the sword, Calrig rode off.

After he had ridden for some time, feeling very sorry for himself, Calrig saw the bird again, resting on a rock set in the middle of a stream. He tried to approach the bird carefully, as many of its colours were similar to those of the silken scarf that belonged to the mysterious maiden and he thought that perhaps the bird belonged to the maiden before she had been enchanted. It was certainly no crow and yet it looked familiar.

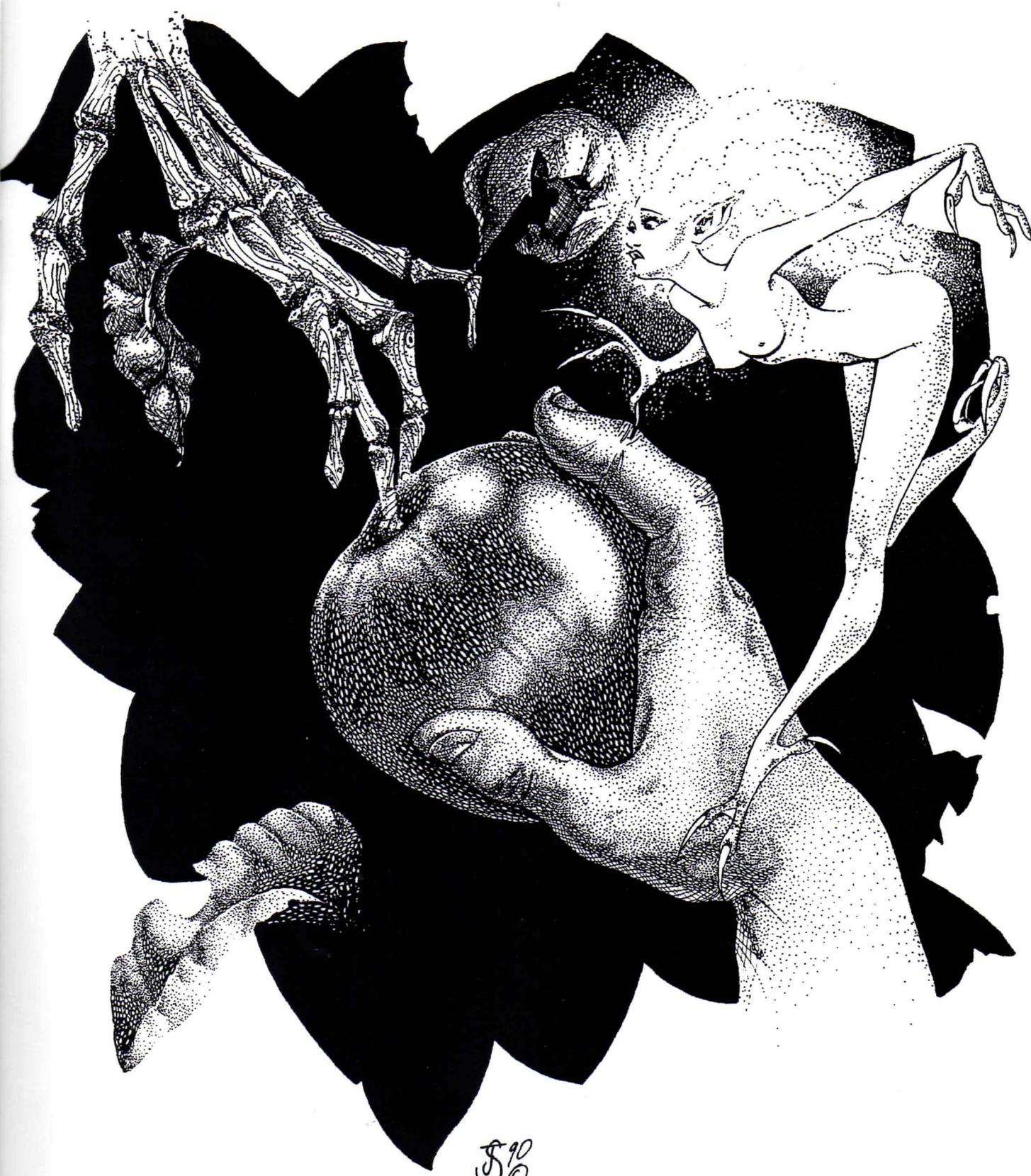
Try as he would, Calrig could get no closer to the beautiful bird than the edge of the stream. Whenever he tried to wade into the stream the bird looked about to fly off.

Suddenly, there was a sound as of thunder and the bird took fright and flew off towards the east. Feeling somewhat wrothful, Calrig looked about for the source of the sound and saw the old woman he had met a short time ago sitting on a tree stump, laughing to herself.

Calrig rushed up and made as if to strike her but the old woman made a strange sign and he was frozen to the spot. She then told him that none but the righteous could approach her and that by his eating of the golden fruit he had proven himself to be greedy and uncaring of advice.

She then told him that the fruit sapped his strength when he tried to lift the sword, which was magic and could cure all ills, while the scabbard was only worth the jewels it had worked into its length, and could only buy him worldly goods, which were of no real importance.

Calrig burst into tears upon hearing this for now the one chance he may have had for



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helping the fair maiden lift her curse was gone. His heart felt like stone.

The old woman waved her hand and he could move again. She spoke, 'Go home fool. You are not worthy to be called a prince!' With that she disappeared like the smoke of a large fire, caught in a stiff wind.

Calrig mounted his horse slowly, the words of the old woman still in his ears. He dreaded having to go back to his father with nothing to show for his venture. Suddenly, he heard a cry of a bird, but a cry of such beauty that it filled him with hope and fear at the same time.

Looking some distance away he spotted a bird circling in the air as if waiting for him. Calrig rode in that direction and the bird flew on, just keeping ahead. It was some time before Calrig realised that the bird was leading him back towards home, but by a different way.

It seemed no time before Calrig was back in his father's kingdom and he rode into the castle and went to see his father. His father was glad to see him back but sorry to hear his tale and then said 'It seemed strange to me that a bird of such beautiful plumage should fly into your rooms and stay there but now I think the bird doth know you.'

Calrig rushed to his rooms. The bird of varied plumage was sitting on his bed and it was crying. When Calrig took out the silken scarf from his girdle the bird gave out with an almost human cry of despair. It was then Calrig knew that the bird was the bewitched maiden and that without the magic sword to cure her they were destined to be apart always.

From that day, Calrig was to be found walking the forest with the bird on his arm, talking softly to it. Those who met him thought him mad and he never became a prince. Some say he wandered into the forest one day and was never seen again.

the end



ISOTOPIA

*Dateline tomorrow, perhaps today,
in the land of the Great Divide.
From fallen steel eggs - lightning guts
swept across our cityside.*

*Purple clouds brought pretty rain
through swirling blades of dust.
Eclipse-like days, aurora nights,
out back, fell down, went rust.*

*Ashes to bricks, buildings go
baked crumble in rubble piles.
Human rat after blobby chook
in a new world's brave grey style.*

*Moonscape land, eroding pits
glow green shine black inside.
Bang bang now it's checkerboard
around the Great Divide.*

- Alan Stewart.

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #9

BY BUCK COULSON

There are times when owning your own house in the country has disadvantages. Take yesterday - and don't bring it back. We were expecting company for next weekend, so I was trying to get the downstairs toilet to work better. One tends to take toilets for granted, but did you ever have to pick one up and turn it on its side in a constricted area? All that ceramic is heavy - 60 or 70 pounds or so, I gather newer ones are lighter, but nothing is new in this place. Anyway, I fished around in its innards for awhile, and put it back, and turned on the water. Nothing. Not a drop. This seemed odd, so I tried every tap in the house; two bathtubs, two lavatories, 1 kitchen sink. No water, and five guests arriving in three days. Called a plumber we'd had before; seems in the interim he got a job with the county and only plumbs at night. (No comments from the more lewd members of the audience, please.) Anyway, he said he'd be over after he pulled a pump for another customer. Pump-pulling is one of those quaint rural sports we have in Indiana; horse-pulling, pump-pulling, hair-pulling, and so on.

Plumber came out, looked things over, adjusted our pump to provide more water pressure, since pressure had been low for some time, and opined that what we really needed was to remove all our water pipes and put in new ones, but he didn't have the time to do it. Which was okay; we didn't have the money to pay for it. He did agree to install a new main pipe for us; since all the taps had gone dry at once, to blockage should be in the main pipe before it split up to go in different directions. Our current pipes are all galvanised iron, which rusts and clogs. Said he's be back the next night to do that. Meanwhile, we could haul water from the one tap that still provided it, which was in the basement, close to where the main pipe from the pump enters the house. This tap supplied rusty water, but any water in a drought, and all that.

So, since the tap in question was about 6 inches above the basement floor, Juanita and I hauled in a garden hose, attached it with some trouble, and began to fill buckets with water and hauling upstairs - up two flights in some cases - to handle toilet flushing until the plumber could return. Los of buckets of brown rusty water. Exercise. Good for the leg muscles.

Just before I went to bed, I turned on a tap for luck - and got water! Rusty water, but I was in no mood to quibble. Tried the other taps; brown water coming out of all of them, at a decent pressure. What happened? I called the plumber today, and we agreed that (a) all those buckets of water run in the basement had probably created a flow that dislodged the rust from where ever it was blocking things, and (b) if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Leave it strictly alone, in fact. So I don't have to pay for pipe replacement, or telephone our guests to stay home. I'm not at all certain that our diagnosis was correct, however. It may be that I had offended the water spirits - or the galvanised pipe spirits - who decreed several hours of anxiety as punishment. Which, of course, is another reason for not replacing any pipes just yet.

The downstairs toilet doesn't work any better than it did before I took it apart, but at least it's no worse. Be thankful for small favors.

The barn will be another maintenance problem eventually. It's 50' x 70', with 2.5 sets of double doors. The wind took out one set and I only have one door put back; nailed in place, in fact. I'll fill in the rest of the opening realsoonnow. It's also covered with asbestos shingles which the wind cheerfully blows off, and has a lot of windows, few of which have any glass left in them. If I could have an entire summer to work on the barn, I could get it into pretty good shape. As it

is...

Barns are no longer de rigeur for farms around here, anyway. There's one place we pass one or twice a month, and awhile back we noticed that the barn was leaning pretty strong in one direction. Next trip, it was leaning a bit more. This kept up for several trips until we went past to find it a pile of broken boards; presumably it finally fell over. Two or three months later, it's still a pile of broken boards; obviously cleaning it up isn't going to be a rush job. The current requirement in farm buildings is the machine shed. Same size as the previous barn, but made of corrugated siding and contains just one big room for machinery instead of lots of stalls for animals. Machines have the advantage of not kicking and biting their roommates, so they don't have to be separated. The man who sold us our place has several machine sheds, but then his family owns three square miles of farmland. He raises corn to feed his hogs, which are kept inside buildings and never allowed out. Then the waste products from the hogs are liquefied and spread on the cornfields as fertiliser. Recycling; just like the ecologists say. You can tell from a mile away when his "honey wagon" has been out in the fields. Pure country air and all that; we got it here, brother.

The continuing summer maintenance is our lawn. Of course, even city dwellers have lawns, though usually not as large as ours, unless they're very wealthy city dwellers and pay someone to mow it. Aside from the lawn on all four sides of the house, and a bit back where we planted evergreen seedlings, there is also the target range. This is a triangular piece of ground, maybe a yard wide at one end and 30 yards at the other, and around 140 yards long, with about 50 young evergreens planted in it, which have to be mowed around. More trees on all sides of the house. Normally it takes me a couple of afternoons to get it all down with our elderly (18 to 20 years old) push-type power mower. But it rained before we spent a week in Milwaukee, and rained when we got home, and the grass was two feet tall, with occasional spikes up to three feet. Even with a new blade, it took several days and two gallons of gas to get the yard back in order. (The target range is a 100-yard range, with white stakes at the firing points for different ranges, and a backstop made of railroad ties. I don't actually use it all that often, but it's there if I want it. One of those things you can't use in town.)

Dad was a farmer, and I learned enough about farming from him to know that I didn't want to do it; too much work. Just as well, since he lost his farm in the Depression. But I grew up on a 4-acre plot outside the town limits, and got a taste for country living. I want elbow room, and since I've been in fandom, I prefer to be a trifle hard to find. There are a lot of bores among fans, with enough gall to come visiting if it's easy enough. Simpler to discourage them in advance, rather than refusing them at the door. Our friends don't object to coming out on country roads to see us. But now and then, at rare intervals, I think that living in a rented apartment and demanding that the landlord repair things does have certain advantages.

- Buck Coulson.



THE HOPES OF AUTUMN

BY GRAI HUGHES

She sticks her hopes and dreams to the refrigerator door, written on coloured scraps of paper that flutter there in the summer breezes like storm wearied birds or the tattered pennants of a deserted fairground, held to the off-white blankness that holds also the vaguest possibility of her reflection, a pastel coloured shadow, with incongruous magnetic holders in the shape of bunches of grapes and lemon quarters, smiley faces and banana hands. Those she feels are most important, those she wishes most ardently to come true, are held with tape because the magnets are unreliable. Occasionally, when she replaces the milk in the door-shelf after preparing a cup of tea and closes the refrigerator door, a magnet drops or slips, and the coloured scrap of paper, covered in her spider-thread writing, flutters to the checked linoleum floor, a paradasiacal-coloured bird broken by the storm and fallen from its place in a high chaotic tapestry to the plain pattern of her mundane life. This falling of a hope or dream or wish or desire from its place, she feels, somehow destroys the potential of her desire that has been slowly building while the scrap remained secure. When this occurs she thoughtfully rewords the desire and reattaches it with cellophane tape. Much of the tape is now yellowed and brittle, the bright colours of the scraps faded to pastels. She believes that the more desirable the wish, the longer it must remain for the potential of its realization to be reached, so the most faded scraps are those she desires most, and their aging and fading pleases her rather than being cause for concern. Even the ink has faded on the oldest scrap, and its formerly vivid violet is now paled, the mauve nearest white. Although the desire there written is as indistinguishable as rain patterns on sea washed sandstone, it is the one hope she thinks of every morning, and included in her intense prayers every night. The only desire remaining in her heart.

Her often doubted, but ever hopeful obsession began with nothing more extraordinary than a shopping list...

'Autumn.' John stood in the kitchenette, half leaning half pushing away with his hands on the rim of the sink. The low evening sun gleamed golden on the dishes draining in the rack and cast his worried-boyish face in tarnished brass, crescent highlights of gold on his cheek, sharp nose and chin made him appear thinner than he really was, a strange elfin creature, with verdigrised sovereign eyes that gazed out dependently over the rows of redbrick tenements, haze shrouded in the distance, and the other towerblocks casting their heavy shadows, as if the ancient forests that he seemed to belong to had only in recent memory disappeared. 'Autumn. I wonder if it's derived from the Latin *Autem*. "Now" that shows a transition in a text. Autumn, the empty season, the present that is merely a transition as we swing further from the sun. Hmmm.' He grimaced. 'I'll have to look it up.'

She studied him from where she sat at the dining table, looking up from her uncertain reflection in a cup of tea, wondering at how his callous debunking of all that was magical, mysterious or joyful was really a cover to mask his disappointment in the unreality of all the mysteries and magic that had caused him such awe and wonderment in everything as a child, and now, in autumn, he couldn't even find joy in the season or the sunset, without reducing it to the hard reality of the turning of the earth, taking only a grim sarcastic pleasure.

She was sure he never meant to be callous in his disillusioning of others - he honestly thought people would be happier without their illusions, he couldn't see that sometimes in his kindness he was cruel, that sometimes the only thing that gave people any joy was their preciously held illusions.

Still, it was one of the quirky traits she loved about John. He disillusioned people without meanness, with a bittersweet self-deprecating humour that rose from his own disillusionment, that said he so wished that what he said was untrue. And she knew he was really thinking about the doctor's report.

'Why don't you just forget about it, John?'

He turned from the window and the yellow light grew ruddier, making his pain seem like anger, though his voice was gentle. 'Forget that I'm infertile? That I have no microgametes to meet your macrogamete? That my seed is empty of life, that from it nothing will grow?'

'A quarter of the male population is affected this way by the Endocrinal Locular Virus upsetting the pituitary gland's hormone production...'

'I did hear what the doctor said, dearest.'

'Well, so many men have got it, it doesn't matter. It's not necessarily permanent. Forget about it.' She knew that his main concern was that he felt he had disappointed her, that she had most wanted a child after finally escaping her parents' house into their own Department of Housing apartment.

'They haven't got it to be exact. Ignoring things doesn't change them or make them go away, it makes ignorance.'

'There's still hope, there's still us, we still love each other.'

'I can't hope or be optimistic about us or the world or anything ever again. Everything I've ever hoped for or desired has ended in disappointment. Sometimes I think if I hoped for the really important things it would be like putting a curse on the world, the way I've put a curse on you.'

'That's just being self-indulgent.'

'Yeah, I know. On my librarian's wage we'll never be allowed to adopt, so I'll never have a child to indulge so I might as well indulge myself.'

The doorbell filled the silence that was about to form, that would have been made more unbearable by his or her tears.

'Mrs Mary Thornley? Sign here, grocery delivery.'

'But I don't have my groceries delivered.' The delivery boy grinned an ugly, jagged toothed grin. 'Look, I don't mind working Friday evening but I'm not toting this lot down the stairs again, I just deliver 'em according to the sheet.' He again proffered the clipboard with pen attached for her to sign. She did. With a click of his teeth and a laugh the lad sauntered off. She picked up the three plastic bags and carried them into the kitchenette. John looked at her quizzically. 'Groceries.'

'Oh.'

He helped her unpack the bags and put the jars and tins away in the cupboards. Looking at the refrigerator, she noticed her shopping list under a smiley-faced magnet with a few raffle tickets, and realized she hadn't yet done the shopping this week. She knew there must have been an error. She only just managed to hide the jars of baby food in the bottom of one of the bags by scrunching the other empty bags together, and thrusting them quickly into the bin, while trying not to think of the possibilities that should have been.

'Autumn's hopes become winter's dreams and spring's disappointments and summer's impossibilities,' said John.

John seemed his usual self the following morning. 'I guess I should be happy with my biological ennui,' he said as they lay in bed sipping tea and ignoring the drone of the early news. 'It makes me an archetypical member of society in its cultural ennui. Screaming noisy squirmy shitting little creatures. Stinking of sour milk, faeces and vomit. There must be a certain sensual attraction in those repulsive odours. They must stimulate the olfactory pleasure receptors, probably a biological necessity, otherwise who could bear that repulsive smell, they'd all be throwing their babies out the windows. The pleasure must come from memories of mother's milk's succour, of defecation's pleasing release, and of pleasurable regurgitation. The same way a smack addict takes pleasure in vomiting after the pleasure receptor's artificial stimulation. Imagine, that freak teenager throwing her baby out the window of Milston Block because it had a touch of gastro and she couldn't stand the smell or the crying, and the baby was the only asset she had, the only reason she had an apartment. That baby meant she got more from welfare than my wages so she could buy her smack and X and meta, and she threw it screaming out the window.'

'You're an insensitive bastard sometimes, John. An utter pig.'

'I know. Do you want to divorce me? I don't mind. You deserve a chance.'

'I wouldn't have married you if I only wanted a baby. I would have gone to the Inseminary or just made a contract with someone with an F Certificate.'

'Would you have married me if you'd known I was an I Certificate?'

'You're not an I, you're an Ind, Indeterminate not Infertile. Just shut up about it. Come down to the market with me. I need someone to carry the umbrella while I carry the fruit and veg.'

'Yeah, I guess it's about all I'm good for.'

Two telefaxes were under the door when they returned from the markets, slightly dampened by an autumn squall. Mary stored the fruit and vegetables in the kitchenette, while John read the telefaxes.

'Those bastards are quick. I'm to report to the Department of Eugenics and Reproduction offices on the High Street for reassessment of my Ind Certificate. They'll probably tell the council and some F will get my job. I'll be in the lowest welfare bracket then so we'll probably lose the apartment too.'

'They can't discriminate because of certificate rating, it's private, between spouse, doctor and Repro.'

'Yeah. They can't discriminate against blacks either but that doesn't change much.'

'Yes, I suppose so.'

'Oh hey, *mirabilis*! We've won a Fiat Nova Hydrogen car in a raffle. I have to phone for verification and to arrange delivery today. Phenomenal. I'll run down and phone.'

Mary looked to the refrigerator door where the raffle tickets and shopping list fluttered under the grin of the smiley-faced magnet. She felt chilled, and wasn't sure if it was because the wind coming through the still swinging door. A seed of winder bloomed in her, a ridiculous, superstitious hope. She wrote on a scrap of pink note paper, and put it on the door with a magnet, curiously shaped like an embryonic mandarin-segment.

The car was delivered. Publicity agents snapped photos and asked intrusive questions which John brushed off with his short sarcasm and brusque charm. The drizzle dampened the agents' enthusiasm. They were left with their prize but without consolation. The sleek, gleaming-blue two seater stood between them, in the parking space allocated to their apartment. They seemed unsure whether to admire the car or kick it. The shadow of the towerblock lightened and darkened around them as clouds rushed overhead. The wind was chill though the rain that had fallen gently yet incessantly for days had finally abated. The sky was still grey, though, and heavy drops fell from the water laden roof of the building.

'The judge's decision is final, no correspondence will be entered into,' muttered John.

A heavy slap of water splashed on John's forehead, ran behind the sunglasses he had taken to wearing. Mary saw him blink the water from his eye through the polarized lens, saw a drop hang from the rim of the glass; a false tear.

'I should get into this car and drive away, drive on forever.'

'Don't, John. You'll have no one to share the pleasure you take in a storm with.'

'I know. But you'll have a chance to. I'll go for a drive and think about it. Hope is the cruelest thing in the world, Mary. Hope in illusion is crueller. I can't let you suffer that cruelty.'

'I know, John. Come back.'

'Yeah.'

'Hope is the only thing that makes the cruelty of hope, the cruelty of illusion, bearable.' Mary said, watching the car pull away. 'Come back, John.' The tears that ran down her face, though obliterated in the renewed downpour, were real.

Hydrogen powered cars were slow, environmentally neutral and safe. The incidence of explosion during accidents was less than that of petroleum fueled cars. However when an explosion did occur during an impact it was inevitably fatal.

The policeman's description of the accident and his expressions of commiseration were cold and dutiful. 'A delivery truck slid out of control on the High Street due to the poor conditions. The vehicle crossed the road and collided with your husband's car. Your husband's death would have been instantaneous. I'm sorry.'

Mary could only take it coldly. She felt the kind of grief inside her that would grow and grow but never realise a potential that would force an upwelling of expression, and thus catharsis.

'Will I be needed for identification?'

'Unfortunately that's not possible, the explosion, you see. His papers were in a safety-wallet. We'll use his genetic records at Eugenics for positive ID.'

'Oh.'

The officer turned to leave. 'There is something I must know,' said Mary. 'Which way was he heading on the High Street?'

'East, Ma'am. Back towards here.'

Within, a ridiculous bitter hope, born of her inability to express her grief, her inability to accept her loss, welled inside her. Futile and bitter, it was hope nevertheless. With a trembling

hand she scrawled her hope, her dream, her desire on a scrap of violet paper, and tearing lengths of cellotape from the roll with her teeth, she taped the note to the refrigerator door.

As autumns passed, the fluttering tapestry of her hopes grew and occasionally, by the oddity of chance or coincidence, a small hope would be realized. Her faith was thus sustained.

But after a stormy autumn finally passed into a harsh winter, as she gazed at her reflection in the china of an empty tea cup and noticed her hair once coloured with autumn now touched with the grey of premature winter, she was overwhelmed by memories and grief and wrote one final note,

*'Autumn's hopes become winter's dreams,
And spring's disappointments and summer's impossibilities,
In autumn's eternal transition,
Hope is the cruelest thing in the world,
Hope in illusion is crueler,
Yet hope is the only thing that makes that cruelty bearable,
I wish, I hope, I dream,
To never hope again.'*

She stuck it to the refrigerator door with a smiley-faced magnet and prepared another cup of tea. Closing the refrigerator door after replacing the milk the magnet slipped...

END



THE TRAIL-BLAZING ARROW

BY MAE STRELKOV

"The symbol for conquest in Aztec manuscripts is generally a blazing temple with an arrow sticking into it. The taking of the temple was the defeat of the local god... It had the nature of a symbol, and it reflected a decision taken upon a more than human level -- taken, indeed, by the gods."

THE SIGN OF THE ARROW

A temple in flames and an arrow sticking into it: that was the symbol for conquest used by the MesoAmericans in their codexes.

Flaming arrows have turned into long-range nuclear weapons, but our wars go on. Can an arrow ever become instead a symbol for peaceful conquest, winning an argument by the use of reasonable words, and friendly behaviour?

The story of the arrow goes far back into our prehistory. And where bows and arrows were not used they had blowguns with deadly darts, spears and clubs.

Archaeologists study Stone Age sites where lively flaking industries flourished and thousands of spear and arrow-heads were made. Scientists collected such flints and label them according to their shapes.

But, as Robert Graves pointed out in *THE WHITE GODDESS*:

"Insufficient notice has yet been taken of the shape of flint arrow-heads as having a magical rather than a utilitarian shape".

He adds:

"An Irish fir-tree arrow-head in my possession, taken from an Iron Age burial, cannot have been seriously intended for archery. The chip of white flint from which it has been knocked is awkwardly curved, and it has so large an 'bulb of percussion' and so short a stem as to prevent it from being spliced to admit an arrow-shaft: it is clearly for funerary use only."

What did the bow and arrow represent in primitive societies wherever it happened to be in use? What words were given it, in its symbolic as well as its practical values? Where bows and arrows were not in use, what might spears and darts have symbolized? And before that clubs and stones that could be hurled? And there was also that most valuable of tools and weapons: the stone-headed axe. What were their religious values, possibly?

The old root terms given these items have embedded themselves in our very languages.

You can trace them in their evolutions via our Indo-European roots, our American Indian languages such as Quechuan, and all the way back to China's ancient writing styles plus the 3,000-year-old pronunciations of various key terms that have been reconstructed by sinologists like Bernhard Karlgren.

The Latin *toxicum* meaning "poison for arrows", goes back to the Greek *toxikon*, from *toxikos*, "of or for a bow".

Our toxic wastes are a real worry to humanity of late. Formerly, only the natives worried as the White Man spread himself all over the New World's beautiful wildernesses, imprinting his own image upon "Nature" that has no need for mankind, in order to be beautiful.

The Bible ordered Man to "tread" (and trample) the planet and "subdue the Earth". We've obeyed. Our trails are blazed everywhere; our feet have trodden down the Earth in so many highways and byways, she breathes through a net of asphalt and stones. And, in her seas, she suffocates beneath a coating of crude oil, lately, more and more.

When the Spaniards and their governing nobles and friars first reached the Americas, they set about teaching the natives the "right way to live". Bathing was declared a sin, mere "devil-worship" which must be severely punished. The native "lies" that "little creatures too small to see shot arrows of illness out of cesspools and open drains", (which now surrounded all the new Spanish establishments), was viewed as further proof of the ignorance of these benighted devil-worshipping "savages". We all know the results. Where natives did not accept "Christ's sweet yoke", (as Spanish minds viewed it), they were liquidated. Mestization occurred.

SIER VERSUS DIAK

An arrow on its own in China's oracle-bone forms looked thus:  or . *Sier* was the old reading, now *shih* or *zhi* 矢. (I omit diacritical marks usually, to make for easier reading. This is a sort of "story", not a linguistic treatise. It's containing nothing "heavy", if I can "keep it light").

China's oracle-bone character for a bow with an arrow attached, was formerly read *diak*, now *sbe* 射, for "to shoot".

 As the centuries wore on, that "how" turned into a pregnant body, viewed from the side. . The arrow was soon replaced by the special hand taking out the arrow (which arrow is not represented now); but still it is an act being done, "to shoot".

That old Chinese *diak* dating from more than 3,000 years ago, matches the Indo-European root *tekw* that gives us the Green *toxon* for the bow, or the bow and arrow, when in the plural form.

The Chinese also had an old *tak* or *tog* for the arrow when it plunges out of the sky, its trajectory suddenly cut short by a "knife" placed alongside it: *dao* 刀 刀 now, for "to reach, arrive". The oracle-bone example of this plunging a arrow when on its own, and about to hit the ground, looked thus: . Once it hits, the arrow turns into a bird:  reaching a bush:  where supposedly is its nest. The hour in this case is "sunset"; but the modern character 至 is used for the "solstice" and for "reaching an end", etc. The sun twice yearly reaches the end of its trajectory across our skies and must turn back.

According to the combinations, the plunging arrow had various old readings. That old Chinese *tak* or *tog*, where its flight is cut short, alternates with a *tiet* or *tied* reading when the arrow (or bird) descends unaccompanied by other symbols. In phonetic usages it could also

be read *siet* or *tsiet* formerly: *siet* when it's a symbol of a hunter or wanderer returning to his homestead and wife, *dziet* when it represents an old person nearing the end of life's journey, so he or she is "old and infirm".

In the latter case, the character today is read as *tieh* (or *die* in Pinyin, but I still use also the older Wade-Giles spellings sometimes):



This character is made up by an old *log*, now *lao* 老, where the old person, (viewed from the side), is topped by woolly or feathery white hair. He or she bends over another character for someone tumbling 𠂔 backwards to represent "change", usually for the worse. (It is found too in another series 𠂔 with the aid of an ancient priesthood, tumbled dead ones are magically transformed into "flowers", apparently).



If the *log* experience brought one low, and made one old, the *tsiet* happening for "old, infirm" was even more drastic. But worse still was an old Chinese *dz'iet*, now *chi* or *ji* 疾, where a body (front view) is struck by an arrow or dart, to represent "a sudden illness", in this oracle-bone form.



Now: that *dz'iet* set of old Chinese terms is often found echoes elsewhere with a R added where the apostrophe is in this *dz'iet*. More, the *dz* becomes an *ST* on some occasions, while the final T might be *Ts*, or just a T or s still. Examples might include, say, the Russian *starets* for an "old man" and the Avestan *zarat* or *zaraut*, "old".

The interchangeability of this old *Ts* or *Dz* with *t*-like echoes, is underlined in a novel I have here, THE ROSE OF TIBET by Lionel Davidson. The plot is based on this very fact that Tibetans and Chinese change our *S* into a *Ts* or *Dz*, and hence the hero Houston upon reaching Tibet is mistaken for the incarnation of a feared former invader named Hu-tson or Hoo-tsung. They reject his protestations of innocence, and he has at first a pretty bad time of it, while they try to extract "the truth" from him!

If the Chinese must include our S-T in some old word, there'll be a vowel or vowels separating the consonants, as in the "plunging arrow" *tsiet* or *siet* examples.

Flying arrows and spears were preceded by flying sticks and stones, as early humans learned to extend the reach of their own inadequate teeth and claws. And so there is what must be a very old survival in the Quechuan tongue of Peru in their *taka* (or *taga* now), "to throw (stones)"; hence their *takay-taka*, "to move as though thrown away".

There's a Chinese character for stones or rocks: *tag*, *tiak*, *diak* or *ziak* in phonetic usages formerly, now *shi* 石 when referring to rocks and stones, but *dan* when used for a weight, (the *picul*). (A *picul*, by the way, from the Malay tongue, suggested "a man's load"; and the old PK-type terms for the "back" and a "pack for the back", etc, which I've come across in China and elsewhere seemed to me evidence that people really did travel far carrying their belongings and children on their backs, from age to age! (But this is not the place to tell that fuller "PK" story).

THE .UK "SEATED DEAD ONE".

On his or her own, China's ancient "Seated Dead Ancestor" appeared on old bronzes in a somewhat tumbled form and with a "flame head", said to be a very ancient pattern. It is found on the statuettes excavated by the Warner brothers years ago in the Santiago del Estero Mound Culture of Northern Argentina, as they pointed out, but their views were too advanced for their times, to be well received.

ŠUK
formerly



, or simply: P, Q, Z, etc
(now *shi* 尸)



This seated ancestor played many symbolic roles, and in one appearance in an old form, he (or she) sits above that plunging arrow or bird already seen. (I'll not add in "or she" from now on, but leave it as "he". After all, the patriarchal Chinese made far more fuss over elderly gentlemen than over old women, usually).

Again the Quechuans seem to preserve older forms of all these old Chinese examples (I scanned the entire old vocabulary of the Chinese versus the Quechuans' tongue, and found this same thing to be the case in most other example, too.)

It seems that the old Chinese *tsiet* or *dz'iet* experiences of the old *log* gentleman have been reduced to a mere *Uk*-type gasp or grunt once he ends up in his final "room". There are echoes elsewhere of such a hut or hole, ranging from the Greek *oikos* "house" to the Paraguayan, Guaraní *oga*, "house, home" (or "hut"), and the Spanish *hogar*. I like the Greek *oikoumene* too for "the inhabited world", (our planetary home). We inhabit as large a space as our souls can fill, (not just trying to devour everything as dictators try to do in their brief lifetimes). Astronomers, for example, have a "dwelling" that embraces as far as their modern instruments can peer, with the aid of marvelous computer technology, so that a vaster Cosmos than anything we yet could have dreamed about is lately being revealed, wonderfully. The "many mansions of My Father's House" are being thus glimpsed, and there should be room for us all, when we're ready to accept such vast dwelling-places as our true home, finally. But meanwhile, the poor dead souls inhabit their mean nooks or *uks*!

A Quechuan echo of the tumbling bird, where they kept also the T so it's not a mere *uk* in this case, might be their *utkay*, (or *uquay* as I've also seen it spelt), for "quick". (*Kwai-kwai* as I recall now is the Chinese echo for "quick, quick!").

At any rate, what's striking about this quechuan *utay* or *utkay* etc, is that it really means "as quick as a plunging object that is drilling holes or diving". In short, the piercing arrow's speed is hidden in this reference, till now.

Perhaps long ago a dead body, seated in its shrine, was simply an *Uk* (John Philip Cohan's THE KEY postulated such an *Uk* or *Og* -etc type deity, long ago known in a widespread way) meaning "the body". At any rate, the Quechuan *ucv* for the human body can suggest the interior too, or "internal". The body is more than what is visible on the surface. Any doctor -- especially a surgeon -- will see, in each person he meets, (in his mind's eye), the plumbing and ticking going on within simultaneously.

That word for "quickness" in the Quechuan tongue, (especially as found in the backwaters of Santiago del Estero of Northern Argentina where older forms till recently were still remembered) could suggest the speed used in "piecing holes" as well as in "diving headfirst"; so consider also their *utcu-utcu* -, "full of holes".

And then there's their obsolete *utcu* (or at times *uctu* for cotton. Why might it be compared with the "holey" idea? Firstly, the warp and woof of cotton cloth is not like thick, opaque hide; you can see right through all the tiny holes between the weaving if you hold it up to a light. But also, I recall that the usual armor worn by some American Indian warriors was made out of cotton, and stuffed with cotton-wool, too, so arrows couldn't reach through to the body easily. After any lively battle, we may be sure that such *utcu* armor (all stuck with arrows) would be correctly described as "full of holes".

Another archaic Quechuan term formerly known in Santiago del Estero (N.A.) is their *uculau* for the west. There the sun "goes in" and vanishes.

There's also the Quechuan *ukru* for a deep, low place. And yet the same term is their *ukru-ukru-huasi* stands for a multi-storied house: "a deep, deep house", obviously: (huasi = house).

Deep, low places or holes are usually damp or even full of water. Thus the Seated Dead Ancestor when he's called the Uk in archaic Chinese, in an old phonetic usage (as *wu* now, "soak; "to steep". We've the Quechuan *uchku* for "a hole, pit or opening", versus their *octo* for "to soak" or "soaking". That latter term nicely matches the Indo-European root *akwa* for "water".

And what might hide in an *uchku* hole? (the Latin American *lauchu* = "mouse", may be an Araucanian term). Obviously a mouse or rat, or perhaps a little bird. In China there's a character combining a rodent with a "sparrow", for a rodent (mouse or rat). I suppose it was a "mousy-bird" or a "birdish-mouse", in old views. The Quechuan *ukush* or *>ugush* now for this rodent is found also in their *ukush-pishku* for a little grey bird: (*pishku* = bird). We speak of "titmice" and they're birds!

Still another phonetic usage of the old Chinese Uk ancestor suggests "to grasp, hold tight, restrain", (and even "kill" in another usage). This in the fuller old Quechuan echo as *uq/a* paints for us a somewhat different picture: it means so many things ranging from "to grasp", or "carry under the arm" (our "bug"?), hence "the armpit" (ib>uqlay, and "to incubate", or "to sleep with". To incubate is "to hatch", Old English *haecc*. When in drinking a man says, "Here's down the hatch", he refers to a sort of entrance or compartment within the body. Old English *haecc* again! The Uk man sits "hatching" in a "hatch or hutch". Compare the Scots dialect *oxter* for the armpit. (*ox* = *uq* - ?)

So maybe the "Seated Dead One" is merely incubating eggs? After all, beneath his buttocks that plunging bird has reached its nest! The bird motif survived in Chinese phonetic usages too, but chiefly only for "the cackling of fowls".

The plunging bird aspect could also evidently suggest a bird flying in with food for its young in its beak, hence compare too the Quechuan *uakaki*, "to feed while flying"; *uaka*, "to feed through the beak as do birds", also "masticated foods"; and finally their *ukshu*, "crop, gizzard, Adam's apple", and also "to become pregnant".

I am sure no Quechuan scholar matches us that *ukru* with this *uq/a*, or their *octo* with their *uaka*. If I do so, it is because my brain by now is permeated with all these ancient Chinese linkages, forgotten for so long, but still waiting to be appreciated as I do indeed value them. Whatever I come across, today, I seem to hear the old Chinese echoes coming automatically to the fore anew in my head. I don't mean "it all started in China", but rather "the Chinese preserved the very old most faithfully".

It makes me feel that though we are still killing and smothering (with our modern wastes) our fellow humans, we still are and shall become yet more of a gestalt people as well as more complete individuals too, once the Cosmos (and our Mother Planet) come to the end of the present travail. (For till now "all Creation groaneth and travaileth together", waiting for the New to be born, and Sons of God who will be ready to inhabit all Creation, out beyond its endless-seeming far reaches too! I believe this firmly by now, and not as a result of blind belief.

Were I to guess at the original bird of this series, I'd select the partridge, named after "a fart", but not in any vulgar way! A fart proved that a spirit resided in a person's body, just as a person when breathing has his (or her) spirit still dwelling within. So the "Seated Dead Ancestor" expels a "bird" that is a fart, in this case.

The story of partridges in the Old World and New must wait its turn apart. But I will mention now a site known in Bible times as Beth-Hoglah. Robert Graves, in *THE WHITE GODDESS*, discusses it, in its relationship to Jacob, who limped. *Hoglah* for "hobbler"

referred to the partridge and a former hobbling Partridge Dance, held there. If *hog* meant "hobble", well then, the Chinese *Uk* gentleman in a phonetic usage stands for a "cripple", too. And thus we may add also another Quechuan word to our list of proto-*uk* ideas, namely their fuller *unkv* for "lame".

So let's make a list of *Uk* aspects now read in China as *wu* or *wa* :  :

- 1) w/a "hand": "to grasp, hold tight": Quechuan *uqla* ; (hug with an arm)
- 2) w/"water" : "to soak"..... " *ocko* ; (soaking)
- 3) w/a "mouth": "the cackling of fowls" " *uqla* ; (to incubate)
also " *unka* ; (to feed with the beak as do birds)
- 4) w/a "foot": "a cripple"..... " *unkv* = (lame)
(in Old Chinese usages) (A wing dips, or a leg is bent, when one hobbles. Birds dip a wing to plunge or fly sideways, as when feeding their nestlings with their beaks.)

THE FALLEN ONE

Getting back to China's old *tok* or *tog*, now *dao* = , "to reach, arrive", compare the Indo-European root *tek* - "to reach, give", and also "beget, give birth to", which has its echoes elsewhere, including a quechuan herding term like *teki* (now *tecicita* with a Spanish suffix added), for llamaid mothers and their little ones. It is a herding cry in use still. Compare the Indo-European root *digh* for a she-goat that goes into our "tyke", a word that can be used for a "little one", too. There are matching old Chinese forms.

A mother "shot forth arrows" (children) from her womb in very old thought, as confirmed by a Chinese character (discussed elsewhere). And there are Quechuan usages, such as their *wacha* "to give birth", versus their *wachi* , "barb; arrow".

Now, in the modern Chinese *dao* when a person is added alongside: [倒] , he has "fallen", he's "turned upside down", he even "goes backwards", has been "discarded", is "inverted", etc. More, if a vessel is treated this way, its contents are "poured out". The character is also used for "but", as when making contrary remarks.

Now for the usual Quechuan echoes.

Firstly there's their *teqma* , "to fall and get hurt". Also their *takya* , "to get stuck; get attached"; hence also "settle down, get used to a place".

The Quechuan *takma* on the other hand, can suggest "to pull down, demolish", while their *ukpa* stands for "to fall over, topple down, crush".

The vessel being tipped over and emptied, you find in the Quechuan *takshi* or *taksha* - "to empty, spill". There is also their *takra* - "reverse, the wrong side".

The arrow falling, point first, into the soil, "digs in", like the Quechuan *tacla* for a hand plow. Our "dig" goes back to the Indo-European *dhigw* - "to stick, fix".

Spooky aspects come to light in the Quechuan *takta* where portions of a body separate from the owner and go wandering off on their own. ("Flying Heads" thus enter the ancient picture of superstitions found in a worldwide way).

Finally, there's the odd quechuan usage matching the Chinese character where a "knife", as it were, interrupts a "plunging bird or arrow's" trajectory, in Quechuan *takpa* "to interrupt

someone who is sleeping or dying by making a sudden noise". Surely China's *Dao* : 道, now?

The *tiet* aspects are also found in Quechuan echoes. That lonely bird plunges as the sun sets, and so consider the Quechuan *tuta-tuta* for the half-light of dusk or dawn, from their *tuta*, "darkness, night". *Tuta-tuta* can mean "night-after-night", too. Then there's their word for the metal "lead", *titi*, perhaps emphasizing the way things "fall heavily like lead", (or like the plunging *tiet* of our prehistory).

I would also include here the Quechuan *tita* for "thick" and for tube-shaped objects, hence we've their *titaaxilish* or *tita-axlish* for the large intestine; and *aca* on its own stands for excrement. To illustrate excrement in one old Chinese form, the Seated Dead Ancestor (*sier*) has a *sier* arrow pointed at his sphincter, to represent *xier* "excrement". That is a symbol of death, when the sphincter muscles loosen.) 

I get the impression of terrible antiquity lingering in all these old terms found everywhere. And so I keep alert for echoes wherever I search, or wherever I happen to be glancing by chance, too. (Where there are no P or R, etc consonants in use there's always an alternate T or W, etc, and I now know the alternate Old Chinese forms to match).

Looking again at the bow and arrow character that is now a mere *she* for "to shoot" in Chinese, when words are added alongside (弓身寸), the meaning becomes not only "to cease, to resign", but "to thank".

Why should an arrow shot from a bow suggest "thanks"? I thought of the arrow in its different old roles, the *dz'iet* aspect reminding me of the Latin *saeta* for a barb or arrow, of obscure origin, and the *diak* (now *she*) aspect reminding me of a fuller Latin *sagitta*, "arrow", also of obscure origin. But perhaps (as it seems to me) *saeta* simply lost the middle G that remained in *sagitta*. The final T might easily change to an R in their appearances. (R = T in various tongues). And so I thought of other terms for "thanks" like the Arabic *shoukran* and the Turkish *tesekkur*. But what of the Hebrew *today* for "thanks"? Have we here a *tiet* aspect of the ancient arrow?

You say "thanks" at the end of a giving/receiving ceremony or transaction: the term can thus stand for "endings".

The arrow has phallic connotations. On some old Chinese bronzes it appears thus  instead of a subsequent Small Seal form: It was formerly read *kog* or *g'og* and *kok* or *kiog*, now *chiao* or *jiao* , etc, which character is explained as originally depicting "a man entwining between his legs", or having intercourse.

One former usage covered "an Imperial edict". It was obviously an important old symbol. (Perhaps one day I'll write it all up in just one series of books, but not yet. I've tons of files waiting for a final sorting out).

The Babylonian "Bet shaggathu" was their sacred House of Copulation". *Shati* in Quechuan is a rude term for "copulation", while their *shuqla*, (which is in the *uqla* pattern for "hatching" and "hugging" (our "hug" is from the Scandinavian: Old Norse *hugga*, "comfort, console" etc. In the Chaco-Santiaguino Mount Culture there were statuettes of copulating birds and others illustrating also "to incubate") and so on, stands for "copulation" also. Was perhaps some older combined "shaggati" -type term known to them too?

Then you've the Quechuan *suziy*, "to encrust, push it". Also their *shuti* for a parasite that burrows under the skin; and there's an *uti* parasite and an *uti* illness too. Finally, the Quechuan *shutu* stands for "to leak, drip". The Seated Dead Ancestor above the plunging arrow and or bird suggests that too, of course. A body urinates from that end, as well.

SILENT VOICES

Reading is too intimate

in the future.

Personal sharing and teaching

away from consoles -

forbidden.

Their intonations drift long corridors

silent with dust.

An overlooked case in a corner

yields slim treasure volumes

to be aired and wondered at.

Couple curl around print,

in a pool of light;

mutual discovery in the ruled emptiness

of sopors and dust.

- Alan Stewart



Bg Susan Clarke

The sun bathed the grounds of the historic Hawkesbury Agricultural College (sorry, the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury) in a rare weekend of warm, winter sun, bringing out the best of that particular venue. Believe me, I've slogged it to dinner through the drizzle and mud pools, partied in sub-zero temperatures, aided and warmed by copious amounts of Romulan Ale. Hey, there really *is* something to say for cold weather at times!

I've always maintained Hawkesbury Ag is the best venue for a fan's convention. Lots of room to huckster, party, do con items, and spread without wowing the natives too much. No hotel managers to tell you to keep the noise down. The only handicaps: single beds, communal bathrooms and college food.

This is where we separate the fans from the mere attendees.

Ron and I are fans.

Mind you, we didn't suffer at all that weekend - double bed, colour television, heating, VIP accommodation. I'm glad we go as a matched set to conventions!

Syncons are fun! The kind of activity one indulges in when you've not a con organiser, when you want to get laid back again (I said laid *back*, thank you!) - getting a chance to talk to old friends and meet new ones, which is, after all, the purpose of a convention after all, which makes Syncon 90 a success by fannish standards.

The theme Science in Science Fiction was, perhaps, not as emphasized as it should have been. The panel on the subject, though, was interesting. Recently, I read Ben Bova's essay on the self-same subject in L. Ron Hubbard Presents Writers Of The Future Volume VI (I hope - now say that fast after a Syncon Cocktail Party the night before...) and was suitably fired with ideas on the subject. However, the panel drifted somewhat around the theme settling on the argument of whether one should have a high science content in science fiction to be called *science* fiction.

The lecture by Dr Chris Bertram of the University of New South Wales on Chaos Theory was perhaps a little too much science all at once on a laid back weekend to take in fully. Pity. The graphics were, at least, most entertaining. (And this from a science major - admittedly in chemistry, not physics. I managed to split the electron in my second prac at Uni and was never forgiven by either the dons or Mother Nature, even though they could not fault my mathematics, only my eyesight when taking readings!)

We all sported hand-crafted mugs ranging from enormous to reasonable sizes, with dragons, newts and frogs (loved the frogs), whilst gremlins and gargoyles cast a beady eye about the hucksters room. Prints and books battled for attention and purses. I didn't resist - sigh...

Saturday night, we were rocked into the arms of Morpheus with a bedtime tale with suitably dimmed light, by Uncle Wynne...

Other highlights of the convention for us were:-

* People's reactions to our fan film archives, dusted down and produced as Ron's special offering as Fan Guest of Honour.

* Participating in a trivia contest with Garfield Barnard and Nick Statholoulous (kings of the Trivialists) and finding out that the white dragon's name was Ruth and not Fluffy. Pity that. We lost by one question. (I maintain I had trouble concentrating surrounded by all that male pulchritude... my excuse and I'm sticking to it).

* Meals where you are so busy socialising that they turn out the lights on you - after cleaning up and resetting the table for breakfast - talk about subtlety!

* Having a weekend away with Ron and with no children and being able to sleep in the same bed. (No, don't ask about that one!)

* Participating in the Art Show when you have no artistic bent whatsoever. The Do-It-Yourself-Art-Show was great and the theme "Edible Aliens" may not have done a lot for promoting interplanetary relations, but they were very popular - and delicious.

In case you haven't already guessed it, we had a great time. It was the first occasion that Ron and I have been asked to be Fan Guests of Honour at a convention and it being a Syncon seemed very apt.

And the nicest accolade we've ever had (apart from being the only accolade we've ever had...) was said about us by Ken Ozanne:

"I have known the Clarkes for nearly twenty years and they have been neighbours for fifteen, and I can't remember a harsh word spoken about either of them. They are more than worthy guests of honour."

Thanks.



L to R: GERALD SMITH, BLAIR RAMAGE, ROD KEARINS



THE AUDIENCE OF ONE OF THE PANELS



L to R: KIRBY IKIN, (BLANK), ROD KEARINS, WYNNE WHITEFORD



RON CLARKE, SYD THE (GREEN) KOALA, SUSAN CLARKE



J 88
©

IF IT'S YESTERDAY, THIS MUST BE AMERICA!

by James Verran

FOREWORD: As the first Australian finalist to be published in the L. RON HUBBARD PRESENTS, WRITERS OF THE FUTURE ANTHOLOGIES, I have been asked to speak on my experiences by the local Fellowship of Australian Writers Group. As a preamble to this, I undertook to write the essay below.

When I submitted it to N.E. Publications, for their perusal, it was suggested that it could be of interest to Australian SF and Fantasy Writers. The reasoning being, that as the first successful Aussie entrant in the W.O.T.F. Contest to date, I might encourage more writers to enter future quarters of the Contest.

I wish your readers and writers every success in the Writers Of The Future Contest, an outright winner from Australia must surely come soon!

* * *

If you have been thinking of entering the L. Ron Hubbard, Writers Of The Future Contest, do it!

December 1989 began an amazing episode in my life. I received a phone call from Algis Budrys, editor for L. Ron Hubbard Presents, W.O.T.F. Volume VI. He had some bad news and some good news. I had narrowly missed winning a place with my entry, THE DIVE. However, he had found it appealing enough to buy the first world serial rights, etc. and to publish it in the W.O.T.F Anthology Volume VI. The rest, as they say, is history.

As part of the deal to publish my story, I and a companion of my choice (read: wife's choice), would be flown to the U.S.A. I was invited to take part in a writer's workshop prior to attending the awards presentation and book launch with my wife.

All this for *my story*, the kind of thing that only happens to other people! At last, it was our turn to be *The Other People*.

After months of anticipation, we flew out of Adelaide on the 28th of May. QANTAS all the way, bless them. The non stop flight from Sydney to Los Angeles, in a new Long Reach Jumbo, was a tiring ordeal. Thanks to the International Date Line, we had to do Monday the 28th, all over! The short flight from L.A. to Las Vegas, via America West Airlines, was a no frills

flight, in a spacious aircraft with excellent cabin service.

Upon entering the Las Vegas Airport Terminal, we were immediately greeted by poker machines! We and the other writers were stacked in the arrival lounge as we stepped off our various flights by Algis (A.J. to his friends) and Mrs Edna Budrys. Edna Budrys proved to be a charming lady of interminable patience, but then, she *is* married to a writer. The plan was that our companions would fly in, later in the week, after the workshop. However, due to the distance from Australia, my better half had travelled with me and had to face Las Vegas alone, for four days.

Having seen my beloved safely on a bus for her hotel, I rejoined the other writers, to be bussed to Boulder City, Nevada. We were accommodated in the Boulder Dam Hotel, a registered historic landmark building, similar to an Australian National Trusts registration. After being allocated share rooms, we assembled for dinner and an orientation talk. Later I called my somewhat nervous wife, to find that she had settled in, double bolted her door, and was hoping to get some sleep.

The Boulder Dam Hotel is quiet and comfortable, boasting a lounge room, panelled with wood imported from Australia! Our four days at the hotel provided ideal conditions for study and revision, after each day's workshop.

For the next four days we assembled at 08.45 and walked to the Boulder City Recreation Center, where we worked until lunch time. A.J. allowed occasional breaks and, after lunch, we were required to complete set assignments, then study and review the morning's work. We were paired with a "twin", with whom to share and discuss the various assigned tasks. A.J. considers this technique to be superior to unrestrained group activity, which often produces a workshop group of clones. Most group interaction took place at the morning workshop, during discussion sessions.

The workshop covered more aspects of writing than can be detailed here, but A.J.'s quiet authoritative manner got the message across. Most of the material provided for our course was based on, or consisted of, essays on various aspects of writing by L. Ron Hubbard. Some were quite recent, while others were extracts from articles he wrote in the 1930s and 40s. Of course, there were also specialist essays by A.J., on the essentials of what makes a good story and how to please a publisher or editor. After all, who better to impart such advice?

No audio or visual tapes were used during the workshop. A.J. delivered the entire four days' program face to face, battling on, while suffering less than perfect health, for several days. We can only hope that he got a well deserved rest after the Awards Event. As an added bonus, he read and reviewed a short story from each of us, then later passed on sound, constructive advice to each writer, personally.

'But', you ask, 'What of L. Ron Hubbard?' The late L. Ron Hubbard was much more than the man who developed Dianetics. A subject which was only mentioned at the workshop, in passing, during a reading of some background notes on his career. In fairness to L. Ron Hubbard, too few people remember him for his work as one of the world's most prolific and successful writers. However, he is still greatly admired by his contemporaries for being just that, a prolific writer on many and diverse subjects. He must also be commended for his efforts to aid new writers through the Competition which bears his name. A Competition, supported by many of the great names in Science Fiction and Fantasy writing today.

At the conclusion of the four day workshop, A.J. simply said, 'Be yourself!' Later, we attended a private graduation ceremony and received our certificates. Importantly, we all have our workshop materials and notes, to provide an invaluable resource, as we attempt to practice what was taught in Boulder City, Nevada, in 1990. As our bus for Las Vegas pulled away, one character said, 'Goodbye Mom and Dad,' to the waving A.J. and Edna. We had all grown quite fond of them.

In Las Vegas we met our wives, husbands, lovers and whatever, then attended a reception and book signing. After a pleasant meal and social get together, Bridge Publications Inc., wheeled in an enormous pallet of broad sheet, uncut pages. Each writer was then given a pen and invited to sign all his or her first pages, near the byline. The signatures were for a leather bound, limited edition. This year the illustrators shared in the glory and it soon became obvious who the artists were. They had the more legible signatures!

Saturday the 2nd of June dawned hot in Las Vegas, near 40 degrees celsius, in fact. We had a special breakfast laid on, then departed for the Las Vegas Convention Center, to attend various functions and listened to several panels of guest speakers. Later, we returned to our hotel, the Flamingo Hilton, to rest before the night's celebrations.

The awards were presented after a delightful dinner. Then followed a veritable orgy of autograph signing by the writers, illustrators and judges. Before leaving Adelaide, I had vowed to get the autograph of Frederik Pohl. I met him and was surprised when he seemed honoured to have been asked by me, a novice writer, for his signature! He kindly signed personalised autographs for myself and my daughter. The night raced by and eventually I was cornered by a marauding television interviewer. Thank God it was being prerecorded! When I remembered the question, I'd forgotten the answer and when I had a beaut answer, I'd forgotten to repeat the question. However, several takes satisfied the camera crew and I was allowed to leave, shaken and in need of a good, stiff drink.

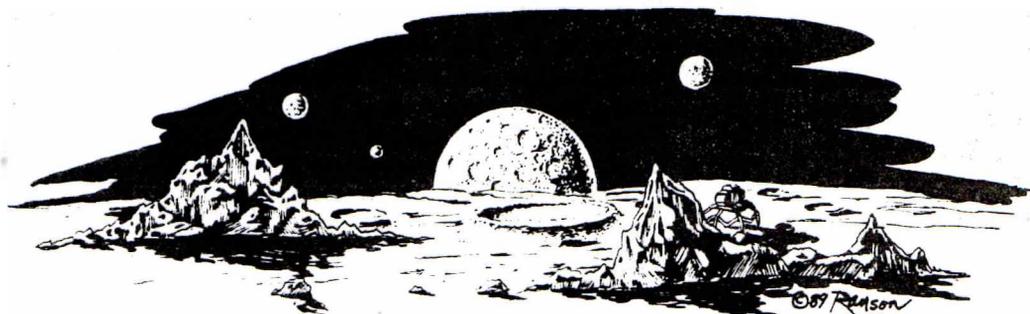
The next two days were ours to see the sights. I bullied my wife into going shopping, little realising that she had already had her fill of the 40 degree heat of the Las Vegas strip. Five kilometres from our cool hotel, on foot, I realised that Las Vegas was designed for automobiles, not pedestrians.

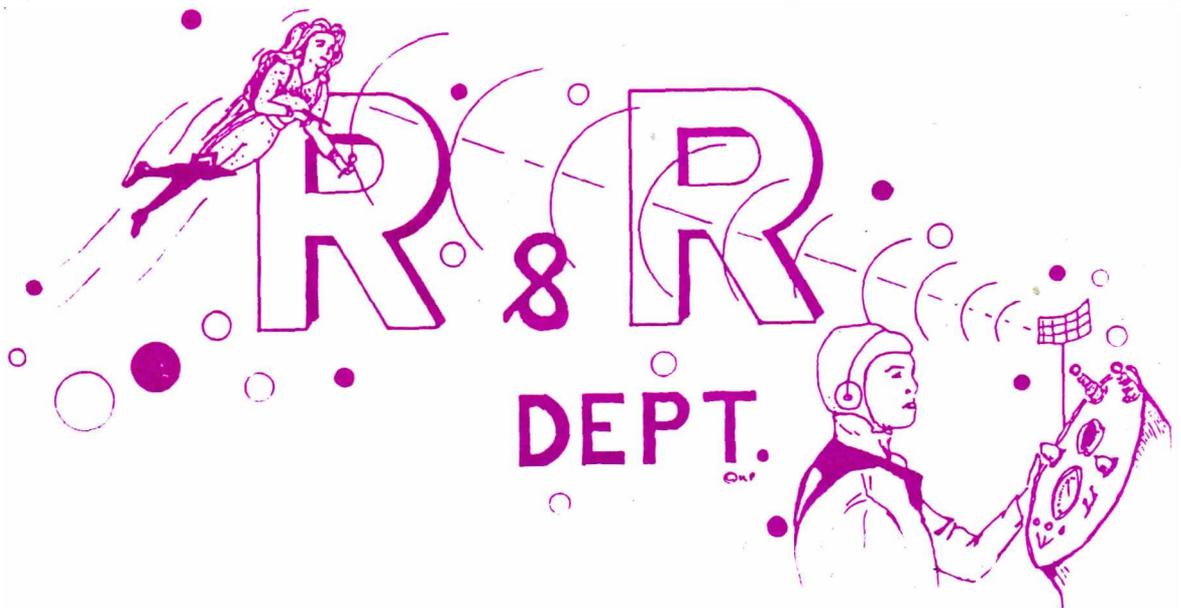
We had spent one week as the guests of the L. Ron Hubbard, Writers Of The Future Contest organisation and had been looked after in grand style. Our return to Australia was a reversal of the outward trip and we arrived home for lunch on June 6th.

In closing, I urge all eligible Aussie SF and Fantasy writers to enter this competition. Who knows, if enough of us win, they may be forced to hold the celebrations Down Under.

Entry form and contest rules may be obtained by SSAE to: L. Ron Hubbard's Writers Of The Future Contest, PO Box 466, Paddington, NSW 2021.

- Jim Verran





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

Hate to knock art, but the cover of THE MENTOR 65 is a bit wimpish somehow. Her [Peggy Rawson's] other piece maybe has been over reduced, hard to react to at that size. Liked the octopoid "birthday cake" tho - murderous friendliness personified.

THE SUMMER OF '92 was an interesting use of near-future fiction to make a current political point - the immunity from all criticism granted to certain 3rd World countries get out of expediency/profit etc (Iraq till very recently had enjoyed the same here, despite using chemical warfare on their own people, murdering the British journalist Bazoft etc - in fact I suspect their missile-launch gun was supposed to reach them safely, but somebody down the line didn't get clear enough "blind-eyes" orders, so that whatsit hit the fan). But as a story it's a bit too much essay rather than narrative for my taste.

Long ago ran out of superlatives to use about Andy Darlington's poems - this one is another gem, 'nuff said.

THE REVIVAL found an ingenious new twist on a topic I thought had been exhausted to the limits, and put it across in a way that compelled the reader right through. My only slight cant is that Jane's sensations of cold perhaps gave away what was happening a bit earlier than necessary, but it didn't really matter.

One final comment - very interesting to read Nola Frame Gray's analysis of the con/zine balance in marketing/socioeconomic terms - it's very rare to encounter analysis of fandom by a fan that is capable of using wider referents in this way - and very refreshing.

Taking THE MENTOR 66 in no particular order - THE ALPHA EXPERIMENT was intriguing as an attempt to turn a philosophical argument into a story (is violence necessary to creativity?), but the characters were too much like figures in an equation. I also saw little need for the payoff; like tying it to conventional religious symbolism.

Loved the first two literals that crept into my loc as printed - *overkill/wise* becoming *overhill/wise*, though should refer to me, not Terry who is much younger - and sulking over not getting *on* (should be *one*) is probably one of my subconscious' many current figures.

The Szekeres portfolio seems technically highly proficient/professional, tho the only one I really liked/found fresh/new was the delicately unsettling Alice in Wonderland illo.

LETHE is a powerful piece - "how big events affect little people" - worked end-to-end for me, a belief-compeller. Liked UNDER PRESSURE's idea that "Space belongs to Oz", the tale itself seemed too long for the content.

MAY STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy, Argentina.

THE MENTOR 64 just came and to see that old article of mine so beautifully presented gave me mixed feelings, chiefly guilt that I never yet have gotten all that valuable material into shape so I can finally present it in a series of books to some publisher. The original I sent you was very blurry, and apparently the "h" and the "n" could be confused. You thus saw "showhouses" for "snowhouses". But most importantly, it isn't *Thaa* but T-N-A-M: *Tnam*, on page 32, thus rhyming with *naam* and so on. Also, (but this is minor), the Mushroom Man in the market-place has a *kindly* not "kingly" look. These are small quibbles and I am embarrassed even to mention them, but that TNAM *is* too important a detail to overlook.

Thanks too for the HISTORY OF ARGENTINE SCIENCE FICTION. If it had arrived earlier I'd have forwarded it to Joe Saunders who's pubbing a book on World Wide Fandom. A couple of years back they asked for a piece by me but what could I tell them? I knew no Argentine fans and said so. We live in the sticks now. Anyway, they wanted to print it, at the Greenwood Press, (I can't find his correspondence now, so I quote from memory), and he just the other week asked me for more details. I wrote that the material sent is already out of date from four years back when I wrote it, but I now tried to round it out for him; but they won't like it. I didn't give dates, names, and so on, re all the troubles during 1982. I don't want to stir things up at this end anew.

Some months ago it dawned on me that my manuscripts embodying my years of study were growing more and more abstruse and I must put it all aside, forget the intricate details, and see it "like new" after "forgetting" the wealth of coincidence that just percolated in my head. So I stuck all the bundles and notes away and began to write it up from a new angle: not just the language-stuff itself, but a story of the infant mind that got "trapped" in the study of Chinese from the age of four or five in that Chinese kindergarten I still recall so fondly.

I meant to devote just a couple of weeks to this avocation of the 1920's and 30's in Shanghai, but soon found myself going back to my grandparent's time and an encounter with China's rain-dragon (in effigy) and so on... very lively stuff all of it. And I found I must tone down and even leave out the language material or the tale bogs down. At first I kept sticking it in but finally began culling ruthlessly. What's left is an in-depth study of my "Born-again" parents, and the phenomenon of "Bornagenism" as I call it. (One quarter of the US population right now is "Born Again"). Also told are my infant struggles to call my mind my own, while on all sides Bornagen preachers shook their heads disapprovingly. Also told is the lonely struggle to "keep the ghosts in their place", when we lived in the most haunted house of Chapei, outside Shanghai. It has already come to four books' length, with some four re-writings, and each new typing sees it expanding. Lots of funny scenes came to light in my memory and I made the most of them. But I'll be busy with it for months to come, I'm afraid, and I just can't let myself fret over the language-stuff now being neglected, at least till I have this set of books on life in China when I was young completed. (Together with all its gods and ghosts versus a stubborn little "daughter of a Northumblander" in opposition to them all back then.)

It occurred to me the way to find publishers for my encyclopedic-sized language-stuff is to get readers interested in the background, which my present attempt at discussing China in my childhood attempts. I proffer comical scenes as my bait. (Myself, I best love reading funny stories too).

THE MENTOR 65 just came and many thanks again. I was very amused by Buck's tale of his long train trip across the USA. Last time I made such a journey there was when I was ten or eleven, back when Hoover was going to be elected, but we didn't know that then. (My clan voted for Hoover, and I felt glamorous wearing a Hoover label on my chest). In 1974 I crossed by stages via Greyhound, and it was an adventure. In 1978 Susan Wood insisted I come by jet and sent the tickets to where I was already with my clan in Atlanta. But that train Buck describes - a sort of double-decker - and all the happenings aboard, girls dodging drunks and so on - sounds wild and hairy. 'What's the world coming to?' as they say.

I miss your photo on the Editorial Page. It set a reflective mood. Very thoughtful!

John Alderson's remarks are fascinating and I'm sure just about any theory anybody yet put forward has truth in it too. As for what I say, how can anybody either agree or disagree? You can't "agree" or "disagree" with archaic Chinese writing styles. They simply exist. You can only

say when I point out coincidences, 'What fun!' or 'How Amusing!' Deep conclusions cannot be drawn from such material; it's mostly evocative, "deep-down-under" stuff. The more I got into it the more bewitched I became, especially if you believe in alternate dimensions (as even scientists seem to be suggesting - the latest I heard was a BBC book review on PARALLEL DIMENSIONS, or some such title by a scientist, but I didn't write the name down at once and it didn't register in me). So my studies switched my thinking along parallel tracks where - as the reviewer quoted - in our dimension the atom is a particle and in the adjoining one it's a wave. Maybe. I like that. Fits the "vision" I had in my own thinking. We are followed through our Cosmic journey by the waves we ourselves create, as we journey along. Ghosts of ourselves seem to be still in action. We actually ran into this sort of thing when we lived at Last Barrancas, Sierras del Cordoba, which was a bewitched old hollow where the ancient and most mysterious "blond-and-blue-eyed" Comechingones used to live. Our own doubles kept popping up and confusing things for everyone. It could be distressing sometimes. Here, though, everything nearby is normal enough though visions are had by the natives outside our own territory (nearly 300 hectares of valley and mountain ridges).

SUE CARTWRIGHT, 30 Centre Cres., Blaxland East, NSW 2774.

Thanks to Terry Broome and Steve Sneyd for their comments concerning my story in THE MENTOR #64. Feedback is so helpful. Shane Dix has a very pleasant writing style; a combination of just the right description and action. Interesting story but I bet the author's real talents would be more clearly seen in the production of a novel.

The story LETHE (aptly titled) was hard to forget. Grai Hughes writes so one experiences, and the experiences were not pleasant. The description sucks one in and my only critical comment would be that some of the sentences are too long, or perhaps should be broken up with semi-colons. But that is a grammatical thing. The writing ability Grai obviously already has taped.

I LOVED Jozef Szekeres portfolio and I bet they are terrific in colour. But Gawd! You are only 19?? Jozef, you have no reason to be shy. You are talented! My advice to you is to never let anyone tell you otherwise. You will go far, far, far. Have you tried any contests, say for example, the "Writers of the Future" contests? Part of that competition includes artists.

ALAN STEWART, PO Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vic 3005.

THE MENTOR 66 - interesting portfolio from Jozef Szekeres. I particularly liked those on pages 35, 37 and 43. Even in this small sampling it was interesting to observe development between '87 to '89. It will be interesting to see if Jozef's illustrations appear in other fanzines after their showcasing here. THE WHEELING SYSTEM DARKENS, I still can't see the significance of the "Wheeling" of the title, was nicely atmospheric, if the idea has been done before. I kept expecting some clever juxtapositioning between the life of Bunch and the old Africa of the documentary, but it never eventuated.

With reference to Buck Coulson's column, my only British Convention has been the Worldcon Conspiracy '87, with a bar at one end, but no real loud music. The other end was tables of fanzines for purchase or browsing. No Con suite as such with free food and drink, I think that institution is really just in the US. No Australian convention can provide a similar service because of the cost. With international air fares for a big name guest of honour, and having to pay for all function rooms, virtually all the income from memberships is gone before you start on program items and facilities. Although free coffee and tea in the Fan Lounge is usually available, sometimes soft drinks (as at Danse Macabre recently) and perhaps munchies, but nothing like the catering I've seen described in reports of US cons. Perhaps the fact that we're talking 200-300 members for a Natcon here, or even a regional convention with an extremely popular GoH, limits what can be done. I think Aussie fans would rather the money was spent actually getting the GoH here, than on food usually available at a nearby supermarket. Perhaps "famous" pros at a Convention is too much of a convenience in the US, and they give higher priority to Con Suite food etc.

UNDER PRESSURE was interesting, with delightful bits like using the telescope to defeat

the attackers in the ship. Though the idea of a stable 100,000 satellite system is a bit too far fetched for me. Over time collisions would have greatly reduced this, particularly as further captures would be occurring, disrupting the system.

With regard to John Tipper's comments about THE SUMMER OF '92, quite a few books about an attack on Australia from the north have been published, mainly in the 1920's and early 1930's. I think one was called THE INVASION OF SYDNEY, but I'm not sure, I will check the MSFC library copy next time I am there. In this case it was the Japanese doing the invading, or perhaps the Chinese, but definitely a "yellow peril" novel. Another novel with mysterious vaults in the Blue Mountains and secrets under Parliament House is Russell Braddon's YEAR OF THE ANGRY RABBIT. A hilarious example of Aussie satire where Australia becomes world supremo thanks to the threat of releasing super-myxomatosis virus. Unfortunately made into a forgettable movie, NIGHT OF THE LAPUS, set in the US, sigh. Try and track down the book, and enjoy.

Interesting about your copyright mention in response to Steve Sneyd. The MSFC received a letter requesting copies of ETHEL THE AARDVARK be sent to the National Library in Canberra. I suspect they found us via a copy of the AUST & NZ FANDOM DIRECTORY. Anyway I sent off the first five issues, plus the current two at the time, and we received a response that we needn't bother in the future as they had limited space and were cutting down on "pamphlet" storage.

My "archival" copies of THE MENTOR go to the National Library, the Mitchell Library, the Fisher Library and the NSW Parliamentary Library. Maybe some time in the future TMS contributors may be read into Hansard. Really puts you off, doesn't it? - Ron.

From a later letter: THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM was a good story. I particularly enjoyed pages 4-9, which had an authentic ring to them, but felt it got away from the author into clichedom with too much ground covered in the final paragraphs. If Chris could spread out to cover a fifteen mile radius (p.11), why were there still ordinary small trees/shrubs fifty years later (p.12); where are the other hybrid giants? The "flowers", with their fleshy tone and rotten-meat smell remind me of images in another SF story, but the title escapes me. Indeed I was wondering what the author's SF reading background is as he has included a lot of familiar SF ideas and images, admittedly tied together in an Australian and new manner.

THE JOURNAL was well written, but the cliched "diary written in blood" was a bit much. I wonder if Margaret has read David Lake's THE MAN WHO LOVED MORLOCKS. The reinterpretation of Eloi/Morlock society was interesting, but the "diary/uncle -inspires -narrator -to -follow -him" format of the tale is old hat to this SF fan. Perhaps Margaret hasn't read that much SF and thinks this method new and wonderful.

Interesting that the BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS poster (reproduced p.36) shows a forked tongue and nostrils snorting steam/smoke - suggesting a dragon, not the more SFnal dinosaur of the original story. But perhaps that's just advertising hype license. Of the 1953 films Glen lists I'm afraid I've only seen WAR OF THE WORLDS and IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE. Perhaps I will catch up on some of the others at Cons or early morning TV video taping.

Regarding your comment to Harry Warner Jr., I presume you mean ETHEL THE AARDVARK (not Ethyl). As for being put out by younger fans, it is all relative. Myself, as editor, am 28 years old, and most of the Melbourne SF Club (MSFC) members who contribute are between 20-35 years old. I suppose this is young in your context. Perhaps you could publish a contact list for zines received.

Sorry about the (Freudian) slip, I must have been thinking of Ethyl the Alcohol. I suppose I gained the impression of late teens from the reports of Ethel supporters published in the Victorian newszines such as THYME and DOXY!

I'll have you know that I don't have one grey hair showing on my head (they've all been dyed).
- Ron.

I agree with your comments about producing a zine. Despite taking a rostered day off (RDO) to type/laser print text, then being up to 2-3 am for the rest of the week doing layout and photocopying, collating, folding, addressing, stamping a 36 page ETHEL (9xA3 sheets), ETHEL

#31, to get it out on schedule, I would do it again, but hopefully work trips to Perth won't interfere and force the last week rush next time. There is a great sense of enjoyment/achievement in even getting one copy off right, or battling paper jams, etc and ending up with good copy.

You sound like you have a busy time. Why don't you have other club members helping out? I print DATA magazine, the local Star Trek clubzine on the Saturday (it is typed on the previous weekend), with a four colour cover, and the editors (all four of them) have about 12 people up that night and the whole thing is collated and stuffed (the 12 are writing envelopes on the Saturday I print the zine) and it is all set to be posted on the Monday - all 350 copies and 50-75 pages of it. I would think that the Melbourne club would have around the same type of volunteers who could help. - Ron.

I see David Tansey had a story in THYME FICTION 3, which appeared recently. Another "professional" writer first published in THE MENTOR!

MIKE GLICKSOHN, 506 Windemerk Ave, Toronto, Ontario M6S 3L6, Canada.

I've never been an enthusiast of fiction in fanzines, I'm afraid. It isn't just that the vast majority of it is bad (although that is most definitely my observation over the years) but rather that I can read a lot of top quality fiction in books and magazines and don't need to find it in fanzines which have always seemed to me to be better suited to different types of material. The fiction in this issue may well be excellent (and if/when I get caught up with reading and loocing fanzines I promise I'll at least start reading each piece) but that's not what interests/fascinates me about fanzine writing. So if I don't comment on those contributions I trust you'll understand why. (I would never tell you ought not to publish fiction because this is your fanzine. But you can't ask me to read it either, since this particular copy of the issue is now mine. Which is exactly the way it should be.)

I agree with you, Mike. I publish the fiction for many reasons - because there is no regular outlet for budding writers in Oz; to enable readers to comment directly to the author (when I get a story I can't use I send it back with my own comments - when I print one I think is good enough, I hope that the readers comments help the author) and because I am sneaky - I think that many fans can get into fandom through writing fiction when they first get published and known - these people most probably would not become active otherwise - and fandom would be the poorer. And, of course, if you read the R&R Dept you may get the urge to read the particular piece of fiction everyone is quarrelling about discussing. And I hope you will at lest continue to read TM for the articles and Locs. - Ron.

It's odd that Buck Coulson and I can go to the same conventions and yet not go to the same conventions. While I agree with several of his points (I hate loud music at any sort of gathering and for the same reason, because it interferes with conversation) he's very wrong in some of his seemingly factual statements. The majority of cons that I attend (and Buck attends quite a few of the same ones) do serve beer and alcohol in the con-suite. Some new cons don't but Buck's column would seem to indicate that alcoholic con-suites are few and far between and that's simply not accurate. And certainly the great majority of room parties I go to include free alcohol, with those that provide only soft drinks being a small minority indeed. I guess it depends who your friends are and what sort of parties you attend.

The other disagreement I have with Buck is purely personal. Alcohol at a con may be irrelevant to him, but it isn't to me. For me a very enjoyable con will be even more enjoyable if I can have some drinks along the way. A not very enjoyable con can become okay if there's a good supply of interesting beverages to enjoy. (But a lousy con is a lousy con, period.) I don't have to get plastered to have a good time but given the choice between having an interesting conversation with Buck and having an interesting conversation with Buck while drinking a nice cold beer I'll take the latter every time!

Gee, John Alderson is still going! This is the first I've seen of John in about as long as it's

been since I last read THE MENTOR (#37). I see he hasn't changed much. He still pontificates and states opinions as if they were actual facts, even stating things are obvious when they seem more erroneous than obvious to me. Before I actually met John (all of 15 years ago now) this sort of thing would have (and frequently did) provoke me to an irate response but now I just think about AUSSIECON and John and his car and his wine and I smile warmly and am grateful the old goat is still tilting at windmills with the best of them. It's nice to know there are some stabilities in this ever-changing world of ours!

Jozef Szekeres is one hell of a talented guy and he deserved the portfolio you printed. From the self-portrait and from some minor flaws in some of the drawings I gather that Jozef is still a young man who is yet in the process of mastering his art. Considering the quality of the artwork shown here one but can wait with something approaching awe to see what sort of work he'll be turning out even three years down the line. Michael Whelan and Kelly Freas better keep on refining their skills!

Whoops... you see the problem of linear loccking! Only 19, hot damn! When this young man hits 25 I hope I get a chance to at least see his work because I'm damned sure I won't be able to afford to buy any of it!

I'd like to think that Buck was wrong about fanzines having peaked as a form of interaction between fans but I fear he's not. To me, contact was an important part of doing fanzines as was communication but there was always a large part of me that enjoyed the publishing aspects (as opposed to the production aspects which were always such a chore) purely for their own sake. I publish infrequently now but I hope I never lose that thrill of having put together and produced an attractive successful magazine from a bunch of seemingly unrelated components. (Besides, there's a form of communication possible through fanzines - or any form of written communication - that's just not available at conventions and I like to think that type of communication still has a place in fandom.)

The review section forced me to make several observations: (1) I don't read a very large percentage of published sf nowadays; (2) I didn't even know Hitler had written any sf; (3) a lot of reviews of sf books are rather shoddily written and perhaps should be proofread before seeing print.

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

Thanks for TM#67 and another really nice cover. What about some details on Mark McLeod? I really enjoyed all of his illos in this issue, which have a simplicity of design and something unusual nowadays; attention to perspective.

There should be something in a future issue... - Ron.

THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM was a story which must find its way into one of the prozines. Having remarked that I don't generally enjoy fantasy, I have to say that this story had everything going for it. A gradual build-up of tension with great descriptive prose. I was personally a little disappointed in the ending, but that's nit-picking.

THE JOURNAL will, no doubt, result in a number of interesting LoCs. This was my favourite item in this issue but a couple of readers who've rung me since the issue came out seem at odds with the supposition that the traits of the Eloi and Morlock could be reversed. If the author suggested that this was a kind of TIME MACHINE II this argument would hold water, but she doesn't, so why shouldn't their roles be reversed? This story makes for enjoyable reading and (although I wrote something similar in regards to a previous story in an earlier issue) I'd like to see this scenario taken further by the author.

I'll leave Brodie to comment on the remaining contents. I'm sure he'll think up something nasty to say concerning my bit and Glen's. We'd be disappointed if he didn't!

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

...So here I am on a Friday night. I had a bath, a hot supper, a petting session with the cat, and am now relaxing in my nightgown with a pot of decaffeinated tea. I have read both of your zines (TM 65 and 66), and at times like this I realize how *obsolete* my typewriter and ditto machines are. I wonder if any other fan still uses such an antique as an IBM SELECTRIC *ONE* ?? I don't know of any more than 10 active spirit-duplicating fans in the USA. Which is why I read your editorial in #65 with interest. I think that fanzines in the USA are in OK condition. We even have two, not one but *Two* annual fanzine-oriented conventions on a yearly basis, rotating around the country - CORFLU and DITTO. Marty Cantor is hoping to have either CORFLU or DITTO in Los Angeles in 1991.

Having said that, it must also be admitted that fanzine fans are a small part of USA fandom. You only have to look at the huge listing of conventions in such magazines as LOCUS to realize that most USA fans are con fans, with little interest in fanzines. And why should they be?

And while apas are also in a slow decline, it seems that many fans are now using their computers to be active in BBSs. It seems that Bulletin Board Systems are spreading across the country, taking the place of fanzines and apas.

(In this respect, my brother Michel Andruschak is a forerunner. He is not a Science Fiction Fan, he just reads SF. Many years ago, he was one of the very first people to set up a BBS, and it has been a central part of his life since. His BBS does everything my fanzine activity does... keeps him in touch with a variety of interesting and stimulating minds.)

Long trips. Unlike Buck Coulson, it has been decades since I rode on a train. (1972, in London, England). For my African vacation, I was on a airplane. I had to take Sabena Airlines from Chicago to Brussels to Tunis, and 5 weeks later come back home via Brussels to Chicago. It was incredibly dull dull dull. And trying to get any kind of sleep on an airplane is impossible for me, so I suffered jet lag and sleep deprivation both ways.

I am pleased to see Noia in the letter column. I remember when she first asked me about fanzines that I get, and the way she reacted when I mentioned your name. Which is why I gave her my copy of THE MENTOR. Glad to have been of help.

On to #66. A much more substantial issue. That SYDNEY IN '95 Bidding Committee you mention in your Editorial - is that a Worldcon bid?? I would certainly vote for it if it was. Attending, of course, is another matter, but with the current three year bidding cycle, I might be able to save up the money. Something to think about. I suppose I could be a pre-supporting member if you accept USA checks, or get a US agent. (Not me - I'm overextended as it is.)

Buck Coulson mentions two things that have been the reasons I have almost quit going to cons - alcohol and smoke. And oddly enough, smoking is more a problem than drinking. After six years of sobriety, it does not bother me to see people drinking alcohol. *Drunkenness*, on the other hand, still upset me.

Alas, the LASFS Clubhouse is still a place for smokers, which is why I attend a meeting of LASFS less than once a month, and only if I am sure the weather will be mild enough to allow me to lounge outside the buildings. And too many SF cons in the USA still have too much smoking. So I have dropped con-going as part of my fanac. Hell, I haven't even been to the local LOSCON for the last few years. But maybe this year, since they are trying a new hotel, and may or may not update their smoking policy.

All of the cons I've been to in Aust in the last year or so have been "non-smoking" cons, with smoking allowed in the corridors or outside. Of course this doesn't refer to room parties - that is up to the party organiser. Most of the time drunks at cons don't do much harm to anyone else. However, passive smoking seems to do some harm, and a con party usually doesn't have good air circulation (at least in Aussie cons). Smoking room parties usually have foul air - though those drinking (usually wine in Oz) probably don't notice it much. - Ron.

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

I particularly liked the excellent artwork in THE MENTOR 66. The cover was great, but a trifle under emphasised. I felt it needed just a trace more detail work. Then the Szekeres portfolio

was out of this world. What a wonderful range of styles, and all so competently executed. Great Stuff.

WHEELING SYSTEM DARKENS was ok, but overloaded with adjectives. Its premise also lacked credibility. I go along with Buck Coulson about finding it hard to find reasonably quiet talking places at a Con. Piped racket at 100+ watts is everywhere these days.

UNDER PRESSURE was better written, but the spacemen seemed too sloppy, and the ending was over my head. As for THE ALPHA EXPERIMENT, sorry, but it rang no bells. To generalise about all the fiction in THE MENTOR, I feel it is like so much fiction today, both pro and amateur.. too concerned with one little idea, but lacking in basic plot structure. Maybe I'm old and jaded, but I like a story to have credible characters and background, be logically (not just wordily) developed and build to a climax, preferably with an unexpected twist. Nowadays, writers seem too concerned with "messages" - whale saving, planet saving, women liberating, men oppressing, and black boosting. All laudable aims, but we get 'em too often, or else their converse, the anti-establishment diatribe. Bring back the Golden Age.

LOC-col also very good as were the reviews. It was interesting to compare your views and mine on the books which I also read. Can't say I find Guy Smith a good read as all his yarns seem steeped in gore, explicit (juvenile-image) sex and crunching bones. As for the Asimov, AZAZEL, I thought this not unlike the Wodehouse stories - ok in very small doses, but when you get a bookfull, it tends to cloy.

SHANE DIX, 2/26 Diagonal Rd., Glengowrie, S.A. 5044.

Criticism, constructive criticism, is the amateur's best means of improving himself/herself. That's why THE MENTOR is such a good vehicle for unestablished writers: it gives us feedback. And positive or otherwise, it all helps. As Terry Broome pointed out in issue #66's R&R Dept., sometimes the only way for us to see our mistakes is for others to show us. Then of course there are those people like Peter Brodie whose comments at times border on gratuitous vitriol.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not bitter because Peter didn't like my story (you bastard!), but I did find a couple of comments he directed at David Tansey's UNDER PRESSURE (which I enjoyed, though admittedly not as much as his SUMMER OF '92) and Grai Hughes' LETHE (which again I enjoyed; good story, well written, but I felt it needed something to divide the memories from her time in the cell so that all the paragraphs didn't just roll into each other)... I've forgotten what I was saying now. Ah yes: I found some of his comments here to be a little unnecessary, more destructive than constructive. After all, he didn't even finish reading them, so it hardly puts him in a position to comment.

As for his comments towards my own story: yech, implausible? Absolutely. It was never intended to be anything other than that. I didn't set out to detail a vision of the future as I believe it could be, but rather to write a simple story that might look in a slightly satirical manner at a fairly topical subject. To do this I deliberately chose an extreme setting (natural world vs. man-made world), and it is this very extremity which asks the reader not to take me too seriously. Peter raises a lot of questions, though I feel that it is not answers that are needed, but rather a pinch of salt.

As I said though, criticism is criticism, and good or bad it all makes us reflect upon our work. And I certainly have no hard feelings for the comments made. (Then again, why doesn't Peter Brodie just go and take a flying fuck at the moon!).

Jozef Szekeres' portfolio was superb, and I agree with both Peter Brodie and Buck Coulson about the Alice & Rabbit drawing being the best piece, along with the one on page 31. Look forward to more of the same in the future.

Of the three fiction pieces in TM #67 I found THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM by far and away the best. The whole story was well thought out and brilliantly executed, with enough wit to keep you reading through to the end; and then when you least expect it, a message emerges from the absurdity. Ian Lennie is one sick individual, with one hell of an imagination. My type of reading.

THE JOURNAL by Margaret Pearce was interesting and written well, though I was left with a vague dissatisfaction with the ending. I can't even elaborate, so I guess it would be unfair to

comment further. Nevertheless, it was nice to see Margaret revamping an old tale, and I found it amusing that she should even suggest that Wells' time traveller had "been dreadfully wrong". Such audacity to challenge another writer's character's observations! By the way, Margaret, if you are interested in reading a thorough rewriting of H.G. Wells' TIME MACHINE and WAR OF THE WORLDS, pick up a copy of Christopher Priest's tribute to the man, THE SPACE MACHINE (if you haven't already, of course).

I found John Tipper's article quite interesting, and agree with some of his observations. But 2001 a boring film? Stanley Kubrick is many things, but boring he is not.

PETER BRODIE, 15/16 Waratah St, Cronulla NSW 2230.

Ah so, the 25th anniversary issue. The cover was a nice non-threatening one. One of those limbo covers that could be anywhere. Looks a bit like Canberra actually, or a mall-planners daydream (both the same methinks). Soothing Image #7 perhaps? Ah yes, prepare us for wots inside.

Which is: THEY LEFT by Lorraine Cormack. It was very well written. Had a flowing prose style that even had me reading it a few times to enjoy it, but, *wot was its point?* It didn't seem to have a reason for existing. Perhaps we were supposed to be so knocked over by the prose that we missed that there wasn't really a story? Euff. Still nice, if pointless, read.

Glen Chapman's film article SF FILMS OF 1953 was a basically well-written piece that gave a certain amount of info without going overboard. The style was a bit cramped at times as was the prose. Also, the pseudo-intellectual phrasing was a bit of a turn-off when you came to it. Still, an interesting read for those not fueled by films. A readable article for a change. Amazing.

John Tipper's THERE'S A STRANGÉ GREEN GLOW certainly ended with a bang. Did I miss something? Anyway, a nice ramble round his brain cells. I have to agree with John about modern fantasy. Most of it is shit. Same for SF. The books that are being published today wouldn't have gotten past a first reader in the sixties. Sigh. Getting a tad tired of looking at all those fantasy books on the shelves with "Volume One of Twenty-five" on the cover. Yech.

Margaret Pearce's THE JOURNAL was a beautiful read, if you ignored the fact that the writer has never read the original book (or seen the film). I knew the basic premise was trash but it was such a surprise to find almost pro stuff in MENTAL that I kept right on reading. Margaret pulled the big fatal in extrapolation: making the "facts" fit your story, rather than the other way around. Hey, why not have the Morlocks as the goodies? It means throwing the original story out the window but who cares? Lots of people do. Well written but a big nono in the plot department.

Reminds me of those much-vaunted CRUISER C-57D blueprints that came out some years ago and had people oohing and aahing. Pity that the creators made the ship a third as big again as it was in the film, just so they could stuff all the techno inside. No excuse.

THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM was brill. Easily the best story you've published in yonks. Who the hell is Ian Lennie (no offense, Ian) and why hasn't he written anything for you before? Hard to believe this is a first-time thing. It would have been a totally professional story if Ian had fleshed (?) out how Chris had developed into a plant man a bit more; also the plot turned around Chris being exposed to a number of people. He would have been so isolated in "real life" that no one would have ever gotten near him. The real art of telling this particular story would have been to have that situation but still get the result as was printed. With a bit of adding to, and fiddling with this is a pro story and I'm amazed Ian didn't try to sell it to a prozine. I don't see many eds turning it down. Why did he waste his time sending it to THE MENTOR? (Sorry, Ron.) Best "fan" story I've read in years. Nice one, Ian. More please.

The letters were a good bunch of opinions. The Book Reviews were of the usual standard. Easily the best issue of THE MENTOR I've come across in years. You didn't by any chance hold back the good stuff for the anniversary issue? Or was it just serendipity? I felt as tho I'd just finished a prozine when I put it down.

Oops, almost forgot... one of your book reviews gave me the hint to track down a story I've had in my head for years but could never remember where I'd read it. Now I can not only read it again but its companion stories.

Ah yes. Can any reader out there in BEM land help? I remember reading two stories many

years ago (and apart) but cannot find them anywhere and am beginning to think I imagined them. First story deals with a bloke who falls in love with a hideous alien female but sees her as a normal earth-type girl due to a device, as does the female alien to him (see him as one of her kind, that is). The end of the story deals with the mutual destruction of both their planets (dimensions?) and them both finally seeing the other as he/she is and not really caring as they hold each other for the big finale, cities falling, etc. I know it sounds strange but it really has stuck in my mind. Have a vague memory that it might be an old story, almost Victorian. No, it isn't a Wells.

The other story (which I may have read in one of the US prozines of the sixties) dealt with a spaceship that could circumnavigate the universe in a day. It used a fuel found in a black pool in some guys backyard. Yeah, I know, Brodie's off his rocker, again. No really, I did read it. Story ends with the ship being destroyed but the Mark II promising to be even faster!! The whole idea was so outrageous that it stuck in my head all these years.

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

A good batch of stories in THE MENTOR 66, give or take the odd unexpected inconsistency such as in THE WHEELING SYSTEM DARKENS, the difference in climate inside and outside of the wall and who are running the power stations that provide those power points with electricity.

David Tansey had an idea. "If one moon is connected with lunacy, lots of moons could make pretty unstable characters. Why don't I turn that thought into a first contact story?" Why not indeed. Except you need to work at ideas a little more than David did. I'll go along with the Rid's acceptance of the spaceship and crew though it would seem a little too ready for a spear carrying culture, take it that they landed during the native's passive phase. I don't accept that the acceptance would be great enough for the Rid to stand still for an x-ray, even if they didn't run screaming from the immediate presentation of a magic/evil picture box. So, how did Brash know about their brain structure? A two man team seems pretty inadequate to me, if one is a drunk it increases the danger and work load for the other. There seemed to be no reason in the story for Brash to give details of a special relationship within the confines of short story, factors that need an explanation should not be introduced. A person with a drinking problem might have an interesting psychological profile but not if dumped in an illogical situation.

Good ideas and writing styles are not enough. An author has to work at presenting the idea to the reader. Background data has to be supplied so that the reader's intelligence is neither insulted nor their imagination left with nothing to work on.

LETHE is a well written dark mood piece but I can see no justification in the story for it's telling. There is no reason given why the actions and attitudes of too many societies in too many wars should be foisted on to some future citizens. Why America should apparently become the sort of society it fought in WWII to save the world from. Perhaps it is intended to be part of a longer work?

Looking at the portfolio, I thought good range of techniques, draughtmanship and design. Then I thought, so what, you can see one semi clad female supposedly pertaining to SF, you have seen them all. The furry aliens and robot were not particularly original. The mermaid metamorphosing into a birdmaid has potential but seemed incomplete, almost as if the artist had started at the bottom of the picture and got fed up with the idea betime he reached the top and concluded with half sketched harpies. Then I came to the Alice in Wonderland drawing! Neither the scene nor Alice is so very different from other illustrations of the story but yet the whole has a nightmarish quality that I feel is far more appropriate to the story than those other illustrations. Yes, Jozef has got more going for his work than basic skills.

I think you are doing a grand job in publishing such an interesting showplace for beginning writers and artists. I always assumed that both contributors and yourself welcomed critical comments so I was disappointed to see so much of the letter column devoted to folks bickering about the critical comments rather than discussing the contents of THE MENTOR.

DAVID TANSEY, GPO Box 2061, Canberra ACT 2601.

I don't want to take up space with an old matter, but I can't allow Peter Brodie's comments to pass unanswered. For those readers who don't remember, Peter derided the idea contained in my story UNDER PRESSURE, that Australians were more culturally tolerant than most other nationalities.

You don't have to be a genius, Peter, to realise that Australia is an oasis of cultural stability in a troubled world. Just turn on the news at night, especially on SBS (the multi-cultural channel) and count how many times you hear the expression: "Ethnic violence erupted today in..."

What other country in the world would tolerate a Cabramatta (a Sydney suburb converted into a Vietnamese enclave), or even entertain the idea of a Multi-Functional Polis (a Japanese city to be built in Australia)? Sure, we make jokes about the New Zealanders, but we don't gun them down in the street - an attitude that separates us from nearly every other nation on earth.

Just think about the Iran-Iraq war, the situation in Northern Ireland, Cambodia, then ask yourself - who would you send into space to meet the aliens? Of course we are not perfect, but comparatively speaking are light years ahead of the rest of the world.

Australians *do* live in isolation. Even a resident of Sydney, with its three million people, would have to travel thousands of kilometres across the ocean to find a similar-sized city abroad. We are cut off from the world's major population centres.

Obviously the likes of Ron Clarke and John Tipper saw some merit in the story; as did a professional publisher I sent a story containing a similar concept.

Science-fiction is the literature of vision; so maybe from now on, Peter, it would be of advantage to you to open your eyes, and read beyond the first paragraph.

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

Amazing the tricks memory plays. For years I thought that THIS ISLAND EARTH was from a story in ASTOUNDING, but after reading Tipper's article I checked, and found my memory in error; THE ALIEN MACHINE, by Raymond F. Jones, is indeed in the June 1949 TWS. It's not one of my favorite movies, though; it's a pretty film, but not terribly logical. THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL *is* one of my all-time favorites, and some years after it was made, Michael Rennie was asked what his favorite film was, and said it was DTESS. On the whole, the article did remind me of a once-famous saying (by Bob Silverberg, perhaps), "The Golden age of science fiction is 13". Anyone who thinks the old science fiction authors did more research than is done today needs to read one of the 1940s AMAZING STORIES. Readability has nothing to do with research, and not much to do with the author's ability; it resides within the reader. Some readers require that the author stick to logical details and motivations; most don't. Hubbard's BATTLEFIELD EARTH, an overinflated third-rate pulp novel, reportedly has sold a half-million copies, far more than his genuinely good novels written before he discovered Dianetics. (I don't guarantee that figure, but the book is definitely a best-seller.)

1953 was really a rotten year for sci movies, wasn't it? I watched INVADERS FROM MARS with a non-fan friend, and about the time the aliens were carving out their tunnels by causing sand to explode, my friend leaned over and whispered, 'Do you suppose Du Pont knows about this?' I snickered off and on for the rest of the movie. I can't recall if that was one of the movies where the aliens had ping-pong ball eyes or not; there were several movies where they did. Whether it did or not, it was a pretty bad movie.

Lorraine Cormack has a point about fanzine publicity. In the Good Old Days, a lot of the prozines had fanzine review columns - but nowadays who reads the prozines? It's all paperbacks. On the other hand, how many fanzine editors really want to increase their circulation? Even with a computer, more copies mean more work, and there are limits to spare time. Lack of time killed YANDRO, though it lasted longer than most. Is 258 issues still a record for a non-newsletter? It was when we quit, but someone may have passed it by now, in one of the apas. Incidentally, Juanita and I were a good team because she enjoyed running off each issue, while my enjoyment was strictly for the generation of letters, meeting possible new friends, and getting into arguments. On my own, I'd never have published anything.

Harry Warner is wrong; one postal rate increase in the US *was* turned down, and after some arguments, a smaller raise was allowed. That would have been in 1977, as I recall. I

believe another proposed raise was cut down to a smaller one in the 1980s, as well.

Well, actually I believe that Indianapolis has only one north-south train a day, but may have some east-west trains as well.

Nice not-quite-wraparound cover illustration.

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

It seems like fanzines are not appearing in my mailbox as frequently as they used to, too. I don't think Australia has a hold on that problem. I'm not sure there's any one thing causing it but some things come to mind, such as that we're all older now and can't afford the expense of fanzines the way we could when we were young and unencumbered with children, mortgages, or the desire to travel. The expense is high but, I think, remains unchanged largely, for mimeoed zines. Postage has been a major portion of the overall costs, which now makes large circulation fanzines - say 300 copies - very expensive; and fandom has grown to where 300 circulation is a minimal rather than a maximal size. A lot of fans have just drifted into other things - several, like Moshe Feder, have become editors (tho not always of SF) and others, like Jerry Kaufman, seem to be publishing other types of things - Serconia Press - and their departure makes fandom a less exciting place which fails to encourage others to keep up 'acing their fans. But mostly it seems like the rising generation of fans are aliterary. It's not that they can't read but that reading and writing fails to move them as hobbies. They say it's a proud and lonely thing to be a fan, I suspect that until it becomes a lonely thing to be a fan, fanzines will be few and far between.

I enjoyed reading Buck Coulson's little adventure about riding the rails (in #65), something which will likely get the axe for sure this time around during budget cutting. (Amtrak is a highly subsidized government agency.) I rode on a train once and found it vastly superior to the bus, since the seats were larger and more widely spaced. At 6'2" I'm not comfortable in most seats designed for the "average" person, that average being determined 40 years ago when the country as a whole was inches shorter and a couple of stone lighter. What I can recall from that trip, half a lifetime ago (gack!) was that the train was quieter and passed through more scenic territory. It was, by the way, the same California Zephyr Buck and Juanita rode.

Harry Warner wrote in one of his fan histories that the practice of giving away free copies of one's fanzines to all contributors and to anyone who locced or traded didn't begin till some time in the 50s. I published my first zine in 1974 and find the idea of *not* trading for zines or locs strange. And as I grow disgruntled with fanzine production I find myself wondering why I'm sending people copies of a fanzine that costs me a dollar or two to produce for letters that barely do more than acknowledge the zine's arrival. So while it might seem rude for mediazines to never give out free copies (well, actually that *is* rude) I can understand where they're coming from. The mediazines I've seen have been huge and offset printed at an expense that must easily have been \$3 - \$4 apiece. For that kind of money I'd be stingy, too.

John Alderson's letter deserves to have been expanded into an article, perhaps with numerous illustrations of the different alphabets he compares. Like his earlier series of articles on sexually dominated societies I take most of what he says with a grain of salt, but find much that's provocative in what he says. His exegesis of "M-a-n" certainly give one pause for thought. He asserts that writing came to Egypt out of Persia is interesting in light of the argument that Egypt was a Black nation. The argument goes that Egypt is an African country and Africa is a Black continent, therefore Egypt, which is widely regarded as the birthplace of Grecian culture, which is regarded as the birthplace of Western civilization, must have been a Black country, and Western civilization owes *everything* to the Blacks. At least that's how it sounds to me. However, public depictions of ancient Egypt has always shown a dusky people, not negroid. Blacks claim this is falsification of history. I suspect that they are refusing to consider that the Nile valley was settled by nearby semitic tribes, else why did Egyptians distinguish Nubians as a separate people? But Alderson's idea that the letter M is a picture of a woman lying with her legs spread goes farther than I'm willing to travel.

Curiously, while Scientologists have tied up Russell Miller's book in litigation, they seem to have done nothing about Bent Croyden's L. RON HUBBARD: MESSIAH OR MADMAN, which eventually was sold in remainder at B. Daltons. And Croyden also discussed Hubbard's military

career, pointing out the falsifications and the Navy's basic dislike for Hubbard. Croyden also documents in great detail how the Church extorted property from its members (franchise holders like himself who'd built up large churches and considerable wealth) and how the church was promoting Hubbard's SF as a ploy to get people interested in his other writings, ie Scientology. Croyden also suggested that Hubbard started writing SF again as part of a plan to persuade the US government that Hubbard was not in actual control of the church, which had just been caught conspiring against the government, but was only a humble SF scribe. Despite all this, Croyden's book was not suppressed. Curious.

I was glancing through the book reviews in #66 without actually reading them when my eyes were struck by the sight of "FIGHT FOR THE STARS by Adolph Hitler". I looked to see if you were pulling our legs - of course you were - but I first wondered if this referred to some legitimate publication, like Spinrad's THE IRON DREAM. But no, you've whipped out the review of a totally fictitious book. Pity is, it sounds better than most of the real books you reviewed.

You are only the second person to mention that review (Mike Glicksohn in his letter was the first). I wonder if anyone else noticed? If you look at the books listed as written by Hitler in the credits page of LORD OF THE SWASTIKA (in the aforementioned THE IRON DREAM) you'll see FIGHT FOR THE STARS listed. - Ron.

I am impressed that you get such good printing from your computer tho it's still a bit blobby for my taste. I suspect, without having had the chance or equipment to experiment with it, that d-m fonts that imitate leaded fonts are not a good idea.

I liked Peggy Ransom's cover, she is a good artist, and I liked Mark McLeod's illo on page 5, it's a bit more illustrative a piece than most which tend to be expressionistic. The portfolio from Jozef Szekeres featured quite a range of styles which made it much more interesting than many other such portfolios. Some people pretty much draw the same thing over and over again, but that does get a bit tedious. It's nice to see someone who can work in several modes.

Ned Brooks mentions an A.B. Dick mimeo that makes its own stencils from off a roll. I've seen a similar machine from Gestetner (Maybe Ned misremembers the manufacturer?). For the price it hardly seems worth it. It works by incorporating a thermalfax stencil cutter into the imaging area. So as the master slowly scrolls through the machine it's imaged onto thermal stencil material that's stored in a big roll inside the machine. It's drawn over the silk screen in the same step and when done ejected into a waste box (not another roll). The advantage over xerox would be when 200 to several thousand copies are desired because it can print them faster, cheaper and probably doesn't break down as often as a xerox would for that kind of volume production. But still, what's the point?

IGOR TOLOCONNICOU, C/- Poste Restante, Central Post Office, Volgograd-66, USSR 400066.

Boris and I are involved in the VOLGACON 91 project which means that now when I get some of my sf theories out of my system, we sit and try to produce a few publications, and trying simultaneously to sell books from other cities, not counting such a trifle as ardently looking for sponsors. The thing is also that, even though we intended to go to Worldcon 90 in the Hague to air our proposals in person, it seems that the happiness of perestroika is somewhere else, and its spirit's shadow only just touched the local visitor's bureau. Oh, they are all for and would like to let us go, but these standard invitations issued by the Worldcon committee: either get something stamped by a magistrate or obtain something about a group mutual exchange. Or even find somebody bold enough to invite us for a personal visit. Not hearing from the Worldcon committee, we turned to people; letters came in in May, and: 'Oh, here it is written he will show you the Worldcon event; we can't have this; it is a personal invitation, strike this mention off and add the promise he will take care of your health... And better have this personal, private invitation stamped by a magistrate too, or at a police station. Then we'll give you a visa in a jiffy.' We decided to go ahead and phoned and asked to have them stamped thus and sent to us by express

mail, taking as a point of honour that we would pay him the expenses out of our allowance of 300 dollars apiece (and not a cent more!). Twenty days have passed, and I now feel that we never will get to go to Confiction, and must look elsewhere for the means to pay for the financial troubles we have brought on our friend.

After such worries, one will wish the uniformness of Ian Lennie's THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM - quite a notion and presentation! However, it seems to me there are two weaknesses: a final one - how trees would propagate when the last bands of humans were decimated, and if there are other means, why use humans as stock, which points out the strangeness of the initial conversion. There is also the starting weakness of not digging out the stump of Chris at once (which is how everything unique is dug out promptly nowadays, and in a very hush hush atmosphere) instead of putting its stump under guard for two months duration. I've a higher opinion of the Sydney administration than this.

If you only knew the State government, Igor. There is this new tunnel under Sydney Harbour to augment the Bridge, which they have been talking about for the last forty years and only recently started to complete.... - Ron.

Margaret Pearce's piece (THE JOURNAL) is a nice complement (and compliment) to Well's theme.

JOHN J. ALDERSON, Havelock, Vic 3465.

One of the most important aspects of all the sciences is to be able to speculate, and even in THE MENTOR I regard that as sacrosanct. So imagine my irritation when a hopeless Philistine like Glen Chapman says I display "a very sad lack of regard for the actual facts" when his own facts are *wrong*. "Menes, the fabled first ruler of united Egypt is at best hypothetical, and is first mentioned in the third century B.C." is pure rubbish. Herodotus mentions him a century and a half earlier! and there are Egyptian steles depicting Menes (often known as Nar-mer) and his conquest of Egypt. Petrie, in THE MAKING OF EGYPT, says these invaders originated in Elam which in turn was settled from Persia, and points out the Caucasian names of kings of the 1st dynasty, and further points out that the names of places mentioned in the BOOK OF THE DEAD are unmistakably from the Caucasus. As for the connection between the names Mines and Manu, Max Muller was convinced of it. Mines and Menes are the same word (the Egyptians not using vowels) and I discover that Wunderlich in THE SECRET OF CRETE argues the same, and this I have discovered since I made my own speculation.

Of course in Herodotus' day there were those who claimed Egypt was only the delta, which is all mud flats. Did I say anything about 5000 clay tablets being destroyed in the fire at the Alexandrian library... even I know they don't burn. What nonsense you write, Glen.

Now, how do you know that the Scandinavian runes "evolved" about 600 A.D.? I pointed out the peculiarity of a rune which could hardly be co-incidental. I admitted I did not know how the knowledge had been preserved, what is without a trace. But the Scandinavian people took their name from the war-god Scanda, one of the attributes of Siva, which marks their departure from the Persian area as post-Vedic. As for arguing that if Western Europe invented our alphabet "why has such a dynamic society failed to spread any of its ideas?" is a poor argument and shows a total ignorance of historical perspective. Had Chapman been up in even reasonably recent archaeology then Glen would know that the western megalithic culture is earlier by centuries than either Crete or Egypt, whilst the superiority of their mathematics is beyond dispute. It is certainly not true that "until the dawn of Greek culture all ideas spread from the south". Before the "dawn of Greek culture" bronze, iron and steel, and the chariot had been invented. In the north, Glen, in the north, and the word used for chariot is still used for our cars, and the word from which chariot is derived is still used for those things we sit on, the chair, and the letter h represents that chair, and the H represents the arm-chair, so fundamental is the alphabet to our language and the inventions of the Indo-Europeans. Certainly Egypt later got both types of chairs... centuries later, actually. But their sign for the chair is totally different.

MIKE GLICKSOHN, address as previous.

Your editorial (in TM #67) intrigued me, both for its not-so-subtle hints of internecine rivalry between different factions of Australian fandom but also for its too-brief look at the history of your fanzine. Mostly I found myself wondering what had happened to the two fans who started it up with you. You say that both went off on their own separate ways. Does this mean you yourself have no idea where either is at this time? Somehow that would seem a shame, losing total contact with people who once shared a very important part of your development with you.

I lost contact with Richard Moir after I left high school. I lost contact with Chris Guy after we came back from the Bus trip in 1970 and he married one of the girls on the bus and moved out to Tamworth, a country town several hundred kilometres away from Sydney and went to work for Social Security. I haven't heard from him since he moved up there. - Ron.

I don't recall the name John Tipper from previous fanzine reading (this in no ways means I haven't read his material before but merely reminds one of my atrocious memory just in case I have seen his stuff) but he has certainly written a column that contains more opinions/viewpoints with which I completely disagree than any fan I can recall since John Alderson in his feisty youth. (Well, fannish youth, anyway.) There's no point in arguing with John about these matters because most of what he says is very subjective and I just see things differently but it's rather intriguing that two people can react so completely differently to the same set of stimuli.

(Just for the record, though, I do agree with John that fantasy seems predominant nowadays, and I also happen to prefer sf to fantasy. Other than that our ideas do not seem to coincide at all. For example... I'd say most of the simple old-fashioned films he likes can *only* be enjoyed through rose-coloured nostalgic glasses (with THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL an exception)... I strongly doubt fantasy is the easiest genre in which to write (one assumes John means "write well")... I know for a fact that both sf and fantasy writers do a lot of more research than John gives them credit for (I've watched Joe Haldeman working out the equations for planetary orbits and that's just the smallest tip of the ice-berg of research Joe does for every book)... Most thirty year old sf stories seem amazingly dated to me now... Current writers are orders of magnitude better as stylists, artists, imaginers, than most old timers... A realistic space ship is a hell of a lot easier to draw than a valid dragon... THE PRINCESS BRIDE was fantasy and seemed to be moderately successful at the box-office... See what I mean? I imagine John is a lot of fun and the centre of much conversation at fan parties!)

John Tipper edits a fanzine titled METALUNA, which is about guess what? It has been going quite some time now and has a good following in Oz. Being partly a media fan, he has been reviewing film for some time. - Ron.

I was absolutely astounded to note that of the 66 titles listed/mentioned in your review section I have read exactly four. I knew I'd been reading an ever-decreasing percentage of published fiction (who could avoid doing so with the sheer volume of material being produced?) but that's a pretty awful ratio. And the sad thing is I doubt it will improve much since I just don't have the time to read much more than I'm currently reading. Sigh.

It's in the nature of fanzines (and of our increasingly non-literate society) that they appeal to a small percentage of even people interested in sf. The best way to attract new blood into fanzines is to promote *conventions* in places like university campuses and bookstores and then make sure the cons run some solid introductory panels on fanzines to attract the small fraction of newcomers who might find the idea of drawing or writing for or producing a magazine interesting.

Fannish art appears in a fannish context (to me that means in a fanzine or equivalent) and pro art appears in a professional context. The quality of the artwork has nothing to do with where it appears, neither does the status of the artist. When Kelly Freas drew a cover for one of my fanzines he was creating fan art.

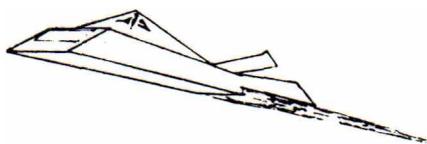
I doubt it's possible to explain to newer fans the attitude you and I share about actually being involved in the production of the physical product. That attitude harkens back to the days

when fandom nearly *was* one big family. The modern fan doesn't see fandom in that way (nor should he) and so is unlikely to care about actively doing his own work. I don't expect young fans to do their own printing because they grew up in a technological world and they view fandom as a much more impersonal entity than I do. But it would be nice if more of them at least made an effort to understand way you and I feel the way we do and not the way they do (as the young man from Kentucky did in the lettercol.)

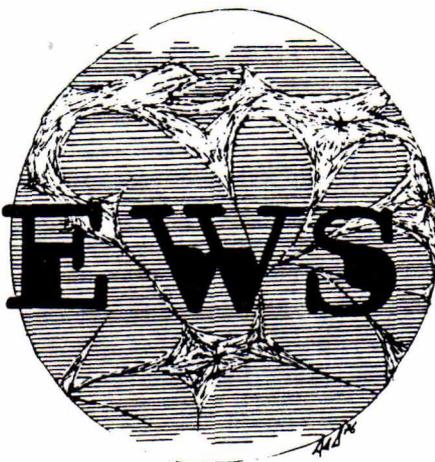
WAHF: Maria-Louise Stephens, Grai Hughes, Shane Dix, Jozef Szekeres and R. Lorraine Tutihasi, who said "In your review of Barrington J. Bayley's *THE FALL OF CHRONOS* and *COLLISION WITH CHRONOS*, you said "... being about the vulgarities of time..." [emphasis hers]. I hope you meant vagaries. What you said doesn't make sense."

Well, Lorraine, some people (those getting on in age), think Time is vulgar. (Actually, you are right.) - Ron.





REVIEWS



CURRENT SF RELEASES:

FIRST FLIGHT by Chris Claremont. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1981/7. 243pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

This is Chris Claremont's first published novel and is very skilfully done. The heroine is equal to the men in the novel, and the author makes her believable, though some of the speech, especially when she is talking to her father, reminded me strongly of Heinlein. Another scene that doesn't ring quite true is when Nicole is comparing the shade of her pubic hair to that of her head.

Nicole Shea is a shuttle pilot at the opening of the story; by the end of the twelfth page she is dead. The novel goes on from there. Claremont gives a nuts-and-bolts approach to the scenery, and gives the impression he has done his homework. The time is in the future when NASA has bases on the moons and humanity has expanded to the asteroids. Starships have reached the nearest stars, though the expansion through the solar system must rely on other systems of propulsion; thus it may take the same amount of time to get to Pluto as to the nearest stars.

There is action aplenty when pirates attack their ship on its training voyage and only four manage to escape the detonation of an asteroid.

This is an unusual novel in that it is a "hard science" sf adventure.

JASON COSMO by Dan McGirt. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1989. 220pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

Paperbacks have obviously broken the \$10 barrier and those readers in the USA should be thankful that they can still get them quite cheap compared with countries like Oz.

Even without using the same cover artist, this novel is pretty obviously slanted for the same audience as Terry Pratchett has made. The artist's, Josh Kirby, style is instantly recognisable. So when there were introduced Wizards, a humble woodcutter in the village of lower Hicksnittle, a tavern named the Festering Wart Tavern, two beautiful girls captured by evil henchmen, and a war between the Good and Evil sides of the force and Demons spring out of nowhere, the humble reader would be forgiven for hoping that this Dan McGirt was good enough to carry it off; there is nothing worse than an ill-done humorous fantasy.

The reader need not worry, though, said author pulls it off with a flourish. I enjoyed **JASON COSMO**, though I noticed that the author has possible left room for a sequel or two...

RUN TO THE STARS by Michael Scott Rohan. Futura pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1982. 245pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The plot of this novel is quite complex for a straight-forward sf adventure. When the reader thinks that all the surprises have been revealed, the author springs another one.

The novel starts out on the coast of Scotland, in the Thirtieth Century. The main character is Chief of Security of a station in the mid-Atlantic (they used to be called sea-dromes in the 1930's) and while on his holidays, just as he and the farmer's daughter are having sex and reaching their climax, a space shuttle crashes into the sea nearby, causing an enormous explosion. Needless to say, this puts paid to any hanky panky for the time being and both he and Kirsty find themselves up to their armpits in a plot (no pun intended) that threatens the existence of human life on earth. It is only later that they find that there are depths that some of the people in the government of the day have descended that make the Moral Majority seem like Sunday school teachers.

Excellent sf adventure.

MIDAS by Wolfgang Jeschke. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1987. 222pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This novel was first published in Germany. Except for the odd English sentence structure in several places, the reader will not find that this effects the pleasure of reading MIDAS.

MIDAS refers to the folk tale of King Midas with his never ending stream of gold. The Midas of this novel is a method of copying people and making duplicates. The original idea was to send a spaceship out to the stars, then beam copy of a human to the receiving apparatus on the ship and the copy would go on to explore. Unfortunately the copying ran into Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle - the duplicating process was unable to exactly copy the person, and the copy usually had only months to live before it broke down. The novel follows an astronaut as he finds out about the copying process and the criminal syndicate who uses it to copy scientists and sells them to the highest bidder. The novel is not as straight forward as the above sounds. An interesting story.

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE by Brian Stableford. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1982. 201pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

An earlier version of JOURNEY.. was published in DAW books in 1982 - this version has been extensively re-written.

When Mike Rousseau, a scavenger of a huge alien world named Asgard, just missed being the companion of a giant android, he counted himself lucky, especially when the man who was the giant's companion was tortured and killed by criminals. Mike was left with the man's notebook and soon found himself following in the giant's footsteps with a team of star-troopers, Earth's victorious troops against a now worldless alien race. The android and his companion had found a way down hundreds of levels in the artificial world, and the Starforce captain had the idea that the android was part of a last desperate plan to destroy all humankind.

The background of JOURNEY.. is well thought-out and executed - though artificial worlds of this type have been created before, the author keeps the reader guessing as what will happen next. When he first wrote it, it wasn't part of a series.

INVADERS FROM THE CENTRE by Brian Stableford. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1990. 256pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The sequel to the above. Rousseau is now rich and back on his way to earth on the starship that he originally went to Asgard on with his now dead partners. On emerging from the wormhole near Uranus he is hailed from a space-station and disembarks to relax after his long trip. Soon he finds himself in deep trouble again with a Starforce arresting him on charges of mutiny.

It is not long before he finds himself heading back to Asgard. It seems that the city that the group of galactic races had set up on the surface of Asgard had been overrun by forces from the depths. Since Rousseau was the only living man to have penetrated more than four levels down, the governments had grabbed him and forced him to help them. Soon he and the woman Starforce captain and her personal troops he had met previously were sneaking back into the city to find out as much as they could about the invaders.

However, things were not what they seemed...

THE TOYNBEE CONVECTOR by Ray Bradbury. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988. 277pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Despite the 1988 copyright date, these stories are from different years and different sources, though this is the first time they have been collected. In fact this is the first time I've read any of them.

The stories are typically Bradbury. They have that "old fashioned" flavour and are written in a straightforward literary style. They make good reading. The titles are: THE TOYNBEE CONVECTOR; TRAPDOOR; ON THE ORIENT, NORTH; ONE NIGHT IN YOUR LIFE; WEST OF OCTOBER; THE LAST CIRCUS; THE LAUREL AND HARDY LOVE AFFAIR; I SUPPOSE YOU ARE WONDERING WHY WE ARE HERE?; LAFAYETTE, FARWELL; BANSHEE; PROMISES, PROMISES; THE LOVE AFFAIR; ONE FOR HIS LORDSHIP, AND ONE FOR THE ROAD; AT MIDNIGHT, IN THE MONTH OF JUNE; BLESS ME, FOR I HAVE SINNED; BY THE NUMBERS; A TOUCH OF PETULANCE; LONG DIVISION; COME, AND BRING CONSTANCE!; JUNIOR; THE TOMBSTONE; THE THING AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS and COLONEL STONESTEEL'S GENUINE HOME-MADE TRULY EGYPTIAN MUMMY.

Some of them are American sacharin, though some are sharp vignettes that stick in the mind. Buy it yourself since it is now out in paperback.

ENDER'S GAME by Orson Scott Card. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1977/85. 357pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

The protagonist of this novel is a six year old boy. The story commences as he is having a "monitor" taken out of his head. The idea of the "monitor" is that the government could keep an eye on their merchandise. In a world where families are limited to two offspring, it is only on government orders that a third child is allowed. In Ender's case, it was an order. His brother was too ruthless for the job he was born for, and his sister too caring.

The novel itself follows in detail the career of Ender, from the monitor episode to when he fought the alien buggers. The details of the plot are carefully thought out - I don't think there is much dead wood, though there are several things that are not clear till the end of the novel which could have been made clearer earlier - whether the human starships in the Third Invasion were manned, for instance. I enjoyed reading this - it was engrossing and portrayed young children very well.

Recommended

RIMRUNNERS by C.J. Cherryh. NEL trade pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1989. 288pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

The last C.J. Cherryh sf I read had aliens as some of the main characters. In RIMRUNNERS all the characters are humans, and the author gets to show how good she is at characterisation.

Bet Yeager grew up in a merchantman starship. At 16 she left it for the Earth Fleet and joined the Marines. At the end of some twenty years the Fleet had been disowned by nearly everyone and had taken to piracy to get their supplies. Bet had been left behind on Pell Station and had managed to get a ship to another Station, where she became stranded. At last a "spook"

ship turned up - a spy ship that appeared to be under the command of one of the Fleet's enemies. She managed to sign on, but not before she had left two murders behind her on the Station. She soon found that shipboard life was possibly the Fire.. the first man in the crew she befriended turned out to be slightly crazy and a scapegoat, and most of the rest of Engineering, where she was assigned, were after her because of this.

RIMRUNNERS is one of the best sf novels to be released so far in 1990. Cherryh's writing abilities has grown and she certainly had me hooked. *Highly Recommended*.

SONGMASTER by Orson Scott Card. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1987. 377pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

SONGMASTER is a novel that the reader may have a little difficulty getting into at first, but as long as the basic premise is believed - that certain children with training and beautiful voices are also top notch in other ways - ie mature and intelligent - then the ideas in the rest of the novel follow.

Anset was kidnapped at about age three and the kidnapers must have panicked because the Songhouse did their tests and picked him up and took him back to train. He had one of the most powerful (and beautiful) voices ever in living memory and Esste thought that at last her long search for a Songbird for the Emperor Mikal was over. She was right, though it was long years before she delivered him to the Emperor. The two got on famously and the friendship (which the meeting developed into) lasted till Mikal was assassinated. Anset found himself bound to the new Emperor, but at last managed to get another job as the Manager of Earth. Then he learned just what the Songhouse had done to him... Excellent sf.

THE HORSE LORD; THE DEMON LORD; THE WARLORD'S DOMAIN and THE DRAGON LORD by Peter Morwood. Legend Pbs, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1983, 1984, 1986, 1989. 254, 304, 318 & 279pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This series is being issued in one go - so here is a good opportunity for Morwood fans to get the set. Three of the above novels have already been reviewed in THE MENTOR (#s 48, 56 & 64), but to save you going back:

The main character is Aldric Talvalin, whose father is killed in the first of the volumes and he, Aldric, goes on a quest. His most able enemy is Voord, a former Commander of the Secret Police and his friend and companion is Kyrin, who is equally good with a sword. As can be seen from the titles, the Lord's of these domains have the usual fantasy type beings around - horses, demons and dragons, as well as warriors of various persuasions.

Morwood is a writer who is while not up with the likes of Eddings, still tells a straightforward story and I think most fantasy reader will like the offerings in these four books.

DEMON LORD OF KARANDA by David Eddings. Bantam trade pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 378pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

I apparently made a mistake in the review section in TM 67 in saying that I previously reviewed the h/c edition of this book - I have the h/c edition, but I can't find where I reviewed in it TM. So here goes.

This volume is Book Three of the Malloreon, the sequel to the Belgariad series. In it, the five - Garian, Silk, Pol, Durnik and Belgarath, endeavour to escape from General Atesca to pursue the sorceress Zandramas who had stolen Garian's son. They have trouble with the evil Karands and pass through country that has been ravaged by Gromlins. On their way they have to dispatch a demon that is being born to a captive woman and even they are shocked by the evils committed on the hapless populace.

If you have read Eddings previous series and novels you will have some idea of what this novel is like. Eddings, is, at this time, one of the foremost fantasy writers in world. If you haven't

read any of his works, you are missing something.

DARK HAND OF MAGIC by Barabara Hambly. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 309pp. A\$9.95. On sale 20/7.

Barbara Hambly has written some quite well done fantasies - THE DARWATH TRILOGY; THE SILENT TOWER; THE LADIES OF MANADRIGYN; THE SILICON MAGE; DRAGONSBANE; THE WITCHES OF WENSHAR and IMMORTAL BLOOD.

DARK HAND... continues the adventures of Sun Wolf and Starhawk. A fairly evenly matched pair - Sun Wolf with his magical abilities and Starhawk with her sword. They fall in with some other villains, among them Dogsbreath and Firecat; all these characters showing that women in this fantasy can give as well as they can take. Hambly writes a solid prose and uses to good avail the detail she packs in the long paragraphs. Purcell, with his genius for trapping people - his geas on Sun Wolf nearly cost Star Wolf his life and that of Starhawk is a character in point.

This is a competently written sword and sorcery fantasy that makes a good read for the person who wants a couple of hours of well written entertainment.

SHADOWFANE by Janny Wurts. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988. 317pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

SHADOWFANE is the last of the Circle of Fire trilogy. In the previous two volumes - STORMWARDEN and KEEPER OF THE KEYS Ivainson Jaric fights against Lord JScait and Maelgrim, the brother of the Tael, the woman he loved.

All is not quite what it seems, however. What the reader may have though were demons are revealed to be quite another thing. The conflict that has raged over three novels comes to a conclusion in this one. The Dark-dreamer has control of many situations and immense power over many people, but even his power may be not up to that of Jaric as he struggles to realise his potential.

Janny Wurts has woven many strands together in this novel - whether it is a sf, fantasy or science fantasy novel is a question I will leave to the reader. I think you'll enjoy it.

SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD by Orson Scott Card. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1986. 415pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

The sequel to ENDER'S GAME, and a Hugo and Nebula winner.

It is three thousand years later and Ender, a physical 35, is a Speaker for the Dead - that is, he performs a speech about the dead person. It may be an eulogy or not, but it is the *truth* about that person as Ender knows it. On the planet Lusitania is a biological research station studying the Piggies, the only intelligent race found since Ender destroyed the Buggers three thousand years before. He is called to Speak for one of the scientists who had been killed by the Piggies, but since it takes twenty two years of planet time for him to reach Lusitania much has happened since then.

Card has obviously done careful research and the background is believable. The humans had been following strict guidelines not to let the Piggies obtain human knowledge: they didn't want another human/alien war on their hands. However the Piggies were at least as intelligent as the humans and they do find out things... Their biology was alien to the humans, though, and so was their morality - or so the humans thought. * Recommended *

THE DIAMOND THRONE by David Eddings. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1989. 396pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

I seem to have missed the hardcover release of this one. THE DIAMOND THRONE is

Book One of the Elenium and promises to be as good as the Belgariad and the Malloreon. I did detect some of Eddings mannerisms that, hopefully, he will cut out of some future works - phrases he tends to repeat and which are noticeable in these novels.

The Diamond Throne referred to was created by a sorceress and twelve knights to protect the sick queen Ehlana until some cure could be found for her. The spell she is under also slows down (I would think) her vital processes. Sparhawk, the Queen's champion, and other champions of the other three Church militants, are striving to find out just what is wrong with her and to find a cure. A high official of the Church is trying to put his own puppet on the throne and will stop at nothing to do so. Eddings writes smoothly and in vivid detail, and whenever I see a new book of his that has been released I know it will be well worth reading. He does have his (few) faults (para one above), but still this is a novel to get and enjoy. One thing though - make sure that if you buy any of his books, note they are part of a series, and be prepared to buy the others when they come out.

FALL OF THE WHITE SHIP AVATAR by Brian Daley. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1986. 368pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The third adventure of Alacarity Fitzhugh and Hobart Floyt. The pair of rascals have escaped earth and have landed on a shuttle on Luna. As always they are short of cash but manage to escape the customs and venture into a old unclaimed area, which is the pits as it were - the dregs of luna humanity live there, with a blowout imminent.

In this novel Alacarity and Hobart find themselves on a planet, Lebenstraum, where they had heard that an old member of the White Ship board had disappeared. They found the woman, or she found them, and the woman who was impersonating her. The trio (the former and latter) escaped, but found themselves halfway across the wild planet from the starship base. They set out with not much hope of reaching the safety of the port. The only way out was to somehow contact the remnants of the intelligent herbivores, which the Company running the planet was in the last acts of exterminating. Also in this book Alacarity makes it to his dream and also Heart, Hobart falls for the woman impersonating Hecate, and is forced to leave to go on with Alacarity. Can't say I really liked the ending - it would have been better to go off after the Precursors rather than go off on a tangent.

CHUNG KUO - THE MIDDLE KINGDOM by David Wingrove. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1989. 718pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

There aren't all that many good long new sf series. **CHUNG KUO - THE MIDDLE KINGDOM** is book one in this series. David Wingrove was the co-author with Brian Aldiss of **THE TRILLION YEAR SPREE**, which received good reviews. This one is * Recommended *.

The world pictured in **CHUNG KUO** is set some one hundred years in the future. The American Empire has fallen and the West is in decline. In fact, according to documented history, the West never existed as such. The Han rule the earth. From the first Emperor in the early 21st Century, who build the enormous continent spanning Cities he hoped to last 10,000 years and who tried to stop the wheel of change, to the present (2190) Seven who ruled over the continents - and the House, which, while it represented those under them, was never meant to be but a figurehead - the Edict was against Change, the novel. However, change was in the air, and powerful men - not Han - were grouped to ensure that it would come, even if the Seven said no.

I found the book engrossing and the background as given by Wingrove seemed well put together and cohesive.

THE BARSOOM PROJECT by Larry Niven & Steven Barnes. Pan trade pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1989. 337pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

This is the sequel to **DREAM PARK**, though I didn't find that out till I read the Afterword.

You don't have to read the first novel to enjoy this one.

The Dream Park is an enormous entertainment complex run along the lines of Disneyland, but in the mid 21st Century. They use Gaming and adventure games to entertain. One of the hopes of the company running the Park is to Terraform Mars, and while the Games are going on in one of the Domes, the other is showing the visiting business men and women the ideas behind the Barsoom Project, and how they can make money out of it. There are two plots - one follows the Security Officer as he tries to find out who smuggled in a rifle and live ammunition which ended up killing a man eight years before, and the other follows the Game itself in one of the Domes as the twelve Gamers play on. One of the Gamers is the woman who got the doctored gun and killed the man (by accident - she wasn't in on the plot).

I would say Niven wrote the Park sequences and Barnes the Gaming sequences - but still, an entertaining read.

THE DAY THE MARTIANS CAME by Frederik Pohl. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988. 300pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This is the second recent Pohl novel that I've reviewed that has used much the same format (the other was **THE COMING OF THE QUANTUM CATS**). Pohl introduces characters (about half a dozen) and does a chapter on each. Each character has a different story to tell, which is linked to the main plot idea (in this instance the discovery by an illfated US expedition to Mars of martians - the supply rocket crashed, and as a result about 250 of the astronauts died, leaving some 25 alive).

Polh is still using satire as one of the prime ideas in his novels - in this instance it is screenwriters, South East Asian politics, consultants, cult religions and UFO writers. I thought that it would have been better, as far as the actual Martians were concerned, to have had a straight-forward novel. As it is, **THE DAY THE MARTIANS CAME** is a bit disjointed, even though some of the separate characters do meet up in the end. The cover-up that were discovered in the construction of the crashed supply rocket is no doubt more worrying to US citizens than to those outside the US of A. A interesting read, though.

THE CYBORG AND THE SORCERERS by Lawrence Watt-Evans. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1982. 304pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

I didn't realise that I had reviewed this book before (it was in TM 43, back in April, 1983).

It is about a spaceship controlled by a computer and android (a human who has been "enhanced") who is sent out by the Old Earth Command to spy and do damage to the colonists who have revolted (apparently because of high taxes...). Though the war had ended six months after the starship departed earth and it is now some 300 years later, the only way to deactivate the computer is use its release code. Unfortunately earth had lost the war and no release code was forthcoming. The computer had control over their mission, and over the android: he had a thermite bomb in his head. If he tried to escape the computer would kill him.

When they landed on a planet with "gravitational anomalies" the android scouted out the place and found that the "anomalies" were men and women using magic. Apparently psi powers. Various killings and destructions went on, with the result that the computer and starship were drained of power and the android looked like he was set free. As usual, things were not quite what he thought... Straight forward and clearly written sf adventure. An easy read.

GLITTERSPIKE HALL by Mike Jefferies. Fontana pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. 413pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Book One of *The Heirs to Gnarlsmyre*, a fantasy series set in the City of Glor and the marshes of Gnarlsmyere. The lord of Glitterspike was getting on, but he had no son to follow him. He only had daughters. It was a barbaric world where women knew their place, and were kept

there. His daughters, though, had inherited his temper and hardness. His first born daughter, Marmimian, had these in abundance, but she had been brought up in the palace, and when she and one of her maids had to venture out into the boggy marsh she proved that she could fight as well as any man.

One of the people she ended up obtaining help from was a man from afar - Krann. Her father was powerful, and had ways of getting rid of people, including using the savage mudbeasts to erase opponents. He didn't think much of his daughters, either, and it was this in the end that did him in. He was old, (actually ancient) and his crony was also thus. In the end it was treachery that did him in - mainly his own.

PRINCE OF THE BLOOD by Raymond E. Feist. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1989. 396pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The Riftwar saga has many readers - this is a sequel set twenty years after those volumes.

PRINCE OF THE BLOOD follows the adventures of prince Boric, who is captured and attempts to escape and warn his brother Erlund of a plot to kill them both. He has a perilous journey back to the Empire of Kesh and the Empress who rules it. The seventy-five year old Empress is feeling the weight of her years and must make a decision soon as to who will succeed her. However there are traitors around - the kidnappers have shown it and the plot to assassinate the two princes would have shown to her also, but too late.

There is political intrigue, plenty of action with swords and blood and quite a lot of conversation, which is unusual for a fantasy that has a lot of action (the talking usually slows the action). I am sure that the fans of Feist and the Riftwar Saga will buy and like this sequel. Feist writes well and his characters are well fleshed. I think most fantasy readers who like good action adventure will find this very readable and enjoyable.

PHOBIA by Guy N. Smith. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1990. 252pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

As the title implies, this book has its main nemeses as phobias. At first, they were well-handled and you could feel the fear building up as the new family in 13 Schooner Street found themselves in a web of horrific dreams and they all feel in dread. Then the book seemed to lose its punch with the building phobias no longer the family members, but those of the former owner of the house.

For me, then, the book became more horrible than horrific as the former owner reached out to claim the family members in death. It would be nice to get even a feeling of the ordinary man winning out over the supernatural occasionally. The "Freddy" series and its ilk has a bit to answer for... or is it actually symptomatic of the way people think these days - pessimistically, with no chance against forces they see as them not having any control over.

With **PHOBIA**, the author had the chance of the hero/anti-hero making the last ultimate sacrifice and using the wife who had gotten away, to at least save the last of her children, or something a little more hopeful. Instead, the wife's character, which was well-fleshed out at the beginning of the book, was dropped out about half way through to flesh out the husband's character. The children had little of their own. For me, disappointing for the above reasons. However, it is well-written and typical of the genre at the present time. - Susan Clarke.

ENCOUNTERS by Barbara Erskine. Michael Joseph h/c, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. 360pp. A\$35. On sale now.

Goodness knows why they sent this one for review except that there were several stories with some supernatural characters which could have been fleshed out to make interesting longer stories such as **A STEP OUT OF TIME**.

Unfortunately, the rest are basically love stories - some humourous, some ironic, but all with the feeling of not been finished properly. For that reason alone, I would not care to re-read

this book except for those couple of exceptional stories in it. I like love stories, romances and the like but I do like them to be at least finished in the feeling that they give at the end. I'm a basic optimist - I like "happily ever after"s. - Susan Clarke.

CARRION COMFORT by Dan Simmons. Headline trade pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 690pp. A\$10.95 (h/c \$32.95). On sale now.

This behemoth of a book is well worth reading. I found it almost compulsive reading and several times almost missed my station because I was engrossed in it at the time. In fact, my biggest grouch with the book was the fact that I wanted to read it all in one sitting and there was no way I could get through a book this big in that time. I should hate to see the size it will translate into as a paperback.

This epic novel is perhaps horror/fantasy and is chilling in the way it melds real events and people within a speculative framework that reads as if this is what happened. It is one way of explaining the Holocaust... a really frightening way of explaining it. The thought that we would have no control over our lives, always being puppets to those whose "charisma" is a psychic ability to control, to make people do things that they would not normally do, should fill us with despair. In fact, this book took us through a gambit of strong emotions that left you shaken to the end.

However, despite the sting in the tail ending which seems to be obligatory to every horror book because no-one wants to let real people win in the end, the ending is optimistic, or if not quite optimistic, makes you feel the strength of the human will to defeat/overcome what seems to be insurmountable odds. Not lying down and letting it happen, fighting and winning in the end seems to be the message, what you are left with at the end of the book.

There were several things that worried me a little.... the fact that the puppeteers were white and male (except for two females who are glossed over by their male contemporaries), and the racism. - Susan Clarke.

THE KNIGHT & KNAVE OF SWORDS by Fritz Leiber. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1978-88. 304pp. A\$29.99. On sale now.

This novel is blurb'd as "the climax of the Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser Epic". I suppose it could be thus: the two are getting on into middle age, are sort of settling down with their current loves (though Fafhrd did go off with some cloud warriors and consorted with the captain and crew), and they end up with some of their children from previous loves either turning up or being discovered.

The novel itself is made up of various parts published previously - THE CURSE OF THE SMALLS AND THE STARS; THE MER SHE; SEA MAGIC and THE MOUSER GOES BELOW. They are all put together quite well, except for one glaring error I noted: at the beginning of the novel the Fafhrd has a steel hook on his wrist bitten off and on page 28 he mentions that he was having a new one of bronze made. Yet in the next chapter he is back having a steel one. Oh, well.

There is a much adventuring around with gods, wizards, witches, pubescent young girls, assassins, etc. This book does show that Fritz Leiber still has what it takes to write good fantasy.

THE LETTERS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN edited by Humphrey Carpenter, assisted by Christopher Tolkien. Unwin trade pb, dist. in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1981. 463pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

I don't have much doubt that the publication of this work in softcover (it was published in hardcover in 1981) will be good news for those readers who couldn't afford to purchase the hardcover.

The letters cover quite a time and subject range. The first letter, in October 1914, to his finance is quite short. There was a desert for letters in the period 1918 to 1937, and the last letter is one written shortly before he died in August 1973. Tolkien did write in that earlier period, but

most of the letters are lost. The ones published all show his breadth of interest and his command of the English language.

The volume has copious notes and an index (well required in a work of this kind) and there are many mentions of his literary works (this was one of the cornerstones of the letters published). Much had to be left out because of space, so maybe there may be a second volume. This book is a must for serious readers of Tolkien and those wishing to study his writings. Well worth buying.

BERSERKER BASE by Stephen Donaldson, Larry Niven, Fred Saberhagen, Poul Anderson, Roger Zelazny, Connie Willis & Edward Bryant. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1985. 316pp. A\$9.95. On sale 8/90.

This is a "collaboration" by the above authors. Fred Saberhagen has taken stories written by the other authors about the berserkers and published in the years 1983-4 in different magazines and, using bridging stories, made them into a novel.

The plot commences with the capture of a "badlife" human who is brought into a berserker base - a base in which the dominant computer brain is repairing its damaged warships as well as mining for minerals and metals. The berserker base computer has gathered a group of humans and alien Carman and is planning to use them when linked up with its mind reading machines as telepaths in order to find out how the ships it recently sent out are progressing in their missions of destruction. What the main character finds as his mind probes (aided by a Carman) is set out in the accompanying stories by the other authors.

Saberhagen has done a good job in joining the disparate stories together. They all read quite like a continuous story. There are sure to be fans of Saberhagen (I find the berserker stories quite entertaining) and this is a good addition to his novels and collections.

TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING by Robert Silverberg. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1989. 308pp. A\$9.95. On sale 8/90.

The main character of this new Silverberg novel is Gilgamesh, the King. As could be worked out from the title, the novel is set in the Afterworld, where one ends up when one is dead. The Afterworld is a large place, where everyone who has ever lived ends up. The first humans (hairy men, but who are intellectually human), and the humans who lived in the time of the Ice Age are there also.

Gilgamesh has been adventuring through the Afterworld for five thousand years or so, and over that long period his memories had been lost of some of the events since he first awoke there. He is searching for his "brother", Enkidu, whom he has lost for years. Gilgamesh's journeys take him across the bleak landscape of the Afterworld, and he meets some strange characters - Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard are but two. Silverberg has obviously used his research into his previous novel, **GILGAMESH THE KING** (reviewed in TM 56) for background material in **TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING**. There have been many novels set after death in a fantasy setting, and this one is worth reading, if a little mystic as to how anyone transfers over to the Land of the Living.

BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO by Harry Harrison. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1965. 160pp. A\$8.95. On sale 8/90.

This is the first time I've read **BILL**...; I missed it the first time around, but I remember the hoo-haa in the fanzines that surrounded its first release.

The novel is a spoof of sf space opera and Slan type super heroes, the type of heroes that **STAR WARS** typified, though the farm boy of **BILL**... was born of the soil, rather than the son of a knight. Bill is dragooned into the Star Troopers and finds himself in boot camp, with a sadistic sergeant, Deathwish Drang, the trainer with the glowing red eyes and the two inch fangs. At the end of their short training (about six weeks) they are all shipped out to the front line, along with all

the training officers; in short, all the personnel in the camp. Bill finds many adventures, both in space and on the Emperor's planet, to which he is flown to get the Purple Dart - an award given to him for saving the *Fanny Hill*, the spaceship he was being transported on as a fuselaeer (a crewman whose duty was to change the yard long blown fuses in the midst of battle).

This novel was from around the time of the first Stainless Steel Rat, and has much the same humour, but better polished. Fun reading.

DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH by Robert Silverberg. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1971. 189pp. A\$8.95. On sale 8/90.

DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH is one of Silverberg's later period novels that I have not read until this edition. The cover, by Jim Burns, is a good illustration of one of the scenes from the novel.

Holman's World was a planet ruled by one of Earth's Companies for quite a few years. Then the natives, through outside agencies, managed to get management of their own planet, and the Company moved on. Holman's World was unique in that two intelligent species shared the world - the Sulidoror and the Nildor. The Sulidoror are bipeds, but many times a human's size. The Nildor could be mistaken for elephants - they had that animal's bulk, had their general physiology, but had three tusks. And were intelligent.

After some eight years off the planet when he had evacuated with the majority of the Company personnel, Gundersen had returned on a pilgrimage of his own - to witness, if he could, the ceremony of Rebirth that the Nildor performed in the plateau of the mists. Many humans had ventured into the mist with that aim, but none had returned. What Gundersen found when at last he managed to penetrate the secrets of the plateau I'll leave to you to discover when you read this novel. Excellent reading.

LILITH : A SNAKE IN THE GRASS by Jack L. Chalker. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1981. 248pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

Volume one of the Four Lords of the Diamond, it appears that the reader should have no trouble reading each volume separately.

Lilith is one of four planets circling a far sun - the four planets are all oxygen/nitrogen worlds that could support human life, and the governing body of human space - the Confederacy - were elated to find them. And then, after the first party of scientists had landed, the truth came out - all four worlds were inhabited by what could be termed intelligent microbes - in fact in one way the whole of each planet was alive. On the innermost planet - Lilith - nothing manmade could survive without the powers that certain people developed over time. These powers - to control matter (through the organisms) - could seem like magic to the uninitiated.

The Confederacy had sent in one of their best agents to keep track of what was going on - and he had turncoated and ended up running the place. Just after this traces of inimicable aliens turned up, and the government again sent in an agent, but this time to kill the former agent and if possible take over and try to find out about the aliens. This looks like it could be a good sf adventure series.

RED PLANET by Robert Heinlein. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1949. 173pp. A\$8.95. On sale 8/90.

Another "old" novel that I've only just read for the first time. That these early Heinlein are still being reprinted goes to show how good an entertainer he was.

RED PLANET is set on Mars. A Mars that has canals girdling the planet. The Mars of this novel is desolate, all right, but the thin air necessitated masks that compress the air before it is breathed. There are native martians - who "share water", and colonists who are working on the terraforming of the wasteland, mainly by liberating oxygen. The plot follows two young men as

they set off to college. One, Jim, takes along a pet - a fuzzy martian in the shape of a ball. His friend Frank also goes along with him to start at the college, and since it *is* Mars they are both toting guns (there is a nasty Martian critter that is something like a water vampire and it must be killed before reaching its target. Its body and egg sac must also be destroyed).

When the boys get to the school, nearly halfway around the planet, they find that the Company has one of its stooges in charge, and the principal has gone on rotation. When the new head finds out about the alien pet, Willis, all hell breaks loose. Things worsen when the boys find that the Company is changing the conditions for the colonists without consulting them... Good sf adventure, for ages eight and up.

METROPOLIS by Fritz Lang. Faber & Faber pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1973. 130pp. A\$14.99. On sale now.

This is what the screenplay of the film METROPOLIS would have been like if it had not been lost. The "screenplay" was taken from the film and from the novel by Thea von Harbou. There are black and white stills throughout illustrating the story. Two articles by Paul M. Jensen and Siegfried Kraucauer go towards helping the reader understand the background of the film and its production.

The "screenplay" itself follows the film quite clearly and the stills illustrate and enhance the scenes if the reader has not seen the film recently (though this reader can easily recognise the scenes and can easily visualise them). The two articles point out the faults and the successes of the film and all in all this volume is a welcome addition to the history of sf films.

I have a standard 8 black and white version of the film, as well as the "recent" colourised and sound edition, so this book is good background material.

CLONE by Richard Cowper. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1972. 190pp. A\$8.95. On sale 8/90.

For an eighteen year old book, this novel is still at the forefront of humorous sf.

Alvin was one of four clones who had been bred from two people with outstanding eidetic memories. The four clones had that memory, but also other enhancements - they could create holographic images that could be recorded on camera and could (though the authorities didn't know this) communicate telepathically. When the doctor they had interviewing them saw the videotape taken of the interview, with her stark naked with two sets of breasts, she panicked and, seizing a spray which wiped the subject's memory for several minutes for each puff, stormed out and sprayed the four. Unfortunately she held the spray down, and they got several minutes dosage. Which wiped *all* their memories.

Alvin was later sent to a remote hydrological station and it was not till he was seduced by one of the female management staff that he was sent to the city, where his adventures really began. And when his memory returned... CLONE is first-rate humorous sf that will keep the reader chuckling throughout.

WATERDEEP by Richard Awlinson. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1989. 341pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

WATERDEEP is Book Three of The Avatar Trilogy, books one and two being SHADOWDALE and TANTRAS.

In this volume Midnight and her two companions, Adon and Kelemvor, are taking one of the Tablets of Fate back to safety. One of the two gods who had originally stolen the Tablets, Myrkul, is determined to get it back and is bending all his will to obtain it and kill the three. During the course of the book they pick up another rider, Cyric, as they ride on towards Waterdeep, the city of mages.

The action is well directed, and with the short sentences and short paragraphs the reader can

read quickly through to get to the action, which is usually not far ahead. The story is really a type of quest novel, though the party already have the object, but are trying to get it to safety, while the opposition are trying to get it off them, or in this case, using them to obtain another object before getting rid of the whole band.

THE HALFLING'S GEM by R.A. Salvatore. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 314pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

THE HALFLING'S GEM is also the third in a fantasy trilogy - this one is *The Icewind Dale Trilogy*. Both this novel and **WATERDEEP** were originally published in the USA by TSR as a **Forgotten Realms** fantasy book. The others in the series are **THE CRYSTAL SHARD** and **STREAMS OF SILVER**.

This novel, also, uses only short sentences and paragraphs - I wonder if this is a sign of action adventure or TSR's policy for their (presumably) adolescent readers? Anyway, in this book, Catti-brie is appearing more and more in Harkle Harpell's thoughts, not the least because she killed his female mage lover. Several story lines are brought to fruition here - the Assassin Artemis Entreni manages to secrete Regis the halfling, who he had kidnapped, south to Calimport and gave his charge into the tender hands of Pasha Pook. Regis's friends, Drizzt and Wulfgar fly to aid him escape, but it is a race against death.

The action of **THE HALFLING'S GEM** ranges along the Sword Coast, across deserts (the camels shown on the cover look to be a bit rough on the derrier) as well as fighting the usual invading monsters. For followers of *Forgotten Fantasy*.

BUFFALO GALS by Ursula Le Guin. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1987. 196pp. A\$29.95. On sale 8/90.

The sub-title of this anthology is "And Other Animal Presences". If you have read **ALWAYS COMING HOME** you will know the style which most of the works in this collection are written in. There are poems as well as short stories intermixed and all are about animals or vegetables (eg trees).

The works included are: **BUFFALO GALS**, **WON'T YOU COME OUT TONIGHT**; **THE BASALT**; **FLINTS**; **MT. ST. HELENS/OMPHALOS**; **MAZES**; **THE WIFE'S STORY**; **TORREY PINES RESERVE**; **LEWIS AND CLARK AND AFTER**; **WEST TEXAS**; **XMAS OVER**; **THE CROWN OF LAUREL**; "VASTER THAN EMPIRES AND MORE SLOW"; **WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE OAKS**; **FOR TED**; **FOUND POEM**; **TOTEM**; **WINTER DOWNS**; **THE MAN EATER**; **SLEEPING OUT**; **THE WHITE DONKEY**; **HORSE CAMP**; **TABBY LORENZO**; **BLACK LEONARD IN NEGATIVE SPACE**; **A CONVERSATION WITH A SILENCE**; **FOR LEONARD**, **DARKO AND BURTON WATSON**; "THE AUTHOR OF THE ACACIA SEEDS"; **SCHRODINGER'S CAT**; **THE AUTHOR OF THE ACACIA SEEDS AND OTHER EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF THEROLINGUISTICS**; **MAY'S LION**; **THE EIGHTH ELERGY**, **FROM THE DUINO ELEGIES OF R.M. RILKE** and **SHE UNNAMES THEM**. After reading through them I came to two conclusions: 1) read the Introductions *after* you read the works they are introducing - at least one Introduction spoilt the reading (**THE WIFE'S STORY** and **MAZES**), and 2) that Ursula is selling all she is writing, and in the case of some of the material in this volume, 'twoud have been better left unpublished.

THE SCIONS OF SHANNARA by Terry Brooks. Orbit trade pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1989. 389pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

This is Book One of *The Heritage of Shannara*, and is set in the same kingdom as a previous trilogy, **THE SWORD OF SHANNARA**; **THE ELFSTONES OF SHANNARA** and **THE WISHSONG OF SHANNARA**.

The story is set three centuries after **THE WISHSONG OF SHANNARA**. Par Ohmsford and his brother Coll and the Dark Uncle were the three that Allanon had spoken to the thousand year

old man about when he had showed him the vision of the land of Shannara being destroyed and the humans being ravaged apart by their own deeds and those of dark others. The message given to Par that Allanon wishes to speak to him about the scourge of the Shadowen brings him to Hadeshorn to seek the dead one.

SCIONS OF SHANNARA is written in an easy to understand style, and the setting-out of the printed pages lends itself to quick and easy reading that enables the reader, who likes being emersed in the novel, to get into it.

THE BEST OF MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY edited by Martin Greenberg. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1985. 397pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

The actual dates of these stories range from 1954 to 1980, and they all show a mature and sensitive style that runs throughout.

The stories in this collection are: CENTAURUS CHANGLING; THE CLIMBING WAVE; EXILES OF TOMORROW; DEATH BETWEEN THE STARS; BIRD OF PREY; THE WIND PEOPLE; THE WILD ONE; TREASON OF THE BLOOD; THE DAY OF THE BUTTERFLIES; HERO'S MOON; THE ENGINE; THE SECRET OF THE BLUE STAR; TO KEEP THE OATH; ELBOW ROOM and BLOOD WILL TELL. They range from straight sf, through to fantasy and horror. Marion Zimmer Bradley has been writing some forty years and only lately has her novels really caught on with the general public (the Darkover novels were a well known sf series, but THE MISTS OF AVALON really took off).

Actually, I was pleasantly surprised at just how *good* these stories are - I found the majority kept my interest all the way through. I had read some previously - THE WIND PEOPLE and (really long ago) THE DAY OF THE BUTTERFLIES, but I still enjoyed re-reading them. If you haven't read any of Marion's short stories, then this volume is a *Recommended*. Even if you have, then this is a welcome addition to her novels.

SALT by Gabrielle Lord. McPhee Gribble h/c, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 281pp. A\$29.99. On sale now.

This novel really came out of the blue. I don't remember seeing it listed anywhere. It is a science fiction novel set in Sydney in the year 2075. Things all over the world have gone to hell over the last hundred years and Australia has fought a civil war. With the hole in the ozone layer, bad soil management and political mismanagement, among other things, Australia has gone from a prime Agricultural exporter to a country blowing away with the Westerly coming out of the Centre. The countryside is a wasteland and Sydney only manages to survive because of the wall around it, shielding it from the abovementioned wind and the ruthlessness of the Western Security Headquarters staff in policing the law. The salt of the title is the rising salt level of the freshwater sources as civilisation collapses.

Sando is a Security pilot and all is going well for him until he tracks down the message his girlfriend's father has left and finds his brother murdered. I started off this novel with misgivings - how would an (apparent) mainstream author handle Oz sf. I need not have worried. This is good solid sf. There hasn't been a good sf novel out of the major Australian publishers since SONG OF GONDWANA, THE SEA AND SUMMER and before that Chandler's KELLY COUNTRY. Gabrielle Lord has previously had published a novel called FORTRESS. I may have to look it up.

Recommended, especially if you want to keep up on published Oz sf.

THE CASTLE by Franz Kafka. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1930. 298pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

Kafka is, of course, well known. One of his other novels, THE TRIAL, has been made into a movie, which did quite well.

THE CASTLE is the account of a traveller who arrives in a village and spends some time in

the Inn. While he is there drinking, an cousin of an official comes in and tells him that he needs a pass from the Count to be in the village. The man, "K", says good, he will get the pass. He is then told that it is impossible to see the Count, as he is a nobody. K informs the official that he is a Land Surveyor and he has been asked by the Castle, where the Count lives, to join his employment (there is some doubt that he actually is what he says, but the bureaucracy takes him at his word and passes him from one official to another. The whole country is run by the bureaucracy and K is told time and time again that they know what they are doing (at least is their own departments). K take the mistress of one of the higher officials and gets her on his side. However her employees don't think too much of this and place many obstacles in his path.

The novel is a satire on bureaucracy and the difficulties caused to it by one person; and how one person can cause troubles for the bureaucracy.

MAN FROM MUNDANIA by Piers Anthony. NEL trade pb (also in h/c), dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1989. 343pp incl glossary. A\$16.95. On sale now.

I was a little amazed by this novel. It is a genuinely funny novel from Piers Anthony, and not at all contrived. The humour is a little in-groupish (as the title will indicate) and I enjoyed it.

The novel is one of those set in the land of Zanth. Prince Dolph and Electra are still in the same place (she has finished Electra-plating the Heaven Cent), which sends Ivy, Prince Dolph's older sister, to Mundania, an un-Zanthish city more like one from this world. Grey Murphy is a citizen of that city and uses his computer (which calls itself Com-pewter) for various activities, including dating girls and playing dungeon-and-dragon like games. The two dislike each other so much that they pretend to like, nay, love each other and are always arguing in private but in public they are loving. This, of course, is but a ploy of the Magical Murphy. They both get themselves deeper involved with each other that the three (the computer and the two of them) make up a good time binding team.

As I said, I was surprised at how good this novel was - Anthony's usual novel usually has a more forced humour.

DRAGONSPELL by Katharine Kerr. Grafton pb (avail in h/c also), dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1990. 378pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The fourth in the Deverry series. This novel continues in the tradition of the others (reviewed above and in previous issues) as the characters continue in their battles against evil. The principal evil one is the Old One - a man well versed in ancient magic and whose power is almost absolute. His only problem is that he is almost at the end of his long life and the powers that backed him are apparently having second thoughts.

The writing is, as always, powerful and clear and the reader will find that she or he will enjoy this volume as much as the others in the series. There is an introduction wherein Katharine Kerr explains some of the reasoning behind her writing of the books, and the methodology she uses. She explains the non-linear timescale and goes into the kind of magic used. She gives the background of Western magic and how it grew from a stunted growth because of persecutions, and how the Asian magics became fused with their normal religious life of the people.

A companion volume to other good fantasy.

SHORT MENTIONS (Previously reviewed in THE MENTOR):

DRAGON PRINCE by Melanie Rawn. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. 574pp. A\$10.99. On sale now. The hardcover didn't come out all that long ago; twas reviewed several issues back. If you like dragon books, you'll want to read this one.

STORMWARDEN by Janny Wurts. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. 447pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. Originally reviewed in TM 64. A fantasy about a wizard and two children who he

had helped. The brother and sister met another youth in their travels, but a demon takes over the brother and sister and her friend must fight for the magic necklace. Well written fantasy.

HOTHOUSE by Brian Aldiss. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Muffin. 206pp. A\$8.95. On sale 8/90. The novel that helped hook me onto sf. The far future earth with vegetable growth run riot and humans only a fraction of their former size fighting for their lives. I think it is one of Aldiss's best novels to be introduced with.

TERRAPLANE by Jack Womack. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. 227pp. A\$9.95. On sale now. I reviewed the hardcover version of this novel in TM 64. It's a novel along the cyberpunk line, with a future that is an outgrowth of this timeframe, but raw and bloody. If you like cyberpunk (and I do) you should get this one.

DAWNSPELL- The Bristling Wood by Katharine Kerr. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Transworld. 461pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. The h/c edition was reviewed in TM 64. This story is "rooted in Celtic mythology". It is the third in the Deverry series and continues the adventures of Nevyn, Rhodry and Jill as they work their way in their attempt to regain their past.

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

COLLINS A&R:

THE MOTION OF LIGHT ON WATER - Samuel Delaney
HOW TO WRITE A BOOK & GET IT PUBLISHED - Susan

Curran

THE FIRE WORM - Ian Watson
BEYOND LIES THE WUBB - Philip K. Dick
PIONEERS - Phillip Mann
THE SOUTHERN SEA - Katharine Kerr
THE SOURCE - Brian Lumley

HODDER & STOUGHTON: THE MASK - Stuart Gordon

BRIDE OF THE SLIME MONSTER - Craig Gardner

REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS - B. Aaronovitch
THERE ARE DOORS - Gene Wolfe
MASTER OF SPACE - Robert Vardeman
THE MAZE IN THE MIRROR - Jack L Chalker
SWORD & SORCERESS V - Marion Zimmer Bradley
DR WHO - THE SPACE PIRATES - Robert Holmes
BACK TO THE FUTURE III

PENGUIN:

THE MUMMY - Anne Rice
ARMAGEDDON CRAZY - Mick Farren

HOUGHTON MIFFIN:

THE DARK DOOR - Kate Wilhelm
NARABEDLA LTD - Frederick Pohl
GOOD OMENS - Terry Pratchett & Neil Gaiman
THE DAYS OF PERKY PAT - Philip K. Dick
SUMMERTIME - Charles Sheffield

ALLEN & UNWIN:

FORESTS OF THE NIGHT - Tanith Lee
WARLORD OF HEAVEN - Adrian Cole

TRANSWORLD: CREATURE - John Saul (& in audio)
DIGGERS - Terry Pratchett
TRUCKERS - Terry Pratchett
THE WISHSTONE & THE WONDERWORKER - Hugh Cook

PAN: CIRCLE OF LIGHT - Martin Middleton
FACES OF FEAR - Douglas Winter
STAR SCROLL - Melanie Rawn
SPOCK'S WORLD - Diane Duane
THE STEERSWOMAN - Rosemary Kirstein
THE EMPIRE OF FEAR - Brian Stableford
MOONHEART - Charles de Lint

SEPTEMBER RELEASES:

TRANSWORLD: JITTERBUG PERFUME - Tom Robins
EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE BLUES - Tom Robins
JOHN GLEN: SPACE PILOT

COLLINS/A&R: DRAGONSPELL: THE SOUTHERN SEA - Katharine Kerr

OCTOBER RELEASES:

NEW ERA: MISSION EARTH Vol 5 : FRONTIERS OF FEAR - L Ron
Hubbard

ALLEN & UNWIN: THE HISTORY OF THE LORD OF THE RINGS - J.R.R.
Tolkien
BILBO'S LAST SONG - J.R.R. Tolkien
SADAR'S KEEP - Midori Snyder



THE BLUE MOUNTAINS SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

September 1990 Meeting

WINE & CHEESE NIGHT!

The September 1990 meeting of the BMSFG, to be held on Friday night, September 7th, will be Wine & Cheese night. It will commence at 7.30 pm at the home of John and Diane Fox, 9 Anderson Ave, Bullaburra. If you want directions, please phone them on (047) 59.2187. This meeting will be an informal (aren't they all?) meeting and will be conducted around viewing and discussing sf movies. Bring a bottle of wine, or cheese or savouries.

Such meetings usually end about 10.30 pm and readers with cars can usually drop others off on the highway near their homes, as long as they are between Katoomba and Blaxland. If you read sf, but have never been to a meeting, don't worry - the sf readers who attend are all ages and occupations.