

THE MENTOR 73



Australian Science Fiction

THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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Cover Painting by Peggy Ranson.

Back Cover by Jozef Szekeres

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Steve Fox p.
Anne Stewart p.13
Andrey Karapetyan p.4

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The Editorial Slant

Well, here we have another issue that 'just grew'. There is the last half of my Russian trip report, and some pieces I picked up at Volgacon - specifically the material from Andrei K. I had a talk with him at a room party and asked him could he send me a resume for the Portfolio. So far I haven't received it, so I am publishing the Portfolio anyway.

This issue has a colour cover, this time from a Hugo nominee - Peggy Ranson. Readers of TM and other fanzines have seen her B&W works, but not her colour material. So here it is. Other artists have showed me colour works, including Jozef Szekeres, but the subject matter didn't suit TM. You may see some of their colour work in future issues.

Also in this issue is an article by Andrew Darlington. He has also sent me some other pieces dealing with the fifties and sixties period, so you will also be seeing those. As noted on the cover of TM, this fanzine publishes 'Australian Science Fiction', and I intent to stick to publishing only Australian SF. However I am open for poetry and articles from overseas, and welcome any such submissions. I am aiming to publish new (previously unpublished) material, so please don't send material that has already been published in English.

THE MENTOR is costing me about \$5 an issue to print and post surface mail, so I am constantly removing people from the mailing list for failure to respond to past issues. If you haven't sent a LoC or other contribution for several issues, this could be your last issue.

The trip to Russia for interested writers and publishers is still on. Write as soon as possible if you are at all interested in going. Of course I will keep an eye on the political situation. All in all this looks like an interesting year coming up. - Ron.

Contributions must be on an Prodos Apple II or IBM ascii file (DD or HD) or typed, single or double spaced, preferably a good photocopy (and if you want it returned, please *type* your name and address! Contributions are not paid; however they receive a free copy of the issue their contribution is in, and any future issue containing comments on their contribution.

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ARISE, YOU SOFT MACHINES

by Brent Lillie

THERE IS a clipping, faded and torn, displayed in a plain, wooden frame on the wall above the project director's desk. Taken from the Daily Telegraph late last century, it reads as follows:

"PROOF OF GOD" FROM SCIENTISTS
by Jeremy Scott

Science may have proved that God exists, according to a top international physicist now visiting Sydney.

Professor John Hagelin said yesterday that physicists had discovered what Einstein looked for but never found - the unified field, a level of nature which makes nuclear energy look like a match compared to the sun.

And the unified field appears to have consciousness and intelligence, he said.

Professor Hagelin, an American recognised as one of the world's leading theoretical physicists, is among a group of scientists meeting at a symposium at Sydney University to discuss the unified field.

INTERPRETATION

According to physicists, the unified field links all the laws of nature in one underlying field of infinite, unmanifested energy out of which everything in the universe comes.

Professor Hagelin said it represents "the most consciously intelligent field in nature."

He agreed that many people might interpret that as God.

"Some people could interpret it that way, but if I say yes or no to that, I would be

putting myself in the position of a religious expert."

* * *

FIELD DAY, September 22, 2097
Tanami Desert, Australia. 300km North of Alice Springs

The project director, one Edward L Hanover, leaned back in his plush leather chair and placed his arms behind his head. He wore an immaculate dark grey zipsuit, with a single, red stripe on one sleeve, denoting his importance.

'Yep, today's the day,' he announced around his fat cigar. 'At exactly 1pm, we tap the unified field!'

We both gazed out the bunker window at the rods. They were aligned in symmetrical rows across the plain - thousands of them - each three kilometres high. A forest of gaunt metal spires that seemed to rise up and pierce holes in the firmament, dancing and shaking and shimmering in the rolling waves of hot desert air.

I knew I should have been elated. This was, after all, the culmination of twenty years hard work - but all I could muster was a dull sense of foreboding.

'Just think, Sam,' Hanover continued, gesturing expansively. 'Power - limitless, clean power. Enough to keep the world running until the end of time. It's mind-boggling. In a couple of minutes, every factory, every home on earth will be using energy supplied by the unified field.'

My sense of foreboding intensified.

I will tell you why.

Ten years ago, operations were centred in Barrow Creek, a small settlement approximately seventy kilometres east of the present generation site. One day, I looked up from my desk to see an old aboriginal man standing at the doorway of the metal box we called a lab. He hovered about on the top step mistrustfully, just beyond the access membrane, the thin band of molecules that prevented the lab's chilled air from escaping into a harsh and unforgiving outside world.

I clearly recall my sense of surprise, not only at his sudden appearance, but also at the very fact that he was there at all: the local aborigines had always maintained a healthy distance between themselves and the research site. But, there he stood, lending his own special brand of permanence to my temporary surrounds.

His blue flannelette shirt was hanging loosely outside his pants, and a hat, grubby and sweat-stained, sat high on a furrowed brow that was as black as a desert shadow. For a long time he stared at me with his nicotine-coloured eyes.

'You the fella buildin' them things in the desert?' he finally muttered through his dirty grey beard.

'I'm a member of the project team,' I replied, not wishing to take all the credit.

Casting an eye out toward the wastes, he took a meditative drag on the sorry-looking roll-your-own scissored between his crooked fingers. Tendrils of smoke trickled from his nostrils, making me think of burnt-out circuits.

'We been wantin' to know why you're doin' it,' he stated flatly. I asked him who "we" were. 'The tribe. My tribe. We been wonderin' why you're doin' it.' The eyes strayed back into the lab, to roam over the fixtures like feral cats.

I'd never had any trouble extolling the merits of the project before, but on that particular occasion, I found myself struggling.

'For power,' I said, somewhat defensively. 'To power the world - with the unified field.'

The old man chuckled, then dropped his cigarette on the step and ground it out with a bare heel.

'Woulda thought you had all the power you need by now!' He looked up at me. 'You took her coal, her oil, n'uranium. Now you're gonna take the one thing that makes her what she is.' Shaking his grizzled head, he regarded his dusty, ill-used feet. 'You do that, boss, n'she ain't gonna like it a bit. Not one, little bit!' Then, he turned, and left like a breathy sigh.

'Wait!' I cried, rising to my feet, but it was too late, the old man was gone.

As I lowered myself slowly back into the chair, part of me tore away, like the debris from a dying planet, and went spinning into the vacuum he'd created. Off it went, into the scorching, arid wastes, never to return. In the silence, I could hear the wind whistling through the tiny gaps in the aluminium sheeting - the constant wind that brings the red dust that keeps settling on our computers and books and charts: the wind that could bury us alive if we gave it half a chance.

I sat for what seemed an age, listening to the wind and thinking of the old man, trying to find answers to his question - trying to justify my *presence*, for God's sake! Now, ten years on, it is as though he is standing at the doorway still, patiently awaiting my reply.

Rumour has it he wandered off into the desert and died, but who can really say? If he did, he would have left very little of himself behind, for I think he was a man of few possessions. But he left *me* with a

memory, and, like a slow poison, it trickles through my veins.

I have tied a thousand tourniquets over the years, to try and stem its flow, and I have felt my enthusiasm for the project wither, then dry up and blow away like the rare, desert flowers that follow the infrequent rains.

It took me a long, long time to realise the venom was the voice of my conscience, forever asking *why*! And at night, in the Tarpit - those dark, lonely hours before dawn - it speaks in gruffly unforgiving tones; and stares out at me with yellow, unblinking eyes.

Hanover pushed a button on the intercom - it was his direct line to the control room

'You there, Decker?'

'Yes, Mr Hanover,' a voice crackled.

'This is it, Decker! Activate th...'

'Don't,' I said.

Hanover glanced up sharply. 'What...? Yeah, yeah, hold on Decker!... What did you say, Sam?'

I found myself staring at the knot of Hanover's tie. It was a beautiful knot: a *perfect* knot - smooth and shiny, and grey as an oyster. And, like an oyster poor, sad, mercury-laden oyster, it was bloated, ripe with poison and death. My mouth went dry. I desperately needed a drink... perhaps, later, I would have a drink.

Hanover's finger was still on the button. He was watching me carefully. The moment seemed frozen. Hugely important.

'It doesn't matter,' I whispered.

'Okay. Decker?'

He paused.

Time stretched out to the distant horizon like a rubber band. Around the earth thrice, it went, then out into space - past Neptune, past Pluto, entwining itself around galaxies. Time was a diver, suspended at the very apex of his curve; it was the soft click the front door made when my wife left me, two years ago. Time was that magic moment when the smell of a Christmas tree coaxed the child out of the man: it was everything, and nothing. Time was being Lord of the Vacuum. But then Hanover spoke and Time snapped back, dragging stars in its wake, and stung me on the cheek.

'Decker?' he said. 'Activate the rods!'

I closed my eyes. But when I opened them again, nothing had changed. Life continued to drone on relentlessly beneath a merciless steel-blue sky. Hanover must have sensed my relief and shot me an accusing glare. His fingers scabbled for the intercom.

'Decker! What's happening?'

Decker said: 'Nothing.' I knew he was pushing buttons, calling on his gods, which were satellites. 'The rods, the field... it's not working, Mr Hanover!'

Wrong Decker, I silently chided. Get your nose out of your computer and look! Something is *definitely* happening

The sky above the rods began to boil. A wind flowed down from the ranges and caressed the desert out of its coma. The burnt scrub shivered, dust devils weaved drunkenly between the bases of the spires like phantom square-dancers.

Hanover swung around in his chair, his pudgy hands vices, locked around its chromium arms. The fat cigar tumbles from his trembling lips, onto his lap, and a small fire broke out in the folds of his prosperous trousers.

The ground cracked and a hand burst through the hard-baked soil. An aboriginal man with a long, grey beard emerged and struggled upright until he stood erect on the darkening plain. You old devil, I thought. Here I was, wondering where you'd got to all these years, and you've been right underneath my feet. But then I saw it wasn't the old man, although it looked very much like him. More aborigines appeared: saggy-breasted women, children, young warriors daubed with ochre paint - all naked - all staring expectantly at the sky with magnificent, time-worn faces.

'What's going on, Sam?' Hanover managed to gasp out. 'What in God's name is happening?'

The world trembled. I was vaguely aware of a sound. Soft, crumbling, giggling whispers - an awakening. Bodies, stirring in their graves: the faint, skeletal scrabble of countless hands, clawing their way up through moist earth.

'Don't you see what you've done, Ed?' I was mesmerised by the myriad dark forms. The rolling clouds were like silken fingers. They plucked at the stark, hard reality of the rods, creating a symphony of echoes, of mind-twisting harmonics. 'The old man was right! The earth is God! It could never power *our* machines, it was never meant to... it's... it's resurrecting its *own* machines! The ones with pumps and valves and miles of complex plumbing. The ones with brains greater than any computer. *The machines that walk on two legs!*'

'Who was right? Old man...? *What* old man... Sam...?'

Hanover's ravings were cut short by a lightning flash that leapt from the top of one spire to another. The aborigines began to chant, quietly at first, then louder, and louder - until their song became a roar that reached into the bunker and took hold of my senses.

'Ed, can you *see*?' I cupped my hands over my ears. The desert split and the rods began to fall, one by one. 'We've manifested *God!*' I threw my head back and tried to scream above the maelstrom.

'The soft machines are rising, Ed! *This is Judgement Day!*'

THE END



The Rest Of The Trip

by Ron Clarke

I woke up at 8 am on Monday, the 16th September, 1991 in Igor and Masha Toloconnocou's flat and had a shower. After a breakfast of porridge and bread, jam and tea, Igor and I left for Volgograd city at 9.30 am. The train was full and the journey took one hour twenty minutes. We got off at Volgograd Central station and walked to the Central Post Office, where Igor picked up his mail. We then went to the Aeroflot office where Igor ordered the air tickets for Minsk and he paid for his. We continued walking on to the Intourist hotel - a block or two, where I paid for my ticket. Igor's ticket cost him 70 roubles (about US\$2), and mine cost US\$110. (*An aside:* I paid for mine by Mastercard as I didn't want to spend the US cash I had - I still had to pay for my ticket when I got back. When I got back to Australia and eventually got my bill it showed that the ticket cost was 67 *Roubles* - it showed both Roubles [67] and US dollars [110] on my receipt - and Mastercard converted the Roubles to Aust. dollars, which came to A\$48. Thus, instead of paying US\$110 cash, I paid A\$48 when I got back home. I suppose the moral is to pay credit card when in the (old) USSR.) The flight would be some 1300 kilometres, while the rail journey from Moscow had been some 800 km.

With these jobs out of the way we had a snack lunch at the Snack Bar in the basement of the former Central Committee offices - some of which were now converted to Council offices. Many of the doors were still sealed with paper seals. It was only a very small area - about 10 x 5 metres and there were only three people other than Igor and I there.

After lunch we walked around the city and I bought some post cards, visited the post office again for me to send the post cards, then to a souvenir shop, where we bought two bird whistles, on to a bazaar where we bought a hand-knitted scarf that looked to be cashmere off a peasant woman, then had a drink and biscuits in a side-walk kiosk and visited a stamp shop.

It was getting late in the day, and Igor wanted to visit his parents for dinner. We caught a bus and there was a half hour journey. After getting off the bus we walked past an air-force academy - with some old Migs on the quadrangle - and up the several flights of

stairs to the flat. Igor's father was working, so his mother had fixed us up a nice home-cooked meal of chicken, cold veges, devon, crayfish bits, and coffee. Very filling and satisfying. We sat talking about the various education systems in our countries - Mrs Toloconnocou worked in a high school. We then went back to Igor's flat, where, after talking for some hours, Masha brought out supper. She was very tired, having been cooking and preserving veges all day, for the coming winter.

After changing our watches to Moscow time, I went to bed at 9.30 pm (11.30 pm Volgograd) to get some sleep so as to be up at 6 am to catch the flight to Minsk.

I woke at 5 am, had a shower and woke Igor at 5.30 - his alarm hadn't gone off. He said Masha had been up till 3 am boiling and bottling the food.

Igor and I left the flat at 6.15 am and caught a train to the local TV station, which was on the same hill as the Defending Motherland memorial, to pick up some video tapes of Volgacon and other cons. After waiting while the technician finished cross-taping them, we got a lift in a car to the Aeroflot building and caught an Express bus to the airport, where we booked ourselves in at the old Airport building - now a terminal for foreigners to book in - where Igor said he was my translator and thus contrived to stay with me. We then walked to the new terminal where I went to the toilet. It cost 25 kopeks. It was clean, but no toilet paper. We also had a drink and some pastries while we were waiting.

The plane was due to depart at 11.15 am. We walked back to the old building where we waited until the women behind the counter called us, then followed her back to the old hall! We got in an airport passenger trailer bus along with an Asian man, after having the bags x-rayed, and joined the last of the Russians queuing at the base of the plane's steps. We got one of the last seats, near the front door, and, after stowing my bag and knees under the folding table, the 1.5 hour flight to the intermediate airport began. The plane was a three engine jet, and the pilot drove it like a bus while it was on the ground, taking corners fast. It was obvious from

the passenger's conduct that they treated it like a bus ride themselves - there were lots of bags, mostly string, and the adults held babies and children in their laps. Most didn't put on their safety belts.

The only thing served on the flight was lemonade.

We had a rest stop of an hour at the intermediate airport, where Igor and I had some cold meat rissole, bread and ice-cream before we boarded again after standing in a bare waiting room and getting checked again for metal objects.

The trip to Minsk was in the same plane and took another 1.5 hours. When we were served the drink refreshment, Igor spilled his fizzy drink onto the table and over the shirt of the young woman opposite. Igor offered his handkerchief, but she waved it off, laughing.

We disembarked at 3 pm at Minsk airport. There was a long line-up at the bus stop, and no busses, so we caught a taxi for the 35 km to Minsk Central station with an Asiatic looking man as third passenger. The trip cost us 20 roubles - Igor had thought it would cost about 50. Later Igor said the fare was actually 25 roubles, but the driver was going to charge the other passenger the extra 5. (*Another aside:* the exchange rate at this time was 33 roubles to the US dollar. There are 100 kopeks to the rouble.)

It took us about 30 minutes in the queue to get a bus ticket to the hotel where Eridan had a guest house permanently booked at a hotel outside of Minsk. The 35 km trip took us about forty-five minutes.

The hotel is situated in a quiet pine forest. The woman at the front desk gave us a key she said was for the guest house, but after three tries with three keys, we gave up, and she gave us a room in the main hotel for the interim. After unpacking, we had dinner in the hotel restaurant at 7 pm, then went to our room and I had a shower and then prepared for bed.

At about 8 pm the phone rang - representatives of Eridan had arrived in their guest house. We went down to it and had supper - caviar, salmon, tomatoes, small sardines, apples and coffee. Shortly after we arrived two others arrived, a Director of Eridan and his driver. We all went down to the Bath House which was for hotel guests, where we undressed and went into the sauna. It was my first time in a sauna and the Publishing-Director, Nick Orekhov, said that the dry heat would help my bronchitis. So would the dip in the cold-water pool later...

After the sauna we sat in a small room, wrapped in sheets, and talked of SF publishing and had tea and a little beer. Later we had a dry sauna and went back to the guest house where we talked until about 2 am. Nick said that there would be a professionally-run Publisher's conference to be held in Minsk in May, 1992 and asked me to find out if any Australian SF writers or publishers would like to attend. He later left for Minsk and Igor and I returned to our room and to bed.

Because of all the coffee... and brandy... I had drunk I couldn't sleep. My head was throbbing and my cough, which had departed in the sauna, seemed to be back.

I got up at 7.30 am, tidied up and showered. It was now Wednesday. Igor and I went to breakfast at 9 am and we had rice, bread and a meat dish I didn't have as I wasn't hungry, and tea. We returned to the room and I emptied most of the heavy things from my small travel bag as we were planning to go to Minsk by bus for the day.

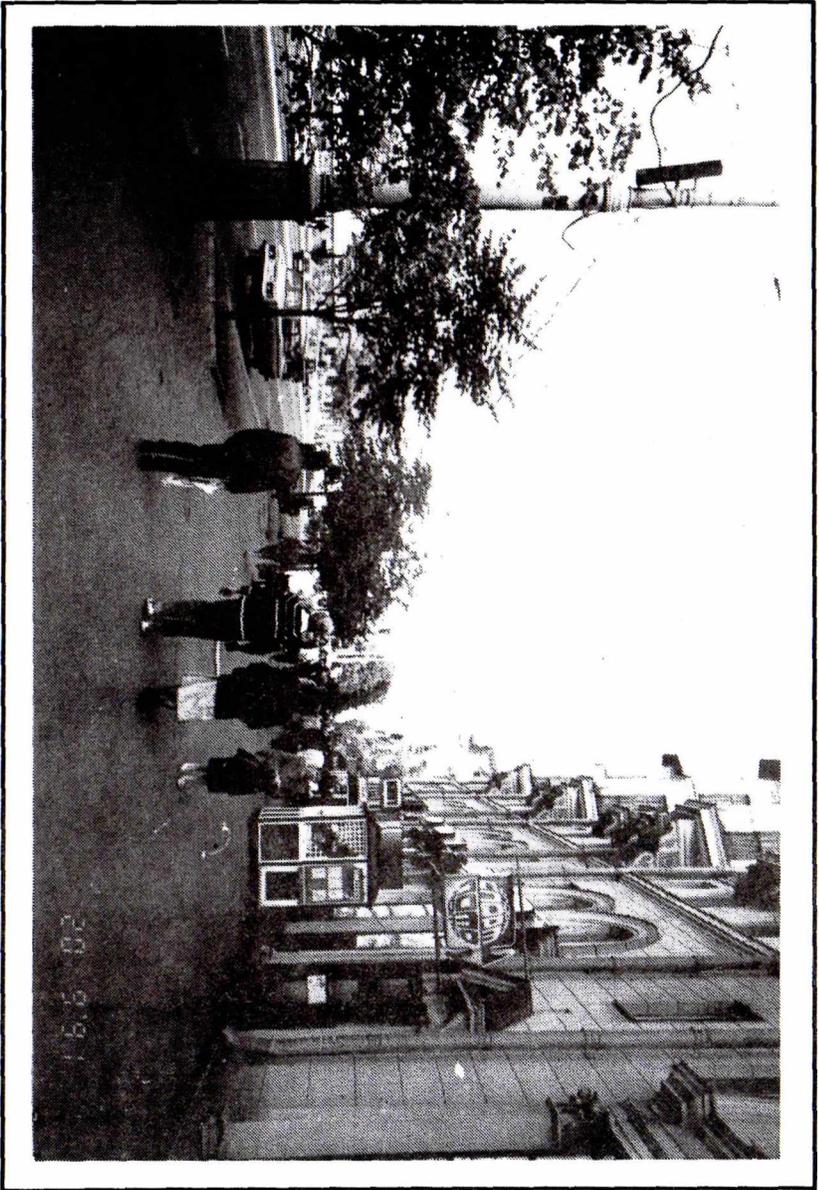
As we were standing waiting for the bus, the Eridan driver walked up - his boss had returned at 4 am and spent the night and was now returning to Minsk. Would we like a ride?. We all climbed in the small car and drove to the Arena SF newspaper office where I met the three women staff and had some grapes. My head was nearly spinning with tiredness. Shortly, two women, Zoya Vasilyevna and Natasha Borisovna, the Director and Editor from the BSSR State tv station arrived to do an interview with me. We waited for about an hour for the camera crew, then walked to the park where I was interviewed about Australian SF by one of the women from Arena and videotaped by BSSR. I thought this a bit strange - the tv people used a local for the interview - not one of their own people.

Back to the Arena office, then a walk down the main thoroughfare of Minsk to buy some pastries to eat. All the restaurants were either closed or had lines of patrons waiting. After "lunch" we again met Irene Lef from Eridan who took us to the flat of Evgeniy Drozd, of the Molodaya Gwandiya publishing house. The same tv crew who interviewed me turned up and interviewed Evgeniy and a newspaper photographer also turned up and took photos.

After his interview, a relieved Evgeniy served a filling and tasty afternoon tea and we all discussed the different publishing industries in Australia and the USSR. Zoya, the TV director, also mentioned the publisher's conference and she asked me to see some Australia tv stations about showing a pilot show on a Russian painter. After the refreshments we walked with Evgeniy and Irene to a souvenir shop, which didn't have much stock, then got a taxi to Eridan's new office to meet Nick. No-one was there. We caught another taxi the 35 km out to the hotel, which cost 45 roubles this time. After an 8 pm dinner I went to bed to catch up on some sleep and Irene and Igor went to the guest house to talk to Nick and the rest about business.

When I awoke the following morning I had a quick wash and Igor put some 2-day mustard plasters on my shoulders and calves (which we had purchased in Minsk from a script given me by the Atom doctor) and we then had a breakfast of yogurt, bread, cheese and tea. There was also a meat dish with rice I wasn't up to eating.

We picked up Irene and caught the hotel bus into Minsk. The three of us walked around the city and bought some souvenirs. We decided to have lunch, and



THE MAIN STREET OF MINSK



THE TOLOCONNICOUSS - MASHA, IGOR with MARIA on lap

tried four restaurants - all there were, and all were full. Eventually we gained entrance to one which was between two second-hand bookshops that we had visited that morning. The food was great - ham and rice, a beautiful thick mushroom soup, pork and flat potato slices (a special Russian dish), stuffed Polish tomatoes and tea. Very filling. A treat for me and for the two Russians also, they said.

We were supposed to be meeting Eric Sur, also of Eridan who was the Editor-in-Chief of the SF magazine MEGA, but he hadn't been in his room at the local school when we had phoned. At about 3.30 pm we finished lunch, and walked to the school. Irene went home after making sure Eric was there. Eric, Igor and I talked about getting Australian authors published in the USSR, specifically in MEGA. At about 5 pm Igor and I took a bus to Eridan's office and met Nick and Irene again. We talked for about thirty minutes then went back to the hotel, after dropping Irene off to her flat. We arrived at the hotel at 7.45 pm and had dinner.

I went back to our room after getting my travel bag and my tablets off Igor, and left them to talk.

Again I didn't get much sleep. On Friday morning we got a lift in the Eridan car to Eric Sur's, after I had had a small breakfast and packed our bags. We dropped off our bags at Eric's school office and, leaving Igor to do some business, Eric and I went to Eridan's office. One of the women from the Area office, Victoria Chaiko took me shopping and to get something to eat. I bought some paintings from street artists and we had a quick snack in a pastry shop. We returned to the Arena office and I was taken by Svetlana Chshiolowskaja, another of the women there, to have lunch at her mother's flat. It was cheese on bread and a cold beetroot soup sent from a neighbour. The beetroot soup was another Russian dish, and tasted *wonderful*.

When we returned from lunch, Igor arrived and he, Victoria and I again went shopping. We bought several gifts for me to take back to Australia. We left Victoria to return home, and caught a bus to some older friends of Igor's. They were two couples and they plied us with good food, cognac and conversation. We eventually left, having obtained a lift by a friend of theirs to the Central station for our Moscow train, which left at 11 pm. We shared our train sleeping compartment with an elderly Russian and his wife.

For the third night running I didn't get much sleep - I was incredibly tired all the following morning and when we arrived in Moscow we caught the Metro and then Igor took me and our bags on a long walk to the flat of the couple who had been minding my other large suitcase. We left our bags there and toured Moscow, looking at the department stores, Red Square, and several other sights before going back to pick up our bags. Hefting them, we caught the Metro out to the flat on the outskirts of Moscow where we would spend the night.

It had been an overcast day with some drizzle; still we *did* see a lot of Moscow, as my tired feet attested.

The people we stayed with that last night were a young couple and their teenaged daughter. The husband was a movie director who had just finished an SF spoof. He had to fly to St. Petersburg that night and, after stuffing Igor and I with excellent food, he departed. After talking with his wife and daughter, I went off to bed, taking a Mersyndol to help me sleep. It worked.

I awoke on Sunday the 22nd of September to the sound of the ever-present crows. It was drizzling outside. I had a slightly stuffed head but hoped that, after having something to eat I would feel better. I had taken a multi-vitamin tablet the night before, along with the Mersyndol and felt a little more energetic. Igor asked me if I wanted to go sightseeing again, but the bleak weather and my head put me off. I thanked him and after he had left, went back to bed.

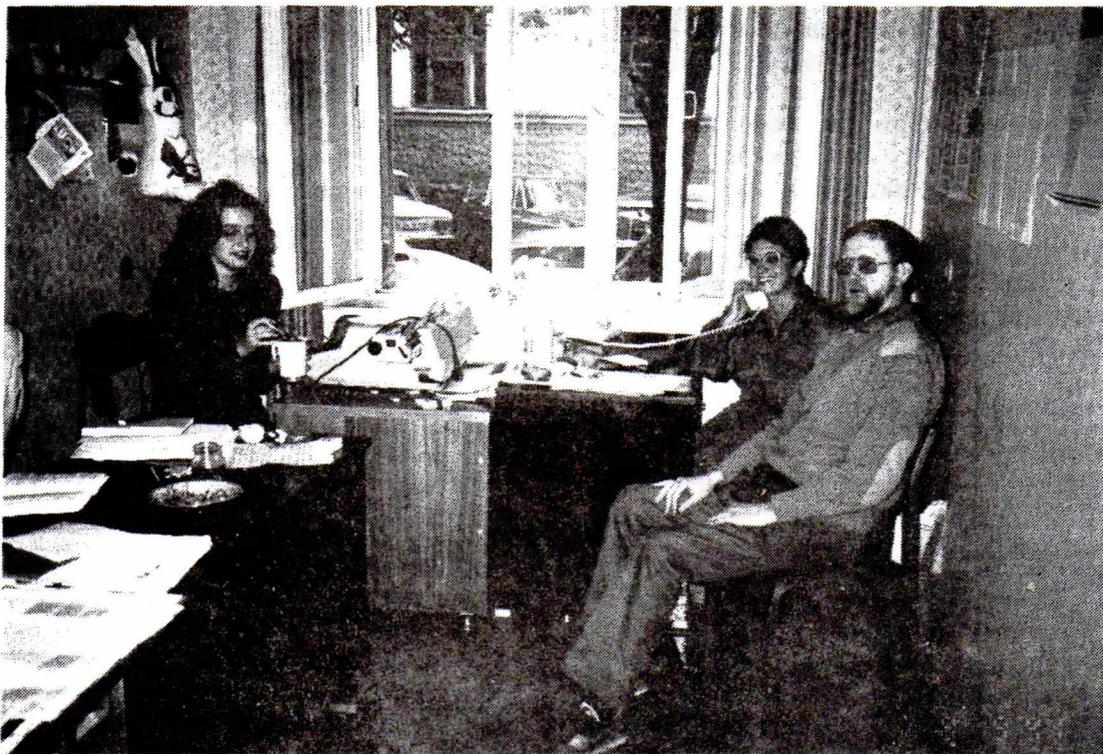
Igor returned at 3 pm. At 5 pm the taxi arrived to take us to Moscow International airport. Before leaving we thanked the wife and her daughter for letting us stay. Arriving at the Departure Lounge Igor and I made sure that I was booked on the right plane. After about thirty minutes I bid farewell to Igor and thanked him for all his trouble looking after me after Volgacon. I waited another 2.5 hours before the Customs call, then boarded the plane.

There were three stops before Sydney - at Tashkabut, Delhi and Singapore. We spent an hour at Tashkabut, an Arab airport city, then flew on through the night to Delhi. We arrived there at 10.30 am, and had a free soft drink at the airport lounge. We got on board the Aeroflot plane and sat... The engines started up, then were turned off. Then started up, then were turned off. Then there was an announcement. There were some "technical difficulties"... We got off the plane and sat in the transit lounge. Over the next 12 hours in the lounge we were given several snacks and one chicken meal of self serve chicken and Indian veges. Sprawled on one of the chairs I managed to get several hours sleep.

We again boarded the plane and took off at 10.30 pm for Singapore, having a good meal on the way. We arrived at Singapore's Changi airport at 3.30 am in the early morning of Tuesday - apparently they couldn't close the plane's cargo door at Delhi. We waited another 2 hours for a hotel bus to take us to the Sea View hotel where Aeroflot had booked us.

When we opened the door of our hotel room there were two business cards on the floor near the door advertising "massage services". After unpacking we noticed a printed notice from the hotel that said to disregard any cards we might find about outside "massage services" - the hotel had their own such on a floor above!

I had a shower, breakfast and another Mersyndol and went to bed. I woke up at 1 pm - too tired for lunch, and went back to sleep. I awoke again at



ARENA SF NEWSPAPER OFFICE, MINSK



L to R - NATASHA IRENE IGOR ZOYA EVGENIY
TIMOFEEVA LEF TOLOCONNICOU KOTOVICH DROZD in his flat

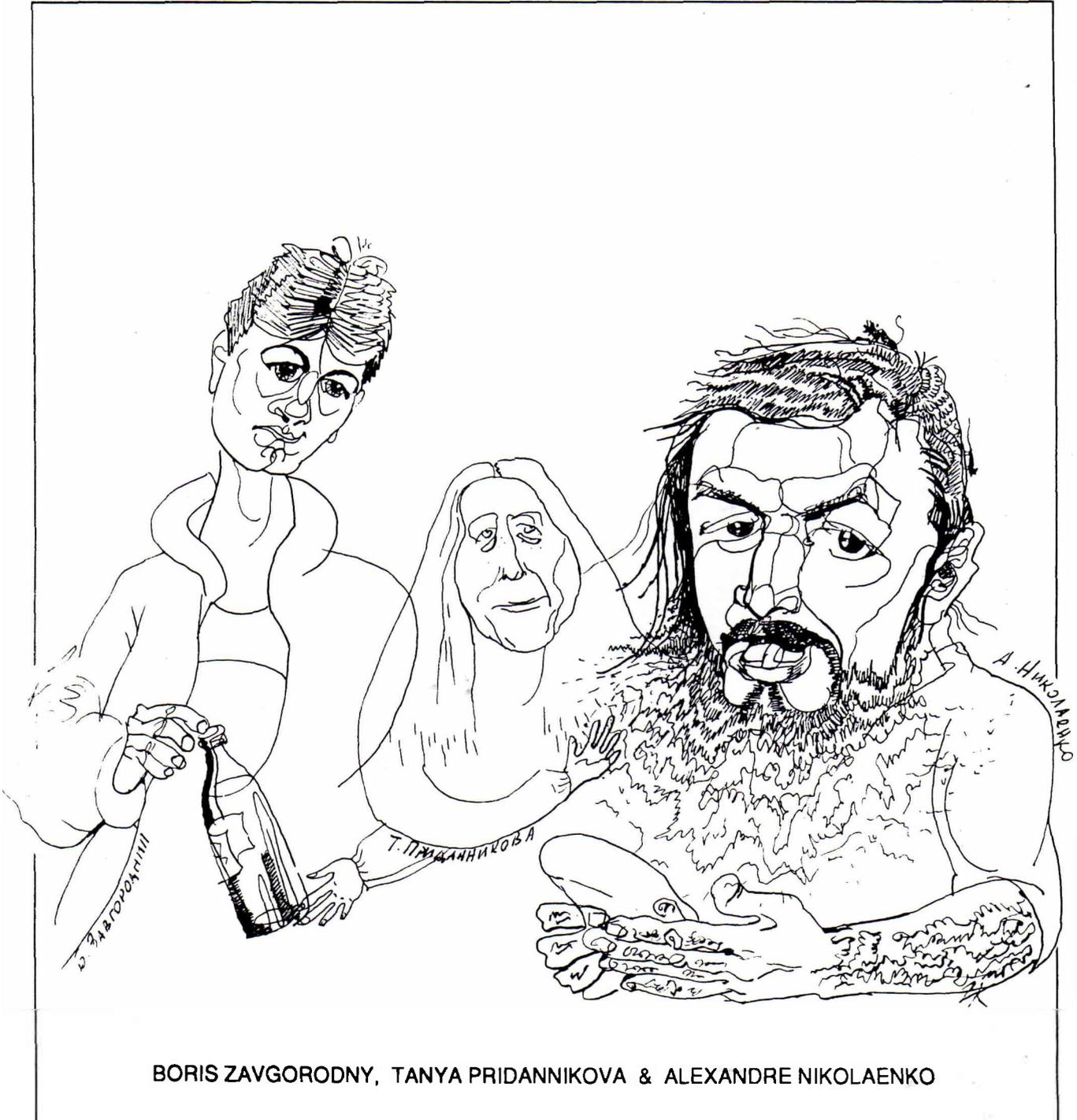
4 pm and had another shower. The airport bus arrived at 5 pm and when we got to Changi airport I booked through Immigration. Aeroflot had booked us on the same Qantas flight, but a day later than the one we should have caught. Singapore had been humid and hot - what I had seen of it. My roommate had gone sightseeing on foot that day, but I needed my sleep more.

The flight to Sydney was smooth and quick. I still didn't get any sleep but arrived feeling rested. The woman in the seat next to me was a grandmother in her fifties - several times people thought we were together.

We landed at Mascot Kingsford Smith Airport at 5.30 am and when I arrived at the Customs barrier I found that two of the five barriers were manned by men I had as subordinates at Postal Control. I was through Customs by 6 am and a friend of my wife's, Ruth Collerson, picked me up and drove me home, arriving there at 7 am, Susan being at work.

I went straight to bed.

THE END OF THE TRIP



DEFENCE MECHANISMS

by David Tansey

In the lagoon phosphorescent zooplankton glittered in the starlight, as I stepped out onto the front porch to see what the animal wanted.

'Master, please come with me,' the animal said.

Animals, or Indigenes as they should properly be called, never asked anything of a human, which only perplexed me more. They only lived among us to serve. Even now, I could hear the dishes clink as they were being cleared from the dinner table, and my father calling for Eustance, our head Indigene, to fetch the deck of playing cards.

I hesitated. 'What is it?'

'We have something to show you. It is a long walk.'

I knew I would get nothing more from the animal. They were a tight-lipped lot. As my eyes became used to the dim porch light I recognised it as young Billy, one of our agri-station labourers.

'Okay,' I finally said. I wondered if I should go back inside the house to inform my parents I was going for a walk. After all, I was almost sixteen, and responsible for myself.

Billy solved the dilemma for me. 'Eustance knows where you will be.'

It turned and stepped off the end of the porch. I followed.

We passed along the edge of the lagoon, pushing between the broad leaves of the jungle's undergrowth. Night had settled over the land, but the plankton and the stars provided sufficient light that I had no need of the torch in my pocket.

One of those stars was that of Earth, the planet of my parents. It was twenty light years away, and my parents had cryoslept for decades during the crossing. During that flight the fertilised ovum from which I grew had been kept in a freezer, in case of accident to my parents. After the landing on Magdalon, the zygote had been thawed, implanted in my mother, and I had been one of the first humans born on this planet.

When we reached the end of the lagoon I paused to look back. My house and the others of the settlement clung to a peninsular beside the water, made

of timber and raised on poles. Lamps swung in the gentle breeze over the doorways.

'This way, master.'

Billy indicated that we should turn inland. It led the way sure-footedly in the gloom, its large pupils adapted for night hunting. I pushed onward. After another twenty minutes I realised we were in a part of the jungle I had never been before. The trees seemed taller, the vegetation denser, as though few had trod here before.

I pushed aside a two metre long fern front to find myself in a small clearing. The other side was the steep side of a low hill. A slit opened into the hillside, the opening of an Indigene burrow. Billy stood to one side of it, beckoning and indicating we should enter.

I hesitated. It occurred to me that the animal could have lured me to this isolated place to do harm to me.

No, that was impossible, I told myself. They were a docile race. Animals had never been known to attack humans. When the Earth ship first arrived on Magdalon the settlers had built their colony on an uninhabited island. As I had learned in school, the colonists had later made contact with the Indigenes of other islands, who had come here for employment.

Dismissing the possibility of a trap, and interested to see what the animal had to show me, I turned on my torch and entered the burrow after Billy.

Neither myself or anyone I knew had been inside an animal's home before. I had to stoop a little, but was glad the tunnel was dry and clean. In the torch's beam I watched Billy's greyish back as he proceeded ahead. The tunnel was straight and gradually sloped downward. After some time we were far from the surface and I became impatient that we had not yet arrived at the burrow's living spaces.

'Wait up, Billy,' I said. 'How much longer does this damn tunnel go on for?'

The animal spoke without breaking stride. 'Not far. This is not Indigene home. Was dug to reach something deep.'

When my patience was exhausted, and I was about to turn around and leave, the passage opened into a larger excavation. I drew in my breath as I looked about. It was a low-ceilinged cavern which extended ahead and to the sides beyond the range of the torch. How long it had taken the animals to scoop away all the dirt and rocks with their claws I could not guess. They had left pillars to support the roof, and supplemented these with the odd piece of timber shoring.

As I stepped forward, and cast the beam about, a terrifying sight became apparent. The cavern floor was scattered with innumerable bones, recognisable as those of animals. I had been led into some sort of Indigenous burying ground. Then I saw the other bones, which far outnumbered those on the ground. They thrust down from the roof in a chalk-coloured forest. Males and females of all ages seemed to reach out imploringly toward me.

'Now you have seen it,' Billy said quietly, leaning against a pillar. 'The ground above us is the bottom of a great pit. It has been filled in to cover the dead.'

That would make sense, I reasoned. It would be unsafe for the animals to burrow through the loose fill. They had to dig through the more stable clay of the hillside to reach here.

'Why are you showing me this?' I asked. 'Is this your people's cemetery?'

'Look closer at the dead,' urged Billy.

I trained my light upward, examining the remains. After a while something did attract my notice. With a gulp I realised many of the skulls had perfectly round circles through them.

'These are my ancestors. They died fifteen years ago. The bodies were thrown in the pit and covered.'

'Are you saying we humans killed them?' I asked in a trembling voice. 'But we are taught there were no anim- , I mean Indigenes, on this island when the humans arrived. That's why this island was selected for the colony.'

'Why would Master think all islands except this one have Indigenes?' was Billy's simple reply. He moved over to a section of the hideous ceiling, pointed a particular cluster of bones.

'This is Chevka Anak. His family was shot because his home opened on land the humans wanted to make pasture. This is Alk, two years old, whose head was squashed by a rock because a human had run out of bullets. This is Twilta, a young female, who died when Master Beason tried to find if humans could mate with Indigenes. This is -'

'All right, enough!' I shouted. 'Only last week our family had dined with the Beasons. Why did you show me this?'

'We can forgive the first humans for what they did to our ancestors. We want their children to accept they stole our land. We want to live in peace with humans.'

'But we give you jobs. The money you earn from working for us lets you buy crops, tools, and machines to make your lives easier.'

Billy shook his wobbly grey head. 'We did not need these things before. We cannot hunt now, as all food killed or driven away by humans; you called them pests. We must work for you, otherwise we cannot eat. We do not like this.'

I took one more look at that grim chamber. 'Let's go.'

Billy led the way back along the tunnel to the surface. We passed through the dark jungle and to the settlement.

Billy left me at the entrance to the worker's burrows.

'Master, please think on the things you have seen and heard. Otherwise my people have no hope.' he said, before plunging into the burrow.

I hurried home.

'Jonathan!' my mother hollered from the porch. 'Where've you been, boy?'

'Just out for a stroll. It's such a lovely night.'

The household was in the process of settling in for another night. My little sister, Elsie, was tucked in bed, dreaming the sweet dreams of innocent youth. Mother kissed me good night and went to bed. All the servants had finished their cleaning and disappeared into their burrows.

Only Father remained in the dining room. He had a bottle in front of him and a single glass.

'Where you been son,?' He grinned and winked. 'Meeting with a lass, I suppose, I noticed the way you and the Beason girl were eyeing each other the other night.'

'No, Dad.' I sat in the seat opposite him. Then I told him everything that had happened.

The smile vanished from Father's face. When I had finished he stood and turned his back, looking out the window.

'Son, one thing you'll understand when you get a bit older is that life is hard. Life was even harder when we first came here. You will grow up in comparative luxury compared to what we had to endure, to establish this place.'

He was silent for a few minutes. Then he turned to face me, a harsh glint in his eyes.

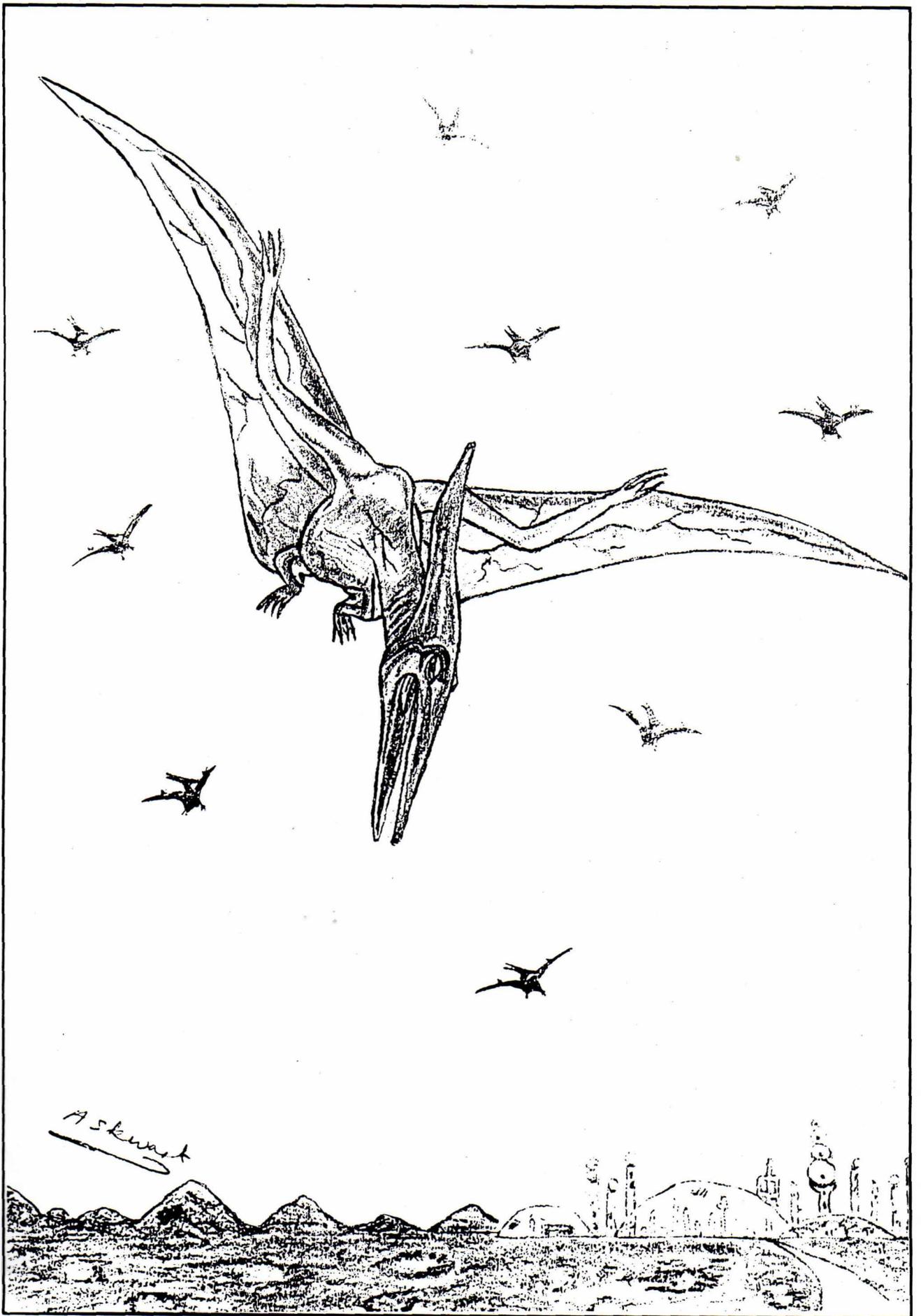
'But whatever you were told tonight is wrong. There was no massacre. This island was uninhabited when we landed. Wasn't it?'

'Yes. There was no massacre. There couldn't have been.'

'That's right,' Father replied. 'There couldn't have been. It couldn't have happened.'

'Yes. Goodnight Father.' I went to bed.

THE END



Robot Archie: And The "Real" Man Of Metal

by Andrew Darlington

Science Fiction's longest surviving legacy - the robot, enjoyed huge popularity through British juvenile publications of the 50's and 1960's, led by the greatest mechanical hero of them all - ROBOT ARCHIE of LION. These magazines were also distributed in Australia, and had a loyal following of young Australians.

Designed by computers. Built by robots.
In the '90's - a cliché, a joke.

But for the 50's and 60's it was a promise of fantastic tomorrows, alluring futures embodied in metal and driven by electricity.

Isaac Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics", (formulated into I, ROBOT in 1950) may have tamed the metallic horde to the rule of science and logic in adult-orientated magazines, but the message didn't filter down to their juvenile counterparts. At one time or another all the major Space Heroes of the time faced robotic adversaries. Dan Dare's REIGN OF THE ROBOTS came at the peak of the strip's creativity. The EAGLE team under Frank Hampson giving narrative pace and clean imaginative art to the story of Dare's return from the Cryptos star system to find Earth under the iron heel of the Mekon, his Elektrobots, and his even more terrible "clockwork killers" the Selektrobots (23 Feb 1957 to 25 Jan '58). Captain Condor - the "Outlaw of Space" over at Fleetway's LION uses his own ROBOT RAIDERS in a story of that title, in an attempt to unseat the tyrannical Dictator of the Planets. The Dictator replying with an even huger destruct-robot of his own! Later, Condor on the PUSHBUTTON PLANET faces an entire world ruled by rival warring electronic brains and their robot armies vividly envisaged by graphics master Brian Lewis. Jet-Ace Logan - in TIGER, introduces a plot complexity to the theme that became the strip's distinguishing characteristic. Through the inventive scripts of Frank S. Pepper in THE INVADERS FROM SPACE (12 Aug '60 to 5 Feb '61) key human personnel are replaced by posnetronic robot dopplegangers as the secret advance of an alien global take-over. Logan, discovering their secret base beneath the "Non-Grav Pleasuredrome" in

Lunar City, is not only attacked by skeletal robots as yet lacking their humanising "flesh", but later confronts his own robot double too, in sequences of genuinely chilling John Gillat art.

But the robot in British juvenile publications already had a long and diverse history. One of the earliest serious attempts to portray the men of metal came through DC Thomson in the well-recycled THE SMASHER aka THE CRUSHER. It began as a prose story in ROVER (18 Sept 1954) running from issues #1525 to 1534, subsequently becoming a picture strip in 1971 (8 May to 26 June). The hero, Glasgow Harry, is site engineer on a dam project and has to stop the mysteriously destructive robot which emerges from the African night intent on wrecking the construction work. Related strips featuring Red Raglan's clash with the giant mechanical "Smasher" controlled by Doctor Doom ran in VICTOR (1962) and BULLET (1976-'78). DC Thomson were also responsible for comedy robot BIG KLANKY, created by artist Jeff Bevan for SPARKY (1966-'74), and THE JUGGERNAUT FROM PLANET Z (in HURRICANE from 22 Aug '64) in which Professor Dan Morgan probes the mystery of a giant robot from outer space.

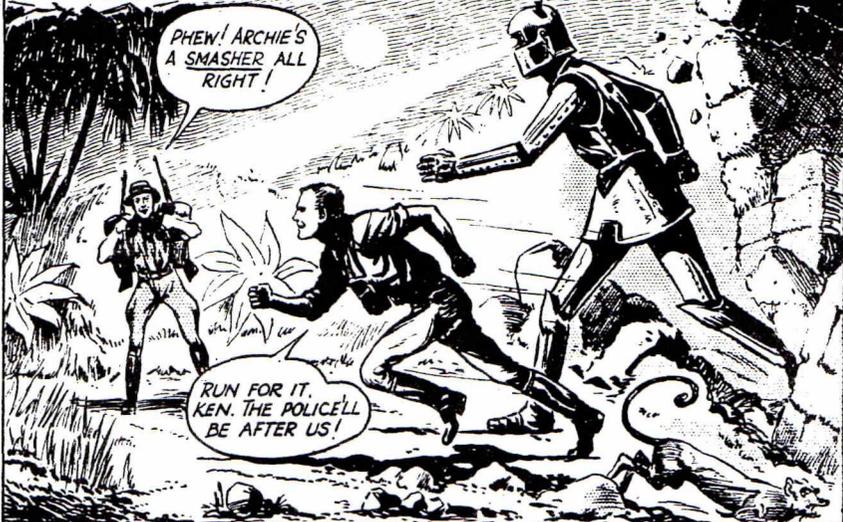
At this simple level the robot is marauder, a mindless agent of terror and destruction, albeit a Terminator somewhat domesticated by 50's mores. But considering the basic premise of most boy's strip fiction the obverse was an obvious development; heroes were strong, fearless, and usually expressionless - their characters reduced down to a few exaggerated physical attributes. What better, stronger, more expressionless or characterless protagonist than a *real* man of metal? THE IRON MAN, an early protagonist, began in BOYS WORLD (1963-'64) but continued in EAGLE following

AT ZERO HOUR, ARCHIE WENT INTO ACTION!



HURRAY!
THAT'S THE
STUFF TO GIVE
EM, ARCHIE!

ARCHIE, USING ALL HIS MIGHTY STRENGTH, BROUGHT THE PRISON WALL THUNDERING DOWN... AND OUT TED DARTED.



PHEW! ARCHIE'S
A SMASHER ALL
RIGHT!

RUN FOR IT,
KEN. THE POLICE'LL
BE AFTER US!

SURE ENOUGH, THE PRISON GUARDS SWIFTLY APPEARED AND OPENED FIRE.



MAKE FOR THE THICK
UNDERGROWTH, KEN. IT'LL
BE SAFER THERE. ARCHIE
WILL CUT A WAY
THROUGH FOR US.

GOSH... THAT
BULLET NEARLY
GAVE ME A
HAIRCUT!

B'WANA PUGG AND UMBALA HAD LOST THE FIRST ROUND, BUT



WE'VE JUST GOT
TO RECAPTURE
THE ROBOT, UMBALA.
WITHOUT IT, THE
TREASURE CAN NEVER
BE OURS.

ME GREAT
GUIDE, B'WANA.
ME FOLLOW
DEMON ROBOT

DESPITE ARCHIE'S TREMENDOUS EFFORTS...



WE HAVEN'T THROWN
THE POLICE OFF OUR
TRACK. THEY'RE STILL
FOLLOWING US, KEN.

AND THAT
BEARDED MAN
AND HIS ZULU
PAL ARE WITH
THEM

AS THE PURSUIT DREW CLOSER, THE PALS SUDDENLY BROKE OUT OF THE UNDERGROWTH AND FOUND THEMSELVES AT THE TOP OF A RAILWAY EMBANKMENT.



THE RAILWAY
TED... AND THERE'S
A TRAIN COMING.
IF ONLY WE COULD
STOP IT!

GEE, KEN, IT'S JUST
OUR CHANCE TO MAKE
A GETAWAY. COME ON,
ARCHIE... YOU'RE THE BOY
TO STOP THAT TRAIN
FOR US!

IN NEXT MONDAY'S "LION" - ARCHIE DEFIES THE HUNGRY CROCODILES!

a merger (1964-'69). "Robert", as only Tim Branton knew "was really a wonderful robot in human form, stronger than a hundred men, equipped with an amazing mechanical brain and disguised with clothes and a suit of special plastic "skin" to appear human". Robert and Tim expend their energies, respectively electronic and organic in combating a "sinister master criminal" known as The Magician.

And then there's Robot Archie...

LION #1 emerged 23 February 1952, a package of twenty pages for just 3d. The wrap-around cover leads off with the CAPTAIN CONDOR space serial. Inside, there's Barry Nelson's SANDY DEANS FIRST TERM - a traditional English boarding school story that runs for many years. Text fiction series feature BIG HANK: SOFT-HEARTED HEAVYWEIGHT and schoolboy capers with JINGO JONES AND HIS INVISIBILISER. But across pages ten and eleven there's also a rather inauspicious one-off strip story called THE JUNGLE ROBOT written by E George Cowan. The robot of the title is the invention of Professor CR Ritchie, but is operated by his nephew Ted Ritchie in cahoots with his friend Ken Dale. Although the art will develop with succeeding issues the basic characteristics are already there, the robot ARCHIE emblazoned across its barrel chest. There are two slot eyes that double as searchlights, and a letter-box mouth. The two protruding knobs that correspond to ears are possibly antennae to pick up instructions transmitted from the pushbutton control-box worn on Ted's chest. As the story opens the mismatched trio are found in M'Lassa, Africa, searching for the treasures of Kaal - the secret of which Archie will mysteriously divulge. It was preceded by William Ward's THE IRON WARRIOR (in THRILL COMICS from Swan Publ 1940-'45) in which Rodeny Dearth uses robotic assistance in Africa while seeking the jewels of Junius. Yet the formula will go on to provide more repetitions to come. Archie runs into various hazards as they journey beyond the Crouching Lion Hills; as early as issue #3 he already "defies the hungry crocodiles" - something that is to become an occupational hazard, and disguised as a Devil-Mask Archie intimidates hostile tribesmen by posing as an animation of their Idol-god N'Gundi. "Ju-Ju Demon him plenty much heavy" complains one hapless native. And all the while their expedition is dogged by the opposing team of "Bwana" Pugg and his Zulu accomplice Umbala.

If America's DC had its Man of Steel, at least LION now had Britain's most popular comic-strip Man of Metal. Yet that realisation proved slow to dawn. The first LION ANNUAL does not feature ROBOT ARCHIE, and the serial did not make it into 1953. Instead Cowan went on to script a series of modest historical strips beginning with REBELS OF ANCIENT ROME and HUNTERS OF THE TOWER OF LONDON TRAITORS. In 1954 - with no new Archie title, he scripts STOWAWAYS ON THE SEA-HAWK, Mark Darrel's quest to find his father on a "mystery jungle

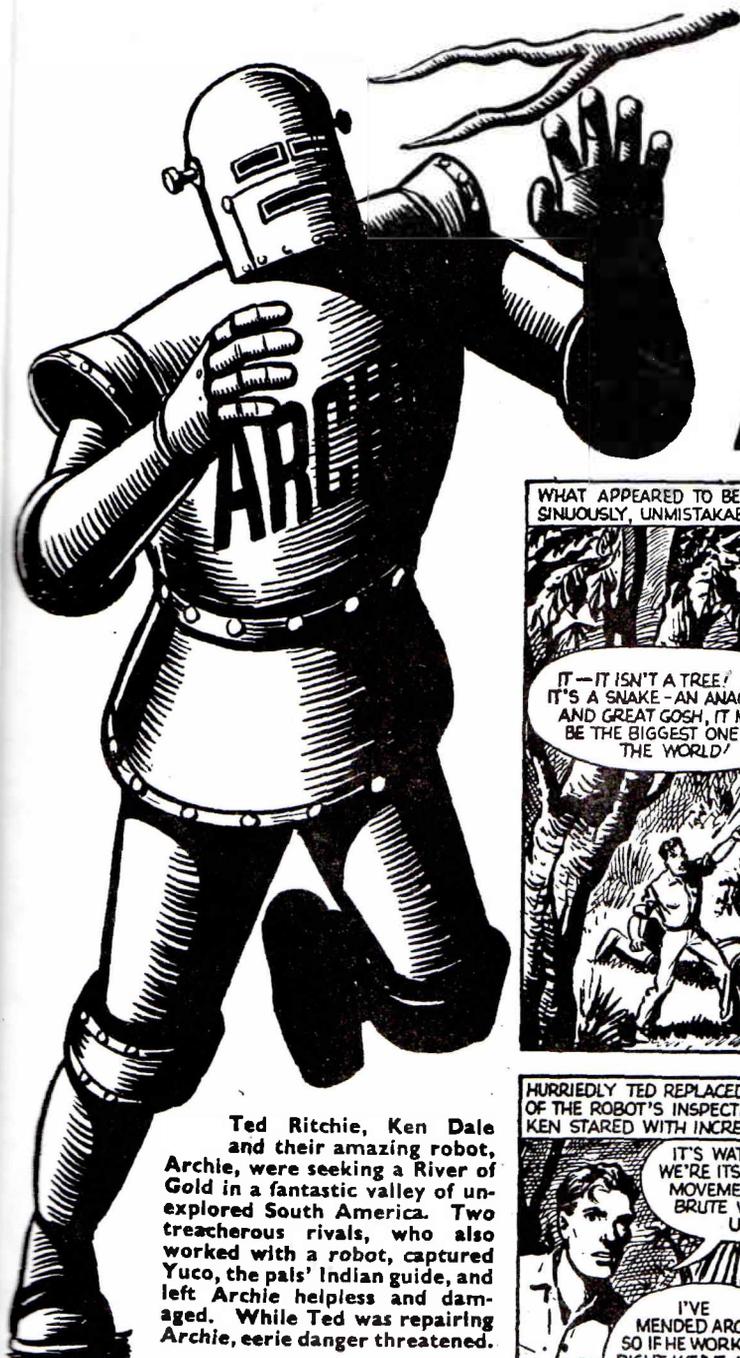
island", while CAPTAIN CONDORS ROBOT RAIDERS assumes the cover from 21 August 1954. Some stop-gap compensation is provided by Cliff Hooper's FLYING SAUCER OVER AFRICA which features not only the titular saucer, but an Archie look-alike robot who descends from it. It's not until early '5 - with LION now 4d, that ARCHIE: THE ROBOT EXPLORER is brought back to mechanical life, this time in the hands of Mark Ross (who'd previously worked on QUEST FOR THE CHINESE CASKET). Ken, Ted and Archie are now prospecting for Uranium in the "little-known Leopard Valley", an adventure pitting them against scheming Witch Doctor Ngo and Krang of the Karanga tribe.

Then - a further gap, as PADDY PAYNE ousts CAPTAIN CONDOR from the cover spot, until Cowan returns with ARCHIE THE ROBOT AND THE MYSTERY OF THE VEILED ARAB, commencing in July 1958. Still in Africa, they're now competing with "the scar-faced Moor" in a quest for a valuable jewelled sphinx found on the bed of the El Maron lagoon. "Ted's jaw jutted with determination" as he and Archie head off camels stampeded by the scurrilous veiled Arab. Already patterns are emerging that stretch back to THE IRON WARRIOR, and will form the framework for stories to come. A quest. An exotic and hazardous location. Villainous rivals.

The advantage of robotic protagonists is that, unencumbered by emotion or relationships there's freedom to indulge whatever mayhem or amoral behaviour suits the plot. While their invulnerability presents its own disadvantages, primarily that of finding an opponent of equal stature. Super heroes require super villains. Archie however, can partially circumvent the problem by periodically breaking down. As early as the first story he's malfunctioning with a broken valve, in the later tale he's damaged by a collapsing archway blown up by the Veiled Arab. Later, in Kilibu, the "crafty Yogini" jams "one of Archie's control buttons. The robot ran riot causing terrible damage". And into late '62 in Peru a speech bubble dramatically reveals that "Archie's out of control! That shot must have damaged one of his switches". Luckily, access to the removable panel on his back, with its tantalising glimpse of circuitry within, will soon correct such disfunctions.

By now the strip has hit its stride. Archie is recognisably Archie. Exploits follow each other directly with the robot evolving into a metallic Indiana Jones scouring the world for lost artefacts. In ARCHIE THE ROBOT: SOUTH SEAS FORTUNE HUNTER the pals are aboard the schooner Silver Spray bound for Devil Fire Island, searching for a crashed plane. This time Archie fights a Rhino, and "talks" through a "loudspeaker inside the robot" to terrify native islanders. An interesting sub-plot, space allowing, would argue these strips as the last bastion of imperialist Anglo-centricity. Certainly the treatment of ethnic peoples would send shivers of shock through a Race Relations aware 1990's readership. Yet in fairness, these were

ROBOT ARCHIE



Ted Ritchie, Ken Dale and their amazing robot, Archie, were seeking a River of Gold in a fantastic valley of unexplored South America. Two treacherous rivals, who also worked with a robot, captured Yuco, the pals' Indian guide, and left Archie helpless and damaged. While Ted was repairing Archie, eerie danger threatened.



HURRIEDLY TED REPLACED THE LAST SCREW OF THE ROBOT'S INSPECTION PANEL, WHILE KEN STARED WITH INCREASING HORROR



THE GIANT SNAKE STRUCK WITH THE SPEED OF LIGHT - JUST AS POWER THROBBED THROUGH THE ROBOT FROM THE TRANSMITTERS IMPULSE



ARCHIE'S METAL HANDS LOCKED LIKE CLAMPS BELOW THE SERPENT'S HEAD



TED KNEW THAT ONLY BY GRIPPING SOMETHING WITH ITS TAIL COULD THE CONSTRICTOR SNAKE MAKE USE OF ITS TERRIFIC STRENGTH. COULD THE ROBOT MANAGE TO DRAG THE TAIL FREE?



Make Sure of LION by Getting Your Newsagent to DELIVER It Every Week!

ROBOT ARCHIE FIGHTS A GIANT SERPENT IN "LION", MARCH 1961

LION, 25th March, 1961

naive days, and although primitive and unsophisticated, the natives are never shown as gratuitously evil, rather they are misled by jealous shamen or exploited by the *real* nasties of the *other* expedition. In this case by bad guys Dagusta and Patch-Eye. Once convinced of the heroe's good intentions the tribesmen invariably become allies and friends. In a 1960 story Archie defeats the Lion Cult by challenging Witch Doctor "Warpgi, you lie! The ju-ju of Archie is stronger. I will protect any men of M'Fanu who work for me. Jackal, I challenge you to a contest of powers!"

From 9 May '59 the page-head banner announces THRILL IN THE FAR EAST, introducing ROBOT ARCHIE: BODYGUARD OF THE MENACED RAJAH in the "torrid tropical jungles of East Kilibu" heading for the city of Zorba to film "the fabulous ceremony of a thousand jewels". Archie is there in the 1959 LION ANNUAL, by which time he's back to Africa in weekly action to fight a gigantic hippo, extend a railroad 50 miles into the jungle, and defeat the Lion Cult. Then, by jetcraft to a South American revolution in the State of Bandaray. And so into 1961 with an escalating weirdness count. With the original plot premise almost milked dry, more ferocious adversaries are needed. In unexplored South America seeking the River of Gold they discover the Leviathan of the Forest - Orion, a rival robot controlled by regulation rivals Brendon and Klaus, as well as a valley of narcotics-exhaling fungus. Then, in an odd plot variant from mid-'61 there's a story set in "a primitive area of New Mexico", a near-Western with Archie as a gun-slinger hunting Men in Iron Masks.

By 1962 the price of LION has soared to 5d, for which you get stunt-man adventurer RORY MACDUFF: ISLE OF FEAR, the excellent KARL THE VIKING, and CAPTAIN CONDOR on THE PUSHBUTTON PLANET... as well as the latest Archie. He's found first in N.E. Africa where a power-mad Sultan uses imported man-eating tigers to hunt down his enemies; then in an Incan city in Peru searching for the wreck of a treasure galleon guarded by a dinosaur. Surely Archie's most lethal contest? But no, soon he's off to Indo-China again to film a "fire-breathing crab, a terrifying monster of fabulous size". "He'll be battered to scrap!" opines Ken dourly, "not even Archie can survive such a drop!"

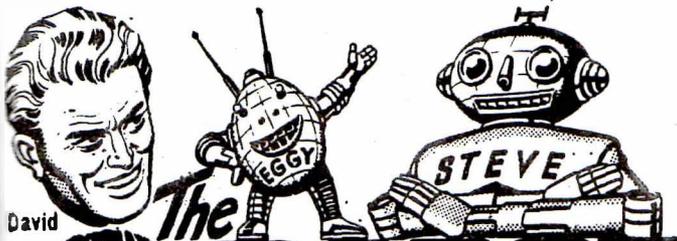
Robo-mania was now assuming epidemic proportions in the realm of comicdom. TIGER AND HURRICANE serialise THE M-MAN through late-'65, a strip with a psychological twist to the Archie blueprint, "determined to take revenge on the world that laughed at him because he was small and weak, John Samsan build an M-Man - a giant electronically controlled metal robot called Gargantua" for criminal power-play. At its termination THE M-MAN was replaced (from 9 April '66) by THE ROBOT BUILDERS spawning long-running sequels illustrated for a period by SF veteran Ron Turner famed for his "Scion Publications" John Russell Fearn paperback-covers).

Briefly the strip was even promoted to colour page-one status. A kind of Robotic International Rescue the "Builders" are the Arrow Family with their specialised mech-men assistants, including one called Eggy who rescues them from terrors in the ancient jungle city of Runh. Further variations - fusing robotics with a World War II theme, result in THE STEEL COMMANDO in THUNDER (from 1970) transferring to LION following a merger ('71 to '74).

While, untroubled by such competition, Archie's adventures continue beneath such billings as THE FAMOUS MECHANICAL MAN IN A BRAND-NEW THRILLER; four of them spaced through '63 - back to the Pacific to solve the mystery of the Marie Celeste-style schooner Grey Ghost, by May journeying through East Africa in the shadow of "the sign of the scorpion", from 31 August in El Berrek with Archie painted gold to lure Arab pirates, and by October back to South America searching for the lost gold mines of El Dorado and fighting a giant bear - "what a brute" says Ken. But in many ways 1964 is Archie's peak year. As well as a prominent placing in the 1964 LION ANNUAL the launch of the LION PICTURE LIBRARY pocket-books opens its first month's salvo with ROBOT ARCHIE: EXPLORER as the series #2 (Oct '63). If the cover of Archie crocodile-wrestling and the blurb "Archie in the jungle of doom" sounds familiar that's hardly surprising. The books contains an edited version of the debut serial quest for the treasure of Kaal! It's followed by #8 ROBOT ARCHIE AND THE GREEN PERIL (Jan '64), by which time the weekly serial is THE CURSE OF DRAGON ISLAND. In Sujana Archie is fighting Rhino's and remote-controlled robot pterodactyls directed by the evil Varan from a derelict pagoda; and even more bizarre, with June's THE WEIRD WORLD OF X their search for missing jet FG1 takes our heroes to the mist-enshrouded island domain of Doctor X with not only his monstrous robots and huge mechanical beetles to contend with, but attacks by giant squids, too. Exciting stuff, followed by ROBOT ARCHIE AND THE MOLE MEN set in relatively sedate Paris with criminals Salanda and Ricco using a "mole machine" boring device to raid for art treasures. By 3 October the story shifts to colour cover 3-page status and laps over into 1965. In fact Archie continues to be LION'S top-rated star even after the title swallows EAGLE in a merger and thereby acquires Dan Dare serials (from 3 May '69).

For your 7d you now get 36 pages of World War II flying ace PADDY PAYNE, speed-cop ZIP NOLAN, Frank S Pepper's time-twister SPELLBINDER, as well as a re-run of Dare's THE PHANTOM FLEET, plus three full pages of ROBOT ARCHIE AND THE GOLDEN CITY. This time the fearless trio are in the lost city of Saleka beneath the sea in deadly confrontation with the mighty metal octopus of their malignant enemy Diablo. "Tin-ribs, you've got to stop them!" yells Ken. Needless to say Tin-ribs does just that. Annual hard-cover appearances also continue,

ONLY THE ARROWS COULD DEAL WITH THEIR OWN MONSTERS !



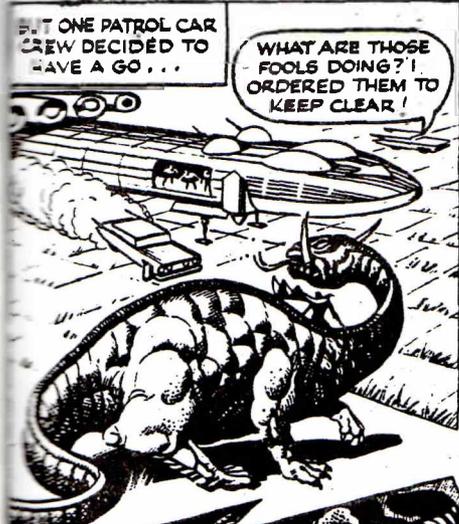
David

The

ROBOT BUILDERS

Damon

DAVID AND DAMON ARROW HAD BUILT ROBOT MONSTERS FOR A FILM ABOUT A 'MONSTER MASTER' WHO COULD CREATE FANTASTIC LIFE. A MYSTERIOUS CRIMINAL, BELIEVED BY DAVID AND DAMON TO BE ACTOR DEAN CALEY, GAINED CONTROL OF THE GIANT ANIMALS AND TOOK THEM TO A DERELICT AIRFIELD TO USE AGAINST A GANG WHO HAD STOLEN A PLANE LOADED WITH GOLD. BUT THANKS TO THEIR ROBOT PALS, EGGY AND STEVE, THE BROTHERS LOCATED THE MISSING MONSTERS AND ALERTED THE POLICE...



RON TURNER ART FROM "TIGER", 12 AUGUST 1967

and even when LION eventually ceases to exist (merging with VALIANT 25 May 1974) Archie goes on as reprints in VULCAN - for its 28 issues from 27 Sept to 3 April '76 before it too is swallowed up by VALIANT.

But by now Archie is facing obsolescence, his simple appeal seriously out-dated. Perception of cybernetics has moved on from TV's clumsy "Robbie the Robot" of LOST IN SPACE to the smooth special-FX of STAR WARS R2D2 and C3PO where robots, as "droids", are expected to be cute and personable. Neither description, with the best will in the world, could ever be applied to Archie. More accurately designed for the new decade RO-BUSTERS begins in the 22 issues of STARLORD (13 May to 7 Oct 1978), continuing into a variety of fine innovative "2000 AD" strips. The story's metallic "stars" - Ro-Jaws and Hammerstein are illustrated with strong emphasis on characterisation and quirky humour, by Carlos Pino. And although it starts where THE ROBOT BUILDERS left off - with chief Howard Quartz co-ordinating a

Robotic Rescue Squad from their Devil's Island base in the year 2078, the series rapidly develops into a universe of highly individual fantastic escapades as the "A.B.C. WARRIORS".

While the last (to date) genuine ROBOT ARCHIE original strip is featured in 1990's one-off CLASSIC ACTION HOLIDAY SPECIAL from IPC. Priced 85p the cover blares ROBOT ARCHIE FIGHTS AGAIN with a dramatic colour picture of - you guessed it, Archie crocodile-wrestling! But odd influences and strange connections continue. In "2000 AD Prog.627" (20 May 1989) the innovative ZENITH graphic story includes a bizarre sequence in which a full-page Acid-House Robot Archie enters the fray, decorated in flower symbols and booming mightily "ACIIIEEE-EEDD!!!" What E George Cowan thinks of *that* is perhaps best left to conjecture.

THE END

Look!
this great

**ROBOT
ARCHIE**

*story is in
this week's*

LION

*Buy your
copy NOW!*

6d.

ADVERTISEMENT FOR A FEBRUARY 1964 ROBOT ARCHIE STORY

A Selection of SF Poetry

by Various Authors

A New Planet?

Up in the skies - so far away
we can only dream the distance -
a star exploded

Its nuclear fuel exhausted
unstable - unable
to keep within its shell
it expanded
its light increasing
hundred - no - thousandfold.

Were there other worlds near it?
Overwhelmed - now destroyed.
Minute particles
creating a new nebula
that will emit radiation
for thousands of years -

Infinitesimal dust motes
swirling in space
looking for company
 gathering
 bonding
 growing
 condensing
to a predestined shape -

until one day there will be
another planet up in the skies -
with life-forms like ours?

- maria-louise stephens

APRIL FOOL

The Planet's slowly cooling now,
The geiger counters click;
There's a prisoner in the guardroom
For that clever little trick;

For both sides pressed the button
When they thought they were attacked;
Our captive is the one who made
Them think that war was fact

- John Francis Haines

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BOYS AT MISSION CONTROL

Hurling a box of tricks into the sky
We cheered each orbit as it twinkled by,
We cheered and claimed that we had "conquered" space
For all mankind, for all the human race:
We even cheered its final fall to earth
Almost as loudly as its launchpad birth.

- John Francis Haines

THE RIOTS OF DISMANTLEMENT.

Property more valued than their life savings
fell beneath the mob
in sharp metal scatterings.

Car assembly line operators
continued untouched, uninformed, weld, weld.

Only red stains told of mistakes,
unfortunate "martyrs" in the rush.

Faceted eye became heirloom,
small-fingers passed to grandfather's tales.

Weld, weld.

- Alan Stewart

HUNGRY

Lorgorg picked black fangs
rasped his toothed tongue
clenched steel strong fingers
grumbling deep full contented
sweet succulent eatable earthlings
thin skinned tender gourmet treats
the best meat he ever gobbled
scrumptious raw or roasted
nervously pitiless reptile eyes slitted
rechecked white frosty freezer
yawning back in white billow breath
two thirds empty now
Lorgorg glanced smiling knowing
to the gray dusty black
silver dialed distress signal
soon he'd leave this green moon
blast in captured earth craft
to the space freighter lanes
turn on that marvelous black box
restock his emptying freezer
Just the thought
made him growl hungry

- Wade Robertson

EVERYTHING YOU EVER DREAMED IN REAL TIME

"Database techniques are fast approaching the point where the computer will understand and anticipate the customer's needs far more effectively than a human contact can do"

- Dorland Direct brochure

Once he had thousands upon thousands of servants
some knew they worked for him
many did not
they did well
at great expense

they filled his tower
tall as the ultimate Advent Calendar
with as many windows shuttered safe against the light
with what he sought

they caught him Bormann Lucan
Red Rum the real
Mona Lisa
the brain of Einstein
the brainshards of JFK

but now science has moved on
now to obtain your true desire
you need what is so much faster
brighter
nearer unto god nearer to making you

its master God
here is the proof
this unlike his other trophies
is not for show is for use
secret in the chasm

under the donjon
here lies white ever so slightly
water-wrinkled
but so young so beautiful so much
the flower of her nation

she won the test to prove it
she rose from earth toward heaven
the computer he controlled knew what to do then
other computers he controlled knew what to do when
they located the wrecked ruin

now forever she is his
to use to reuse to count stars thoughts
miracles on the flesh of in the flesh of
to practise rising again
resurrection now is his work

greater than any Frankenstein baron
he has the queen of heaven his
Christa McAuliffe reigns in his computerland.

- Steve Sneyd.

LIKE A CAT ROUND A CAMPFIRE

Prowling and prowling
waiting for non-happening
crisis would give a need
for him up up down down
endless empty metal
corridors featureless
as to up and down their
patently perfect echoing
endlessly tempt him to sing
but if he should sing he
knows he would be reminded
as he isn't talking since
there is no one to talk to
only machines and he isn't
going to get that crazy any
old how of how as back to
childhood somehow his voice
against sounds out unbroken
which in turn would remind
him unpleasantly this so
successful mirror avoider
faces to the wall in every
chamber where they are how
his breasts are sprouting
how one razor blade has
lasted the last ten years
now how the bastards told
him it was nothing personal
if anything an honour a
tribute to his virile manhood
how all captains regardless
of personal previous good
character are as routine as

the onloading process in
their sleep castrated before
taking such a ship aloft
proving it with statistics
from early voyages how being
the only male being awake aboard
metal egg bearing thousands
of deep frozen women children
chosen the lovely future
of the race etcetera who would
forever be unaware of anything
done to them in flight in such
a state and the subconscious
clearly convinced was acting
alright for the future expansion
of the race created temptation
too unbearable for any one
human and anyhow they promised
process would be readily
reversible on safe arrival at target

just like the immortality
implant to see him through millenial
voyage but he'd like to see any
bastard try to take that out

and in the meantime he couldn't
even pass the time the timeless time
by singing like a lovesick cat

- Steve Sneyd.

How to be an SF Writer In Three Easy Lessons

by Sean Williams

To be an sf writer, you need to write sf stories. Sounds easy? Well it is, provided you follow these simple guide-lines.

Firstly, you need any one of the following, in descending order of preference:

- word processor
- typewriter
- piece of paper and pencil
- clay tablet and chisel
- stick and convenient large beach

You need tranquillity, time to think, an idea, a basic grasp of the English language. You need a partner who will support you through bankruptcy and mental illness. Chronic shyness, an aversion to daylight, myopia and a few extra kilos around the middle will also help.

Last of all, you need the story itself. This is the first hurdle you must face, and conquer, before becoming a writer. There are several options open to you:

- First, paraphrase somebody else's, or copy it word for word.
- Second, write your own.
- Third, write experimental avant-garde gibberish.

The second is by far and away the hardest of the three, but, should you choose to take this course, here are some rough guide-lines to make this onerous task a little easier.

STEP ONE: *Writing the Story.*

The principles of sf story-writing can be summed up most easily under four headings: Concept, Plot, Characters, and Hidden Agenda.

Concept:

Sf is composed entirely of stories about any of the following:

- gadgets (everything from micro-machines to Orbitavilles);
- aliens (the weirder the better);

strange quirks in theoretical science (you know - the sort of things that implies that giant rabbits *could* exist at the core of the our galaxy and, therefore in the eye of the sf writer, probably *should*, at least for the sake of the argument).

If you have more than one example of the above, or an especially clever example of just one, then you might be published.

If you have all of the above, in one story plus some extremely well-executed jargon to cover what you've made up off the top of your head, you could even win some sort of award (but probably not a Ditmar).

The ability to write well is optional. The bigger the gadgets, the weirder the aliens, the more spectacularly unlikely your particular field of speciality - who cares if you insert hyphens simply to get yourself out of a grammatical corner?

Plot:

As someone once observed, there really are only a few plots going around. Try and invent a new one and you get into all sorts of trouble, so for the time being stick to what's already there. Until you're famous, that is.

Three of the most common are:

[1] Who dares wins, again.

Your hero (or heroine) is in a sticky situation and has to get out of it. Said situation could involve a highly improbable planet, a unique machine, or a strange (and peculiarly violent) alien. Create pitfalls; make your character use intellect and pectorals to avoid them; bask in the glow of your audience's relieved smiles at the happy ending.

[2] Gosh, what's that?

Something strange is out there, but we don't know what. Plot is minimal. All you do is provide a subtext within which to throw hints at your reader as to the nature of the Big Twist at the end. (Be careful not to

give it away too early, though. And avoid puns at all costs.)

[3] Welcome to Borgonia; I hope you enjoy your stay.

Invent your own reality/mindset and write dozens of stories all involving this island universe. Fill it with widgets, weirdos, and wacky weather. See what develops as a result. Plot becomes relatively important only around about the fourth or fifth story, at which point the reader will know everything about your private fantasy and will be expecting something to keep him/her awake.

Others include the Love Story, the Quest, and All This For One Terrible Pun In The Last Line?, which are fairly self-explanatory.

Characters:

Sf characters don't speak like normal people. They either use English strictly by the rule-book (which no-one ever does, especially someone from another planet), or have terrible speech impediments. A speech therapist would make a killing in any sf story.

Hints:

give aliens the peculiar habit of being unable to pronounce a certain letter of the alphabet (but avoid the inconvenient, like "e" or "l"); curse your protagonists with outrageous Scottish accents; use slang (preferable of your own invention, though, not Bill Gibson's).

Choose your names with care. They can't be normal ("Steve Rogers"??) but at the same time shouldn't be too far out. Believe it or not, readers will actually try to pronounce them. "Bghaftemlg" may be, to you, a perfectly acceptable moniker for your alien adversary/ally, but it's almost impossible to say (not to mention hard to type). At the same time, avoid stereotypes, like "Bloop" or "Chrome Zep".

Hints:

try the phone book; take common words and rearrange the letters; pull Scrabble titles from a sock.

Sf characters are otherwise pretty much the same as those of any other genre. There are three main types:

Protagonists -

your basic heroic type. Can be further subdivided into (a) Typical (which included the Wanderer, the Professional, the Gung-Ho, and the Astro-Cowboy), (b) the Tragic (Mr. Good-Intentions-But-Poor-Planning, the Wimp, and Basically Unlucky) and (c) Anti-Heroes (Reluctant, and Far-Too-Clever-By-Half.

Antagonists -

the villains (or villainesses). Similarly subdivided into (a) Typical (Bastard-That-

Gets-It-In-The-End). (b) Victorious (Lucky Bastard), and (c) Charismatic (Good-Looking-Bastard).

Extras -

benign, malignant or neutral; this category of character is too large to elaborate upon in any detail. Let's just say that it includes, amongst many others, the Comic, the Bore, the Devil's Advocate, the Three Wise Men, the Bit Of Fluff, etc.

There is, however, a sub-category of character that is unique to sf and therefore requires special attention. This is, of course:

The Inanimate Object.

Basically, in sf a writer can endow consciousness upon anything he or she likes. This, a close relation to the gadgetry so important to the genre, is a frequent trick used to flesh out character-thin stories or to provide comic relief where plots have failed. Everything from wrist-watches to stars have been brought to life by some of the biggest names writing today - so there's nothing stopping you from joining in the fun!

There are two sub-categories of Inanimate Objects.

[1] The ROBOT

This class of character is either benign (as is most common) or ambiguous or chaotic. ROBOTS are mobile, usually humanist, and generally tangential to the plot, with the same relative importance as small furry creatures and women in skin-tight space suits.

(For humanist robots, compare C3PO, Robbie The Robot, Marvin The Paranoid Android, Ash, Bishop, the Terminators, Mk13, etc.)

(For non-humanist, see R2D2 and daggits.)

[2] The COMPUTER

While outwardly similar to ROBOTS, except for their immobility, COMPUTERS have a quite different nature. Their personalities range from indifferent to blatantly malign. They represent the ambiguous feelings we humans experienced upon their "real" advent upon Western Society

(See HAL, Eddie, and the Master Control Program.)

The last category of characters worth mentioning is the ALIEN itself. Not much is needed to be said in this case, except to bear in mind the fact that the best writers have the most memorable xenotypes. If you want to be remembered forever, invent something

like the Pearson's Puppeteers and you'll be halfway there.

Hidden Agenda

Not really relevant with regard to sf, so we'll ignore it.

STEP TWO: *Dealing With Editors*

Okay, You've written a story. What do you do next? You send it to an editor. Simple.

There are, however, a few things you will need to do or have before you take this terrifying plunge into the deep end of literary fandom:

- You need an SSAE (stamped, self-addressed envelope). *This is very important.* An editor won't reply unless your ms has one attached to it. Some editors are even considering making it compulsory for all unsolicited manuscripts to include stamped, self-addressed rejection letters.

- You also need a short autobiographical note (especially if your epic should ever be accepted; have one ready just in case). Contrary to what the experts say, this should never be serious. It's the authors with the funniest lines who are remembered, if only in the short-term, so keep it brief and witty. (Viz those of Simon Brown in *AUREALIS 2 & 3*; one can't help but wonder whether his physical condition will ever change.) Be mysterious. Change your history every time you get published. Ad lib outrageously. Just remember, though, nobody likes a smart-arse.

- Research your market. You wouldn't send horror stories to a publisher of romantic fiction, so don't send hard sf to a fantasy 'zine. Bear in mind that it's not what the reader wants that counts; it's what the *editor* wants. Read a few editions of his/her publication and you'll pretty soon have an idea of what is required. Be it vulgar language, large-breasted women, cute cuddly ET's, stupendous space battles - it doesn't matter. Decide that you want to be published in this particular publication and your flexibility will amaze (and maybe even appal) you.

- before sending off the ms, always ask for a copy of the magazine's Manuscript Guide-lines. If you feel you don't need to know what the required length is because your story is so fantastic that it's sure to be accepted regardless, then think of this exercise as giving the editor a chance to hear your name in advance, thus heightening his or her keep sense of anticipation.

So you've done all the above. The ms is on its way. All that remains is for you to wait. And wait. And wait...

STEP THREE: *Being Published - Coping With Fame*

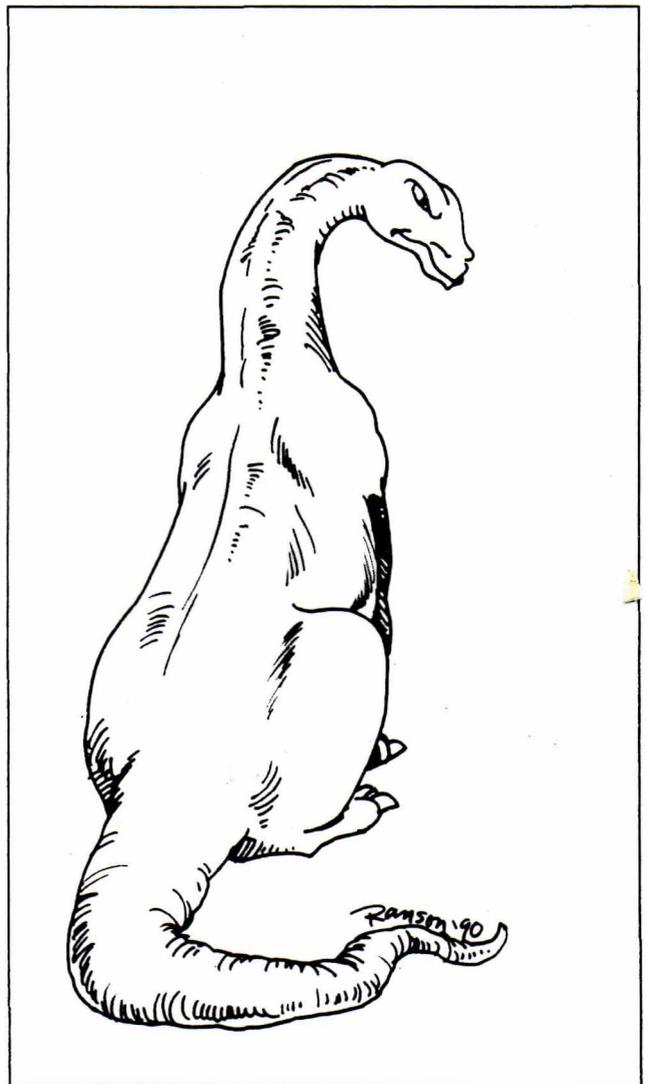
Most sf writers never learn this lesson, and this is most often seen as their ultimate downfall. There is no hard and fast method to ease the burden of constant public scrutiny, but there are ways to avoid its grossest effects. These include:

- using a non de plume;
- becoming a recluse, if you weren't one already;
- moving to Tasmania
- dying of a drug overdose.

If none of these appeal, then you'd just better get used to it. Some people eventually manage the cross-over to Lear Jets and prawn cocktails for breakfast, and - who knows? - you may well be one of them.

You just never know, until you try...

THE END



A Chance Encounter

by Shane Dix

He stepped from the grey shadows into the teeming rain; a tall man with a solid frame, neatly trimmed hair and beard, and features both dark and handsome. He looked up and down the quiet, empty street, his countenance creased with puzzlement and curiosity. He searched for some sign of life other than the dog curled up beneath a nearby car, but found none. Then his attention returned to the house in front of him.

He walked up to the front door and rapped his knuckles against the fly-screen. The door swung open, and through the mesh he could make out a young girl, her face masked by shadows. She stood there for a few moments, as if waiting for him to speak first.

Then, 'Yes?'

'I'm sorry to trouble you,' he said, 'But I seem to be lost. I was wondering if I could use your phone?'

She paused before answering. 'Yes. Of course. Please, come in.'

She unlatched the fly-screen and pushed it open. He smiled politely as he entered, shedding his coat and hanging it upon a coat rack. She showed him the lounge room where an open fire burned pleasantly, exuding an embracing warmth into the cluttered and untidy room.

'I'm sorry to barge in on you like this,' he said, and found he was apologising for her slovenliness. 'I just got into town, and somehow I found myself wandering about down here. Don't ask me how.'

'No need to apologise,' she said kindly. 'Please, have a seat. I'll fetch you a drink. Warm you up a bit.'

'Thank you,' he said, sitting. 'I know it sounds strange, but of all the houses I passed yours was the only one I felt comfortable with. It looked a little familiar somehow.'

She returned with a drink; scotch and dry, no ice. His favourite mix. He looked at her suspiciously as he sipped the drink, but decided to say nothing. She sat opposite him on a wide and spacious armchair, tucking her legs beneath her skirt and smiling genially.

'So what was it you were looking for?' she said shortly.

He thought for a moment, then laughed. 'I'm not really sure.'

'Well, how about what do you do for a living?'

'Now *that* I can answer. I'm a draughtsman. I've come down from Melbourne, looking to find a new start in life. Bad love affair,' he explained, and surprised himself with his openness on the subject.

'Sorry,' she said with a curt shrug.

'What about yourself?' he said. 'What do you do for a living?'

'A writer. Journalism mainly. But I do dabble in fiction.'

'Really. Anything published?'

'Not yet. But I remain hopeful.'

'Do you live here alone?' he asked suddenly.

She grinned and looked away shyly. 'I'm not married, if that's what you mean.'

'Engaged?' he pressed.

'Not even steady.'

'Oh.'

He sipped his drink, regarding her fondly. She had a slim and attractive figure, and a plain and gentle face. But it was this plainness which he found appealing. That and her pleasant nature.

'Well,' he said, realising he had been staring. 'I musn't take up any more of your time. You've been very kind. Perhaps if you could just allow me to call a taxi, then I can leave you in peace.'

'Oh no, don't go,' she said. 'Please. It's not very often I get callers. At least wait until the rain stops.'

'Well, thank you,' he said. 'I can't see how I can refuse. I mean, it's not very often I get asked by a pretty lady to keep her company.'

She blushed lightly and shuffled uncomfortably in the chair.

'My name is Michael,' he said, leaning over and extending a hand.

'Hello, Michael,' she said, taking it and shaking. 'Susan.'

'Hello, Susan.'

They chatted amiably through the hours that followed, touching upon a number of different topics.

Susan continued to refill Michael's glass whenever it was empty, and as the night advanced, his conversation became franker and bolder. It was only when he came to speak of his earlier years that he ran into difficulty and was unable to talk. Not because he was embarrassed about it, but rather because his memories of the time were hazy and patchy.

'It's funny,' he said. 'But it's only now when I sit down and actually think about it, that I realise how empty my life really is.'

She smiled uncomfortably, looking down to the glass she turned between her fingers.,

'I know how you feel,' she said softly. 'My life is the same. Empty, that is. Only I can remember every last lonely hour I have ever spent. I wish I *could* forget. But loneliness isn't something easily forgotten.'

'Come on,' he said. 'I can't believe your life could have been as bad as all that. Someone as attractive as yourself?'

Her cheeks flushed again.

'I'm sorry,' he said. 'I didn't mean to embarrass you. I shouldn't be so forward. It's the drink that is making me so...' He shrugged.

'No, it was nice. Thank you. It's just that no-one has ever said that to me before.'

'There have been no men in your life?'

'Nothing serious. I guess I'm very old-fashioned in my thinking. I like to get to know people before...' Her voice trailed off into silence, and she sipped her drink to cover her discomfort.

'And these boys weren't very old-fashioned?' he offered.

She smiled. 'Not really.'

'I'm sorry.'

'Don't be. I wasn't looking for sympathy.'

'I hope it hasn't made you too cynical about *all* men. We're not all bad, you know.'

'I'm sure you're not,' she said, then fell quiet once more.

'Well,' he said. 'The rain's stopped so I guess I should be going.'

'You don't have to,' she said quickly. 'Really.'

'But it must be getting late.' He looked over to the clock on the mantelpiece. 'Eight-thirty!' And laughed. 'Time seems to be going so slow. I thought it was closer to midnight.'

'Real time can be like that,' she said.

He frowned. 'What do you mean?'

'Nothing,' she said, a nervous laugh jostling the word. 'Listen, why not stay here tonight.'

'Oh, no, I couldn't,' he said, and felt his own cheeks redden.

'No, really. I have a spare bedroom. It wouldn't be any trouble.'

'I couldn't impose on you any more than I already have.'

'No imposition. In fact, you'd be doing me a favour using it.'

He lifted his shoulders in a helpless gesture and laughed. 'Okay.'

'Good,' she said, standing. 'Let's celebrate with another drink.'

He smiled to himself as he watched her step over to the drinks cabinet. The more he got to know her, the more appealing she became. He felt so good being with her. So *right*. In fact he felt more comfortable with her than he had felt with any other woman.

'But I'll only stay on one condition,' he said as she turned to face him. 'That you allow me to cook you breakfast. I do the best scrambled eggs you have ever tasted.'

'It's a deal,' she said, and handed him the glass. 'Scrambled is my favourite.'

'Really?'

She nodded. 'Really.'

'How about that.' He paused for a few moments to stare at her soft features. Then, 'Are you *sure* you haven't got a boyfriend hiding somewhere around the place?'

'Positive,' she said, smiling.

'Good,' he said. 'I'm glad.'

* * *

'This really is very good,' she said, scraping more egg onto her fork.

He smiled and finished the last of his juice. 'Are you working today?'

'Not really,' she said. 'Perhaps a little on my story.'

'You'll have to let me read it someday.'

'Maybe,' she said. 'It's not very good.'

'The humble writer, eh?'

She shrugged.

'I was wondering,' he said. 'If you weren't busy, perhaps you could show me around town. Help me get acquainted with the place.'

'Okay,' she said. 'I'd like that.'

'Great,' he said, clapping his hands together. 'And look, I promise to find myself some alternative accommodation before nightfall.'

'You're more than welcome to stay here. It's no problem, I promise.'

He smiled broadly. 'I was kind of hoping you'd say that. But doesn't it bother you having a stranger in your house?'

'After all we spoke about last night, I'd hardly call you a stranger. And besides, if you were going to do anything nasty I think you would have done it by now.'

'I guess so,' he said. 'Oh, and don't worry, I'll make sure I pay my way while I'm here.'

'I'm sure you will,' she said.

For the rest of the morning they drove around town taking in the sights. They visited the museum and the art gallery, and a few historical landmarks; then enjoyed a coffee in a quiet side-street cafe. And the

more time he spent with her, the stronger his affections became.

He didn't understand how he could feel like he did after such a short time, but he was confident that she felt the same about him. It was the way she laughed at his jokes, the way she smiled at him, and the way she listened to his every word. And every now and then, out the corner of his eye, he would catch her staring at him.

In the afternoon she took him down to the river and walked with him along the banks, her arm brushing lightly against his own. Instinctly he reached out and took her hand.

Startled, she flinched and pulled away from him.

'I'm sorry,' he said quickly. 'I didn't mean to -'

'It's okay,' she said, her face red and her hands fidgeting at her sides. 'I'm sorry. I just didn't... expect it.'

'I just thought -'

'Please.' An uncomfortable silence suddenly fell between them. After a few minutes she said, 'Maybe we'd better be getting home.'

'Sure,' he said softly, apologetically. 'Sure.'

That night she locked herself in her room. He sat listening to the tapping of her typewriter keys upstairs, sipping scotch and brooding over the day's events. He was angry with himself for having pushed for her affection too soon. He should have waited for her to have made the first move.

But he was anxious to hold her, to kiss her. He had never felt this way about *anyone*. It were as if his whole life had been *meant* for her.

'Listen to me,' he whispered. 'I've not even known the girl two days.'

After a while the typing stopped and he heard the door open upstairs; then the stockinged footsteps on the landing. He quickly finished his drink and waited for her to enter. She did so with an unsteady smile, moving over to the drinks cabinet and pouring herself a glass of wine.

'How did it go?' he said.

'How did what go?'

'The writing.'

'Oh, that.' She looked surprised. 'Fine.'

'Look, about today...'

'You don't have to apologise. It was just the suddenness of it, I guess. I hadn't expected you to make an advance so soon.'

'Are you sorry I did?'

'No.' She smiled. 'Flattered, actually. Excited.'

He grinned at this and shook his head lightly. 'I can't explain what is going on inside of me, Susan. I feel so strongly for you. I've never felt this way before. I know it must sound like a corny line, but -'

'No, it doesn't. I feel the same way about you. It's as if we were meant for one another. Like we were intended to meet.'

'Yes.' He laughed uncertainly. 'That's exactly how it feels.'

'Don't let it worry you,' she said. She sat in the armchair opposite him, tucking her legs beneath her.

'But it does. I mean, I really do... love you! But that's impossible! After only two days!'

'Not impossible, just unlikely,' she said. 'But then, I deal with unlikely situations.'

He frowned, puzzled.

'My stories,' she explained.

'Oh, I see,' he said, nodding.

There was a lengthy pause before she spoke again. 'Are you happy with staying here?' she asked.

'Happy?' He searched her expression for levity, but found only apprehension in her wrinkled brown. 'I can think of no other place I'd rather be; no other *person* I'd rather be with. I feel like I've always known you. Like...' He shook his head irritably. 'It sounds so stupid!'

'No,' she insisted. 'It doesn't.'

'It feels like everything prior to our meeting yesterday was just a lead-up to you. To us!'

She nodded sagely. 'I know.'

'I'd like to...'

'Kiss me?' she offered.

'Yes,' he said, and felt guilty for wanting to. 'Yes, I would. But I'm not sure how to go about it. That sounds pathetic, doesn't it?'

'Not really,' she said. 'Things that come naturally can often seem awkward. I've never kissed anyone either.'

'But I have! And yet, I feel as if I'm about to do it for the first time. It's weird.'

'It's nice,' she corrected.

'Yes,' he said, grinning. 'It is nice, isn't it?'

He moved over to her side, squeezing in beside her on the armchair. His hand ran the length of her hair to her shoulders, its softness unlike anything he had ever touched before. Of all the girls he had kissed before, loved... No, not loved, *This* was love. Before had been... lust? How fine the line must be which separates the two. He had truly felt for those other girls at the time, but in retrospect he could see how empty the relationships had really been.

He leaned in closer to Susan. His lips touched hers, carefully, uncertainly; her lips responded tentatively. Their teeth clicked for a moment and she giggled in embarrassment. He smiled, but said nothing. They kissed again, with increasing surety and confidence; and he felt a warmth surge through him. His hand at the base of her neck held her firmly, allowing his lips to explore hers fully...

'Mmmm,' he moaned. 'Tastes delicious.'

'Mmmm,' she concurred, and kissed him again.

'Like the first time,' he whispered.

'It was,' she said, and smiled.

* * *

Michael found his love for Susan develop at an alarming pace; so fast at times that it frightened him.

He cherished the times when they would lie together at night. They were never short on conversation, speaking often of the people they had known, their families, and frequently on the expectations of their relationship.

Whenever she would write, he would remain downstairs and do the housework. Before meeting her he had never had much of an inclination towards domestic matters, but now in the light of this new relationship he was even enjoying it. It made him feel wanted; gave him a sense of belonging.

He would often sit in the dark and listen to the chatter of the typewriter keys upstairs, wondering what it was she wrote about. But whenever he would ask to read some of her work, she would shyly refuse.

There was never any expectation for him to go out and find work. It was as if she were content to have him around for the chores that she never had time for, and that his love for her was payment enough. But after a while he began to feel uncomfortable with the situation, began to feel self-conscious of the fact that he was living off her meagre wage.

'I've been thinking, Susan,' he said one night as they lay together. 'It's about time I started contributing something financial to this relationship. I think I should start looking for a job.'

'You don't need to. You know that.'

'I know. But I'd like to.'

'But I need you around the house,' she said. 'That's more important. I mean, the place has never looked so tidy and clean. I've never eaten this well before.'

'That's all well and good, Susan. But I'm a draughtsman. Since I met you I haven't done a thing to secure myself any kind of employment. I've become lazy. I need to find some work.'

'No,' she snapped irritably in the dark. 'You can't!'

'Hey, take it easy, Susan. What do you mean, I can't?'

'I mean... Oh, God, I don't know what I mean. You just can't. I can't explain. This is getting too confusing.'

'Confusing? What is so confusing? All I want is to get myself a bloody job, for chrissakes! It's not like I'm asking to have an affair, or anything. Don't be so possessive.'

'I'm not being possessive! You don't understand!'

'No, I don't. Dammit, Susan, I love you. I wouldn't do anything to spoil what we have together. I don't know what I'd do if I lost you. You mean everything to me. But I'm feeling stifled. I want to get out and do something with my life. I don't want to depend on you for everything.'

'You depend on me for more than you think,' she said bitterly.

'Okay,' he said. 'So why don't you want me to get a job? It would be good for our relationship. And we could certainly do with the money.'

'We're doing alright.'

'Are we? On your small income as part-time journalist? You're continually scrimping and saving to make ends meet.'

'Don't use cliches on me, please.'

'I'm not bloody using bloody cliches! Dammit! Don't be so defensive, Susan! I'm a professional draughtsman. I can help you out.'

'What was your last job,' she said suddenly.

'What?'

'Your last job. What was it?'

'It was back in Melbourne.'

'What were you working on?'

He thought for a few moments, but couldn't find the memory. Like so much of his past, there was only a vague recollection, both indistinct and far off, making him uncomfortable to think about it.

'I'm not sure now,' he confessed. 'It has been a long time. But that doesn't mean I've lost my touch. It's like riding a bicycle. Once you know how you -'

'Oh, stop using those damn cliches! You're starting to sound like a bad story!'

She moved down to the foot of the bed, sitting there with her head in her hands. After a few minutes he ventured over to her side.

'What's the matter, Susan?' he said. 'I feel so helpless.'

She shook her head gently. 'There's nothing you can do. Let's just change the subject, okay?'

'Okay,' he said. 'Okay. Will you come back to bed though. It gets kind of lonely in there without you.'

A soft, uncertain laugh suddenly broke her frown, and she leant into him and hugged him tightly.

'I love you,' she said. 'I don't want to lose you.'

'You won't,' he said. 'I promise.'

He wrapped the blanket around her and kissed her hair, rocking her gently in his arms. Then, 'So how is the story coming along?'

'Fine,' she said.

'Can I read it yet?'

'Not yet,' she said.

'When?'

She shrugged. 'I don't know. When it's good enough.'

'I really would like to read it, you know.'

'I know. But you can't. Not yet, anyhow.'

'You're very mysterious. Do you know that? Sometimes I feel like there is nothing about you I don't know. And yet there is still that side of you which continues to elude me.'

She shrugged in his arms.

'One day I'll get to see that side of you.'

'I know,' she said, sadly.

* * *

He stood hesitantly outside her study, the still and quiet night amplifying his every sound. He tip-toed into the room, gently pushing the door closed behind

him. A pale moonlight illuminated the desk in the corner. He moved over to it as quietly as possible, but the floorboards creaked under his weight. He stood still for a couple of minutes, barely breathing listening for movement in the next room. When he was convinced she had not woken, he flicked on the desk lamp.

Notes littered the top of her desk while balls of screwed up paper circled the overflowing basket on the floor. Her story sat in a neat pile to the left of the typewriter. He picked up the loose sheets and read the title: *A Chance Encounter*.

Then read the first paragraph:

He stepped from the grey shadows into the teeming rain; a tall man with a solid frame, neatly trimmed hair and beard, and features both dark and handsome. He looked up and down the quiet, empty street, his countenance creased with puzzlement and curiosity. He searched for some sign of life other than the dog curled up beneath a nearby car but found none. Then his attention returned to the house in front of him...

'What the...?' he whispered.

The words troubled him, make him feel uneasy, and he suddenly felt a knot of discomfort tighten in his stomach. He flicked through some more pages, glancing at the sentences with growing nausea.

She had a slim and attractive figure, and a plain and gentle face. But it was this plainness that he found appealing..

'There have been no men in your life?' he said...

And this,

'Look, about today...'

'You don't have to apologise. It was just the suddenness of it, I guess. I hadn't expected you to make an advance so soon.'

'Are you sorry I did...'

He looked at each page, catching snatches of conversations he had shared with Susan, finding personal thoughts which she couldn't possibly have known about. He felt cold and confused as he continued to rifle through the manuscript. Nearer to the end he came upon a section where he was standing in her study reading over her story! He felt sick, somehow naked and vulnerable.

She stepped into the room behind him, watching in silence...

He turned around and saw her standing there, her glassy eyes shimmering in the pale light.

'What is this?' he said.

'It's my story,' she said sadly.

'But it's me,' he said.

'It's us,' she said.

'I don't understand. I'm...' He looked at the manuscript in his hands.

'You're my protagonist,' she explained with a shrug.

'I don't *understand*,' he said, his words choking on the emotion which was consuming him.

'I was lonely,' she said. 'I needed some company. I needed to be loved and wanted. I needed... you.'

'But...'

'You were everything I ever wanted in a companion. I always dreamt of the perfect love. It was a dream I wanted so badly.'

'But I love you,' he said weakly.

'Yes,' she said. 'You do. And I love you, too.'

'But it's not *real* ?'

'Yes, it is real. That's just it. I made my dream come true.'

He paused for a moment, looking away from her.

'Why do I feel so angry towards you? So resentful? I feel like you've cheated me! Why should I feel like that? Why couldn't I just go on loving you and feeling good about it? *Why?*'

'I don't know.'

'You don't *know* ? Dammit, who is writing this story if not you?'

'Please, I...' She sniffed back a tear and moved a few steps closer to him. 'I never expected this to happen. I never expected you to hate me. I never wanted that. I just wanted to be loved. There's nothing wrong with that, is there? Everyone deserves at least that much out of life. But something went wrong. I can't explain. I pictured such a perfect relationship between us. We'd meet and fall in love, and stay in love. But that was a dream, and when I made that dream real I... I forgot that reality has its own laws which must be obeyed.' She shrugged slightly. 'Perhaps true love can't exist outside of the written word. Perhaps

'Talk sense !' he snapped angrily.

'I'm trying,' she said softly, her eyes glistening with tears. She folded her arms across her chest and sighed heavily. 'I don't know why it has to be like this. All I know is that kind of love I've always dreamed about, the kind I've always read about, can't exist in real life. There are too many variables. People write songs and poems and books about love, and they say how beautiful and simple it is. But it's just fantasy, and fantasy isn't subject to the same rules that reality is. There is no such thing as perfect love.'

'I don't understand,' he repeated more calmly. 'I love you.'

'Only to the extent that I wanted you to.'

He looked at her in the half light of the room. He felt confused and frustrated, torn between the love which was the foundation of his existence, and the hatred which now burned through him.

'Love is an ideal. And when that ideal touches reality, it falls under a new set of laws, and it crumbles. It has to. Reality demands it. By bringing you into reality, I had to concur to those laws.'

'That doesn't make any sense,' he said. '*You're* writing the story!'

She shrugged helplessly and shook her head.

'So what happens now?'

'All stories end, Michael. Some happily. Real-life love, however, can only end in sorrow.' She turned away from him and wiped her eyes. 'I'm sorry.'

'Why can't you change the story?'

'I can't do that. It's already been told, already written.'

He looked at the manuscript, then again to her. He walked passed her and through the door, slapping the pages against her, leaving them to scatter across the floor.

* * *

He sat in the armchair looking out at the stormy day, watching a young couple huddled together beneath a raincoat hurrying towards the shelter of a bus stop. And felt envious of them.

Behind him he heard Susan enter the room, saw her ghostly reflection in the window. He turned to look at her, and saw the manuscript in her arms.

'What happens?' he said.

She clutched the pages close to her chest. 'I can't tell you that.'

'Why not? It concerns me, doesn't it?'

'I just can't. That would be allowing you a glimpse into your future, which might affect it.'

'But it has already been written,' he argued.

'It has been written,' she said. 'But not read.'

'What kind of double talk is that?'

'I can't tell you,' she whispered.

He turned suddenly back to the window. Then, 'I don't want to lose you, Susan. I love you too much. I don't think I could stand it.'

'I don't want to lose you either, Michael.'

He whirled around sharply. 'Then change the story now, before it's too late.' When she dropped her gaze to the floor, he said, 'Why does it have to be like this?'

'Because that's just the way it is in love stories. Tragedy is what makes them so endearing.'

'No!' he snapped. 'I just don't buy that! People prefer happy endings, dammit!'

'Only because it's not *real*. But this is!'

'I love you, Susan. Doesn't that count for anything?'

'Of course it does,' she said. 'But this is real now. It's out of my hands.'

'Damn you!' He stood abruptly and shoved passed her towards the door. She stood with her back to him, holding the manuscript tightly. He waited for a few minutes, expecting her to turn to him, to speak to him. But she remained silent. 'At least change the way I feel about you.'

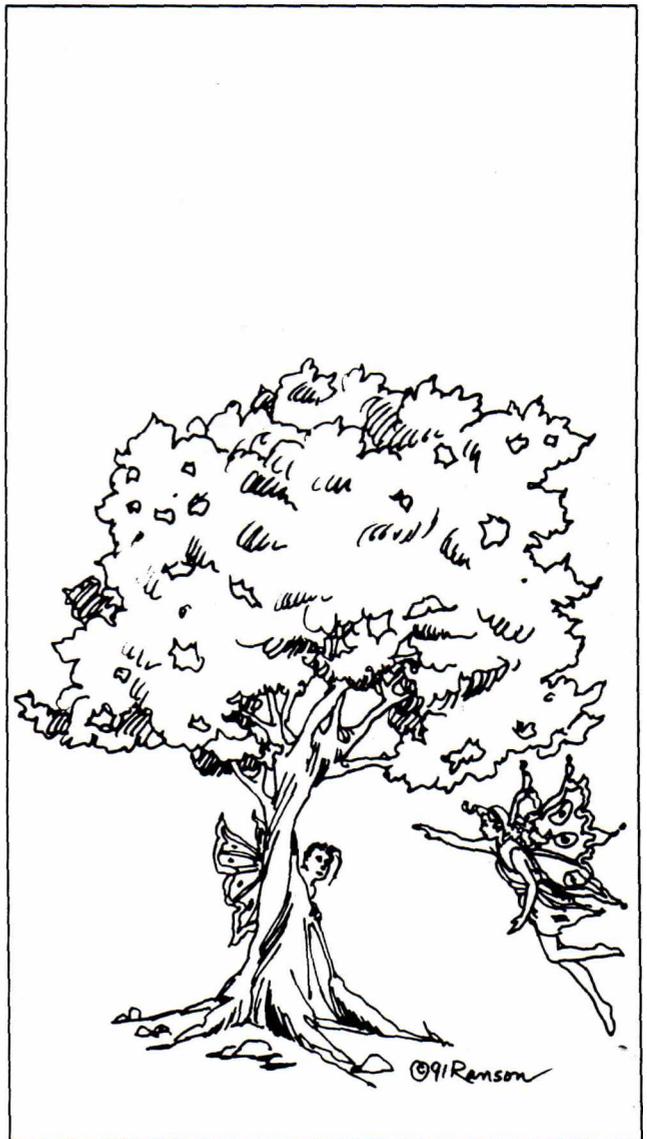
'I can't do that,' she said. She heard his footsteps down the hall, heard the front door open and slam shut again. 'I can't even change the way I feel about you.'

She stepped over to the window and watched as he lifted the collar of his coat to protect him from the downpour, pausing briefly to look over to a dog laying beneath a car. Then he walked off across the street, turning once to look back to her before the grey shadows blurred and dissolved his figure. She pressed her hand against the glass, felt a tear run down her cheek.

She sat down on the sofa and sighed; a soft breath in the stillness. She took the last page of the story and read the closing paragraph. And having read it, knew what she had to do.

She poured herself a glass of wine and took it upstairs to her study, locking the door behind her. There was already a sheet of paper in the roller, its face blank and waiting. Slowly at first, hesitantly, her trembling fingers began to punch at the keys. And as the words trickled out onto the page, she felt the strictures of the real world slip away, and the comforts of fiction envelop her.

End



PORTFOLIO

- **Andrey Karapetyan** -







Душмандин шит
Коммунист
Восстание
Мороз 1870-1871



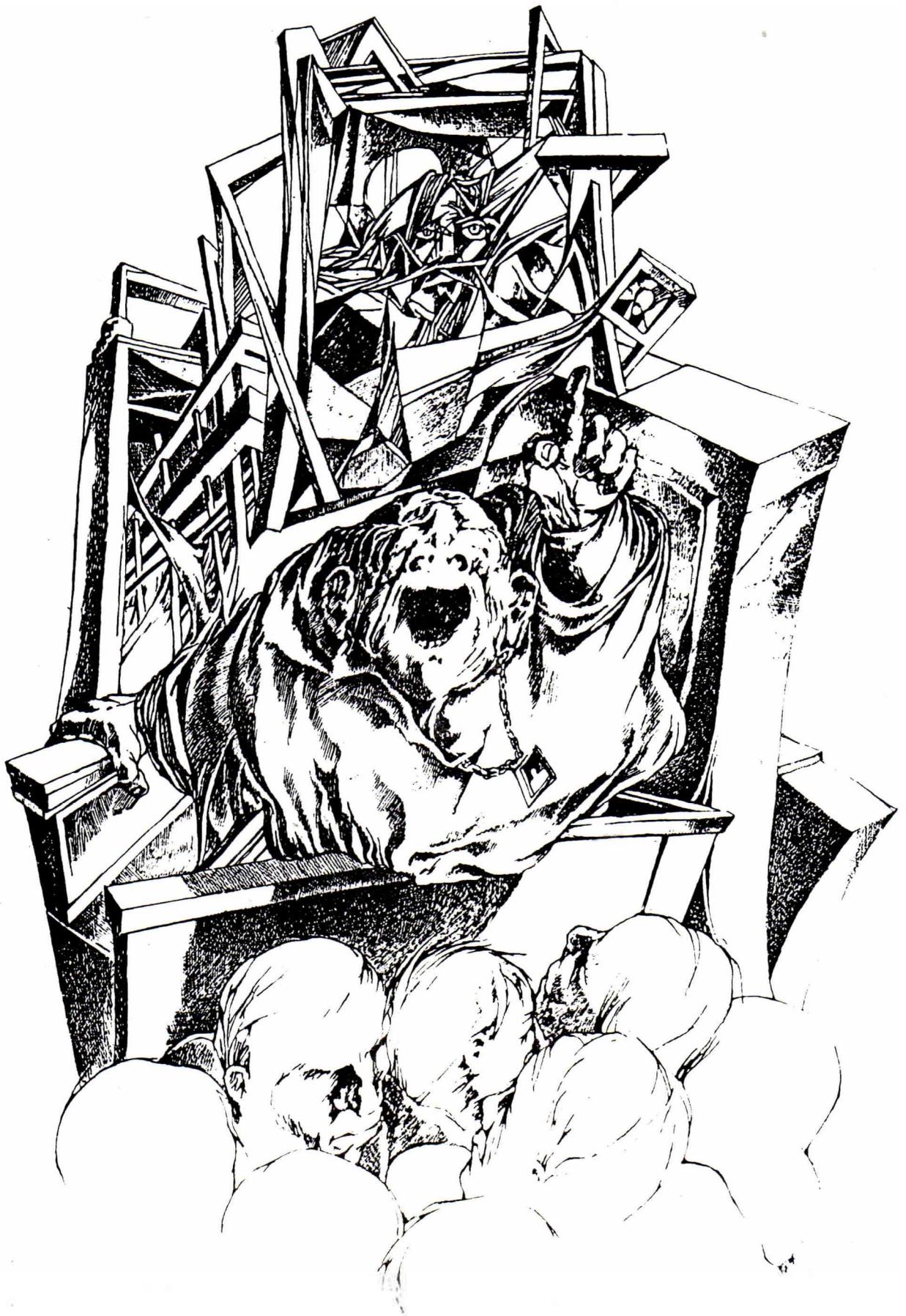


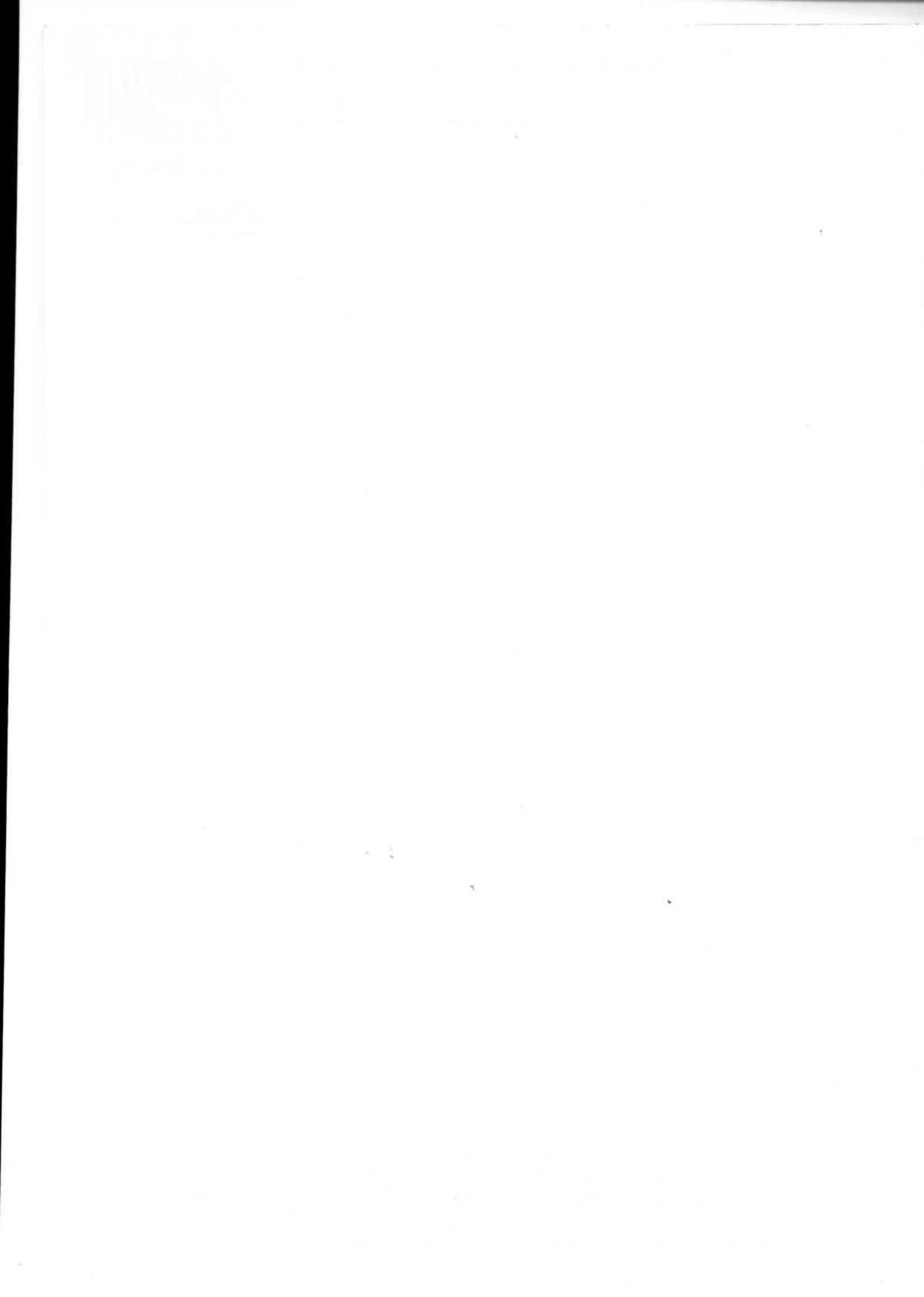




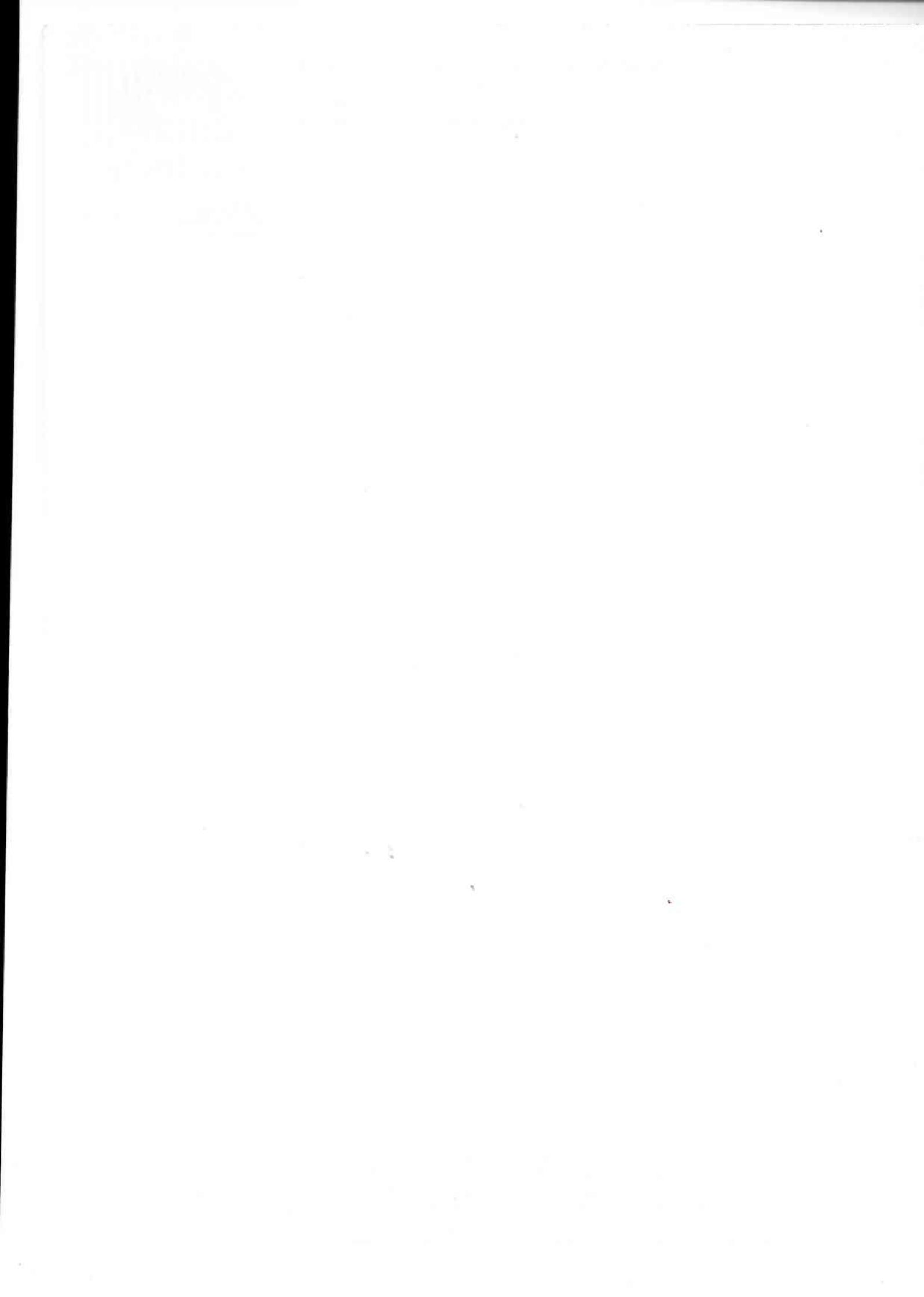
Личность отшельника
Клея восточной
Писем. Рубин 1911
Л. А. Юсупов















MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Juju, Argentina.

Lovely cover on THE MENTOR 70. So haunting. The sky is a bewitching hue, and the weird round rocks beneath make the familiar clouds seem curiously alien. Yes, lovely. What talent there is in your part of the world. And I always enjoy your choice in stories too.

Trip and convention reports seem to be "from another dimension". Our life in these wilds is so different, so "out of Time".

Brian Earl Brown feels he has doubts re my "conclusions", but I reiterate, it's not conclusions but mere coincidences I like to point out.

Harry Warner! I don't know if you'd find such pleasure in the tales from my early childhood in China. They were written from the point of view of a tiny rebel from Orthodoxy and tell of the confusions experienced, but it's no real adventure story, though I've had many adventures. But I was too busy figuring out whether the Fundamentalist god had a right to put folks in Hell. Publishers won't go for it, but I'm glad it's told. One's grand children will value the material in years to come, I think. But I'm back at the studies again very happily.

I'm focussing lately on developing a list of Quechuan words that exactly match terms for the same ideas as used in China over 3000 years ago (Sinologist Bernard Karlgren's reconstructions are trustworthy). My conclusions? What can I conclude? It's not modern Chinese terms the Quechuans have preserved, but words that went out of use in China thousands of years ago, for the modern forms there are unrecognizable. A *siak* becomes a *chu* or *ji*, etc., but in Quechuan echoes it may still be a *siak*-like echo, if not changed to *chag*-like forms.

To give an example: an old Chinese character represents "a feast of dog-flesh" (favorite food offered to ancestors and enjoyed by their living descendants also). The Quechuans also raised little dogs for food. Now:

that feast of dog flesh in old pronunciations in China was either *iap* or *iam*, and is now read *yen* or *yin* in usages. Concepts include "stuffing till nauseated". Adding more and more to what you're trying to eat.

Yapa and *Yama* are the Quechuan echoes. (No mention of dog-flesh, of course, nor in modern Chinese usages either). So you've the Quechuan *yapa* "to add" and *yapay* "again", versus their *yama*: "to get fed up with", "to eat till satisfaction", "get tired of", etc. One Chinese phonetic usage (when coupled with "smoke in the smoke hole" for "black"), *yen* or *yin* in modern Chinese readings, survives in the Quechuan *yana* for "black". (Apparently the N ending was old, too, and also in use.) With a woman present in Chinese, she's "amiable". In the Quechuan echo as today's *yanasa* she's a "lady friend". When the Chinese character was formally read *ap*, "to crush, press down" is covered. The Quechuan echo as *api* - stands for "meal - pap or gruel" (as you have to crush your grain to make it), as there is also an *apa* - "to bear". (Heavy loads do crush!)

In fact, the whole old picture of feasting in a dark, smoky hut with dog-flesh nicely cooked, (Quechuan *yana*, "to cook, prepare food", spicings included), the whole list of Chinese usages till now, is lit up by the Quechuan echoes that reveal how it was much earlier - at least 3,000 years earlier, when the Chinese were using the same words the Quechuans never altered but use still.

The entire Quechuan vocabulary has similar echoes in Archaic Chinese. "To give a lamb (formerly llamoid) as a present" in Quechuan is *shuna*. *Chun* stood for giving a lamb thus ritually, formerly, in Chinese. The Quechuan also used *Shuna* for a "large clay water-jar", but the character for presenting the lamb in Chinese as a phonetic covers "a large water-bath" instead. (I suspect it served for brewing some fermented

beverage for drinking when feasting on the lamb. And thus it goes. (14.8.91)

THE MENTOR 71 just came. Another gorgeous cover. Mark McLeod's talent in color is bewitching. What a shame there can't be many more covers like this one.

In THE MENTOR 70 Steve Sneyd remarks re my material having the "dubious air of pseudo plausibility of the links in Lovecraftian tales or accounts of The Illuminati".

However never read Lovecraft I can't comment one way or another. His writings never came my way, by chance. In any case, I don't care for horror tales, but I never thought my studies evoked horror despite the strange concepts that came to light in the research.

The Arrow material was written some years ago, but I've been trying lately in new stuff to be more matter-of-fact in listing recent findings. I hope to get the material into final shape gradually. (It's all still in draft form).

To Peter Booth: the "e" in Dogones as I spell it results from my tendency to spell in the Spanish way so I slip into the habit easily. For example, take the Spanish *camion* (truck). In the plural it's *camiones*, not *camions*. I've studied so much in Spanish source books, as can be realized. They're more available than English books down here.

Brian Earl Brown casts doubt on the ideograms that are hard to figure out. Well, in the first place, I should have presented them in larger size, done with a thicker pen so they'd be easier to copy. (The ms. I sent you had the characters included in a rather tiny way which made copying difficult). However, even if they'd been flawlessly presented, it wouldn't help Brian's wish to judge them as clues. You'd really have to be familiar with hundreds of basic Chinese radicals and phonetics to be able to see the links vividly. And even so, I don't feel I really know Chinese (or any tongue) "in depth" - not even my mother-tongue, English.

In 1978 I did take a lot of the studies with me to the States when invited up for my Aunt's 90th birthday. (She died over 100). Well, she introduced me to a Chinese lady scholar at the University in Atlanta, and the lady got so excited she actually said, "I've never been so excited in my life!". I gave her a stack of the notebooks I'd made which she planned to take back to China. Instead, she had to have an open heart operation soon afterwards and must avoid excitement henceforth, so I've not sent more stuff to her, poor love. But her reaction reassured me then a lot. To a scholarly Chinese, its value seemed evident, apparently.

I've been sharing some of the material with you because you seem to enjoy it, and I appreciate that. It makes me happy that someone at least finds it interesting (not just I). 9.10.91.

BRENT LILLIE, PO Box 382, Tweed Heads, NSW 2485.

I don't know why, but I found the cover of THE MENTOR 72 appealing - the drawing reminded me of the cartoons in the old SEX TO SIXTY magazines.

Overall, a very balanced issue, with the account of VolgaCon being the standout piece; although the stories were of a particularly high standard, especially Grai Hughes' MIRRORS AND SLIVERS, with its dreamy, inconclusive feel. Buck Coulson's contribution, which I sometimes feel slightly tedious, was fascinating.

TWELVE BAR ACCESS lost me in the first chorus. I clicked onto the ending of Margaret Pearce's A WAY WITH WOMEN almost before I started. Maybe she planned it that way. Well written, but the old "shoe on the other foot" premise has been done to death.

Harry Andruschak's letter ripping into L. Ron Hubbard's WOTFC more or less put into words my misgivings about the competition. Though I've reached the quarter finals twice, I'm beginning to have my doubts about the whole thing. Any Scientology literature I receive goes straight in the bin. James Verran, I know, stressed that he was under no pressure to join the Scientology movement during his American visit. But I'm worried that I'm being led on. A new author is a pretty easy mark.

On the other hand, the stories in the WOTFC anthologies are always good, and the judging panels read like a who's who of science-fiction. Some feedback from Mentorians would be appreciated. Perhaps some will say it's just sour grapes, and perhaps they will be right. (-.11.91)

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

I appreciated the Volgacon report, and the souvenirs. I'd have liked to have gone, but it was financially impossible.

I can sympathise with Pam Boal's problems. I've noticed that as I get older, I tend to increase the dyslexia of my fingers and frequently type the wrong word, or even type the right word backwards. I generally catch these errors, but they're annoying. When I was tech writing for Honeywell, years ago, one of the engineers would quite often use a word that was vaguely similar to the one he wanted, just as Pam mentions reading the wrong word. He drove the secretaries up the wall. Normally they would bring his letters to one of the junior engineers for translation before typing them, but once in awhile they'd bring one to me. (The engineer became furious if they returned it to him.) What really irritated me was that when Honeywell closed the factory where we worked, this engineer got a job as a technical writer, and I couldn't. I shudder to think what one of his instruction sheets looked like.

Not sure what Mike Deckinger means by the "ungainly size" of the new AMAZING. 99% of US magazines are that size, and they get newsstand display. It's the digests which are out of step with the rest of US publishing these days.

I expect that naming children after favorite sf characters is no more odd than naming them after tv stars, which a lot of mundanes do. I wouldn't do that, but I did name our dog Severian, and in the past named

various dogs after various stf characters. (I told Gene Wolf about Severian, and he sent Sev a box of dog biscuits. Interestingly, Gene is the only visitor we've had that Sev didn't bark at.)

I thought my closing remarks last time were reasonably plain; fandom sometimes leads to totally unexpected things, like becoming a minister. Or, in my case, a recording engineer, which I did mostly so a friend's voice could get recorded on a commercial tape. (I'm still getting royalties on that one.) Or, also in my case, becoming a Leader of Black America when I'm not black. Though that one I did to myself. It's all fun, but a lot of it is unexpected.

I believe you erred in your explanation of "apazine". The APA mailing which is sent to each member is called an APA mailing. An "apazine" is one of the individual components of that mailing; a fanzine that is distributed in an APA.

Lynda Weyman asks if I always do weird things. Only when the opportunity comes along, Lynda. Some years back a group of us were attending a pioneer "re-creation", and I was attracted to a tent displaying various fur products, including a skunkskin cap. Since Lan wears a coonskin to some conventions, I looked at the skunksin, everyone else in the party chorused "You have to buy it, Buck; it's *you*", and I bought it. Wore it to last weekend's convention in Huntsville, Alabama, and it attracted a lot of attention, both from fans and the non-fans along the road. (Yes, I did get to meet Lan and his coonskin while I was wearing the skunk, and I said "I see your cap and raise you one".) Juanita christened my cap "Mam'selle Hepsibah", which will be comprehensible only to fans of the old "Pogo" comic strip.

Normally I don't send the same material to different fanzines, but the ministry seemed able to take wider dissemination. They were two different articles, though, Mike; I didn't just copy the previous article to a US fanzine, but wrote up a different one with the same subject material.

The Russian voting on awards was interesting because of the different publication dates of the originals; science fiction of several different eras is being published during the same period and directly compared, which it really can't be in our countries. (13.11.91)

JOHN TIPPER, PO Box 487, Strathfield NSW 2135.

Your report on Volgograd made fascinating reading and I'm sure it was something you won't forget in a hurry. Rather you than me. I assume someone took the locals a supply of the US FANDOM DIRECTORY, as I've had a couple of strange letters from Russian fans asking me to publish their stories - after I pay them lots of money! Do they assume that all Australian publishers pay contributors?

Not much fiction in TM 72 so there's little upon which to comment. Although I generally enjoy Grai Hughes' stories, one point in MIRRORS AND SLIVERS

offers a jarring note. Surely the exterior cleaning of such structures would be carried out by non-manual means? One only has to look at the system used on the Sydney Centrepoint Tower. The roller-cleaner in use on that landmark is rather crude (and scared the life out of me as I sat eating my way through dessert in the Tower Restaurant) so one can safely assume that more sophisticated units will be in use in the near future, without the need to risk human life. Perhaps inbuilt ultrasonics could be used to vibrate the surfaces clean. Any other ideas among readers?

Although R&R contains a number of interesting letters, there's nothing really worth commenting on, apart from FORBIDDEN PLANET. A little over twelve months ago I had the ultimate pleasure of viewing a brand new uncut print of FP on a ten metre screen in a small Sydney cinema, and it was a revelation. One could in fact count the goose-pimples on Anne Francis's neck, if one felt so inclined... The point is, this movie is a yardstick by which to judge all others following. Do any US contributors now if the rumours concerning a remake are true - brought about from what I understand by the re-release of the original novel? (20.11.91)

CHRIS A. MASTERS, PO Box 7545, St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, Vic 3004.

I'm sitting in front of my computer; the TV is tuned to all night rock video show "Rage"; it's about 3:15 am on a Sunday morning. A few moments ago I finished reading my copy of THE MENTOR #72. I decided to write this straight away, while I still remember what I've read. The cover, and artwork throughout for that matter, was all of high quality. Most of the fiction was readable, but not really my cup of tea; except for A WAY WITH WOMEN by Margaret Pearce, which to my 'umble brain cells was by far the best of the offerings. The prospect of immortality, or at least considerable life extension, has always appealed to me in a big way. At the age of about 10 or 11, I remember being asked by a teacher what I wanted to be when I grew up, to which I replied, "A Vampire." But giving up my sex to become a woman just to live forever, that is something to think about: the prospect of spending eternity as female *might* actually be a fate worse than death! I'd rather be a vampire any day.

Your piece on the VOLGACON was an interesting read, not because I'm fascinated by Cons (a rather unfortunate name. Calling something a "Con" somehow just doesn't strike me as smart advertising) but rather because I've always wanted to visit the Soviet Union. When/if I ever go, I will certainly heed your advice and bring my own toilet paper. I'll be looking forward to your next instalment.

Again, by far the most entertaining part of THE MENTOR was the R&R DEPT. Peter Booth really seems to have stirred up a few of you LoC writers. Don't know why, I spent a few hours with Peter when he was in Melbourne a couple of weeks back; and apart from nailing my head to the floor, after which he

repeatedly hit me with a baseball bat while assaulting me with a barrage of polysyllabic words, Peter came across as a quite affable fellow; didn't even mention his sex life once.

I would also love to get one of those mail order Doctor of Divinity diplomas (please send me the relevant details). Wow, a licence to mouth off. Maybe I could start an exorcism service? Do the same people offer diplomas in other areas as well? You see, I've always wanted to be a brain surgeon. The prospect of drilling or sawing into someone's cranium greatly appeals to me... "The C.A. Masters' Home lobotomy Service"!!! Yeah!

Back to immortality: I became very pissed and frustrated with life (even more than I already was), about five years ago, when I calculated that my life span wasn't long enough to even read all the books I wanted to; not to mention everything else I wanted to do. Contemplating this made me very depressed, to which I reacted by locking myself in my room for about five years; doubling my weight by overeating; watching hundreds of videos containing as much depravity in the form of blood, gore, sex, violence, gore, blood and more blood; becoming a connoisseur (sic) of the macabre, the depraved and the satanic (yes, I am a satanist!); I considered becoming a serial/mass murderer but Julian Knight beat me to it, so instead I began writing horror as an outlet for my insanity; writing weird diatribes to even weirder magazines; calling up strangers selected at random from the phone book at weird hours to play them recordings of Derryn Hinch saying "Shame, Shame, Shame"; plus other things unspeakable. I was, and still am, one frustrated and bitter loony...

I was introduced to fandom about two years ago (I don't know if I'm really a *fan* of anything; except maybe horror and the macabre, satanic symbolism and the occult, films, TV and tabloid journalism; but these I'm more a student of rather than a fan). Most science fiction literature bores me silly, but I love sf on the screen. Out of my most recent readings I did enjoy the Hyperion books by Dan Simmons, but apart from these the past pure sf book I read was Greg Bear's EON a few years back. My main literary interests are horror, the occult, philosophy, unexplained phenomena, science, murder (mainly serial killers), and the writings of the lunatic fringe. (Alien contacts, conspiracies, holocaust revisionism, Church of the SubGenius, etc.), when I began to purchase fanzines, and joined a couple of fannish groups, including the Melbourne Science Fiction Club... I attended a few of their meetings last year, and although they weren't really my kind of thing, I realised that I was not alone in the world; there were dozens of others just as crazy as I was (some even nuttier - if you've seen members of the Dr Who and Star Trek fan clubs arguing which is better, you'll know what I mean). A few months later, while looking for an Australian publication to send a couple of my stories, I realised that there was no local outlet for horror writers in Australia: I had just bought a computer, and I decided to start my

own magazine. Some time, much correspondence and a lot more work later the first issue of EOD emerged; and since then three more issues have appeared, with a fifth near completion was I write this. Back to fandom; I still don't understand it. If anybody does, and can explain it to me, please do.

Now to make a few comments about what I don't understand: being relatively new, and in many ways ignorant of this fandom thing - somehow I doubt whether I'll ever meet the requirements that some of these SAGPOFS (Self Appointed Grand Poobahs Of Fandom) insists that one must have before one can even contemplate belonging to this elusive fandom - I find all this bickering amongst you, in the R&R DEPT of this magazine, as well as many other zines, rather silly. Over the couple of years that I have been a fringe observer, I have noted the following things: one can never consider him/her/itself a fan unless he/she/it can recite the name of every actor to have played Dr Who, fill out a Star Trek crossword, be able to hum the Thunderbirds theme, like Blake's Seven, know what a dilithium crystal is used for, etc. etc. ad nauseam. Is this really important? One SAGPOF recently wrote in its feuilleton a statement admonishing anyone who dared to use the abbreviation "sci-fi"! Welll EXXXKKKEEE-OOOOOZZE MMMEEEEEE!!! All this sort of thing does is to give these SAGPOFs a feeling of pseudo-superiority, the delusion that their scribular excrement is somehow more important than that of others. Any psychologist will tell you that this stems from deep feelings of inferiority. My favourite was the idiot who listed what books one must have read to be considered "educated"... well done fool.

Then again, these idiots, luckily, are in the minority. The vast number of people that I have met and come across through EOD and other correspondence, are down to earth, intelligent and non-pretentious. All I can say is that the sooner the rest of us get together, weed out and exterminate these SAGPOFS, the better for all.

[Well, Chris, in any fairly large group - even in "real life" - you'll get people like these, they are a fact of life. Whether you put up with them or do something about it is up to you, the individual. - Ron]

This brings me to my next, and depending on how sore my butt gets from sitting on this chair, last point. I'm very interested in joining or, if one doesn't already exist, starting a Horror Club, or Horror Appreciation Society in Melbourne, that can have regular meetings, etc. I attended a few meetings held by the Melbourne SF Club last year and, although being a total horror-head and sf of only marginal interest, I couldn't help but be impressed with the way everything was run. It made me envious that there wasn't a similar horror club in operation. I'd also like to start or join a horror writer's workshop in Melbourne. If anybody out there is interested, or can supply me with further information, please drop me a line.

Ahhh... Kenneth Copeland has just started on the tube. Time to watch a real loony in action. I still think he looks like a reject from the Thunderbirds. (24.11.91)

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

Hmmm. No doubt you'll have the purists going fer yer jugular as regards the cover art for MENTOR #72. I don't mind it myself. At least it's well drawn. Just get rid of the bloke and have a naked chick. Yeah. It could give the wrong impression as to content, tho, for newcomers to the zine. Wot?!?! No full-frontal naked lust vixens inside?? Wot a rip-off!!

Interesting look at how a Russkicon works. They do take it all a bit seriously tho, don't they? It confirms my suspicion that most Russian SF folk walk around with clenched hair (a great line I wish I'd invented but Neil Simon got there first). I don't think much of the chances for Russian SF in the West, too dour or inclined to go for the "cheap shot". I don't think Western SF, except for some of the major writers, would go down all that well there. Too many "alien" concepts (no pun intended) for the culture. Give it ten or twenty years and we'll see. Most of the current prozine stuff just wouldn't get across to the Russian reader at the mo.

Items #18 and #73 in the FP List might seem minor or a duplicate to Brian Earl Brown but you can have a story set on the planet Argh which circles the star Ugh while not having a legitimate extra-solar destination. The planet Altair is also very exact as to type considering it's star classification and location (fourth out from the primary). The movement of the moons is also of interest but I never intended to bog the article down in convoluted astronomical data or planetary phenomena, even though this might have added another twenty items to the list.

Fell about reading Grai Hughes' interpretations of Peter Booth's name. Brilliant bit of work. One wonders at Pete's reply. Well... actually one doesn't. Slightly reminds me of when I had one of the Nipponettes I write to translate my name into Japanese then back again. I think it was hirigana (though it could have been katakana, always get them mixed). Anyhoo... my name came out as Dayboard Dancepassagemud. I say, wot a moniker! No wonder these Nips think we're strange. Rather like the Dayboard bit. Sounds as tho I just got off the boat from Trinidad, Mon, but the Dancepassagemud leaves me to think I might be better employed bowling for Pakistan. Lot of fun, names.

Well, Buck, I used the term "memory metal" because I couldn't think of a better one. I am aware of the original connotations. When I see solid steel shutters appear out of a quarter inch frame then disappear back into said frame (ie Morbius's home) then I'm left to simply conjecture on the mecha, utilising known phraseology to make my meaning, hopefully, accessible. Perhaps the shutters remain as a liquid in a magnetic domain that responds to a signal that codifies

their actual state into the required structure, instantaneously, using a phased neo-genetic code that works on the molecular level to re-arrange the atoms into the required solid basis according to the aforementioned instructions? Then again, I could be wrong. In which case you could scrap the above and begin again, only this time, for starters, try reversing the polarity of the neutron flow.

[You might ask Batman the same question. In the latest move his car is shielded using apparently the same type of shutters. - Ron.]

Ah so, Steve Sneyd. It took about ten viewings of FP using both so-mo and frame by frame. Praise be to great god Video!! Saver of sanities.

Yes, Gary Deindorfer, I was aware that the movie was very loosely based on Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST. Every man and his dog is by now. Yeah, Anne looked great. One of my favourite fantasies is to be an isolated scholar living on a planet investigating an ancient techno with a nice blonde daughter who likes wearing very short dresses and is very devoted to Daddy. Sigh.

No, Betty Wilder, I'm not as boring as you think I am (though several people I know might agree with you). The effort on the FP list was a one-off both for my own amusement and that of others. Just exercises for the brain. If you feel like slinging mud by all means do. I've been insulted by experts over the years and doubt you'll have me shivering in me little booties. I basically couldn't give a shit, sweetie.

Nice job of scouting, Richard Brandt. Robby is often mistakenly credited, in both the pro and fan press, with following Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics. He doesn't. He totally ignores the Third Law which states that a robot must protect its own existence provided that doing so doesn't allow a human to come to harm or contradict the first two laws. When Morbius tells him to stick his arm in the household disintegrator beam he is about to do so until Morbius stops him. If Robby really followed the Third Law he'd tell Morbius to stick it, or the robotic equivalent. Morbius would come to no harm by Robby's refusal.

One *could* argue however, that since Robby was "tinkered together during the first few months" he witnessed what happened to the other colonists and was aware of Morbius' discoveries and the resulting ramifications for those who displeased Morbius care of the energy creature created from his merest thoughts. Saying "No" to Morbius might be akin to Robby placing himself in line with a trash compacter irregardless of any conscious kind thoughts toward him on the part of Morbius. Robby, therefore, aware of possible repercussion for making Morbius lose "face" in front of the visitors, after the visitors have left, elects to lose an arm rather than his "life". He will, after all, feel no pain and the arm can be replaced. Amazing what stray musings can lead to, innit?

But, Richard, you *did* find a missing item for the list. Well done. That Robby didn't obey all three

laws blinded me to the fact that he *does* obey the first two. So.. #114: Robot that cannot harm humans.

Gad!!... I actually understood John Alderson's letter from the wilds of Turkey. Have I suddenly entered another dimension? Just a sec... I'll take a wander outside.... no.. everything seems normal. The twenty foot mushrooms are still growing nicely down by the station and Godzilla is brunching on Sydney before satisfying his appetite on Tokyo (yet again). So, it must be a first for Indiana Alderson. I wonder why they didn't kidnap him, instead? He probably wouldn't shut up when they approached him. Anyhoo, I look forward to another first from Indiana Alderson when he returns. A fascinating article on the Ark. But wot's the bet that he goes all mystical on us and produces yet another wondrous wordmangle? (10.12.91)

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

I hope loccing THE MENTOR on Friday 13th won't spell bad luck for either of us. The cover, like the two before, was very striking. I could really get used to the idea of fanzines with color covers (and solve something of what to do when all the local fan artists do only color drawings to be entered into convention art shows. Don't worry, just xerox them.) Sad to hear, then, that this will be the last of your color covers due to the departure of an inside man at a printer who, undoubtedly, was giving you a very good deal on this work. Pause for a heavy *sigh*.

[Yeah, it takes a lot more saving up to get the money together - and the artwork has to be outstanding. - Ron.]

At first I thought this was just a picture of an arctic wilderness but closer examination shows that Mark McLeod has depicted a number of floating cities with arboretum hovering above the clouds. That the objects in the foreground - ie the floating cities - did not stand out sufficiently from the background - the clouds - suggests that the color scheme Mark used could have used a little fine tuning. A minor detail.

The laser printer has given a great improvement in the sharpness of the type. My condolences on deciding to move on up to a DOS machine and WINDOWS. After using an Atari 1040ST I have no desire to switch to anything as primitive as DOS. Recently I got a desktop publishing program for the Atari, PAGESTREAM, which is quite nice, and learned the one unavoidable truth about Desktop Publishing software - it ain't soft on RAM. The 1040ST comes with 1 megabyte of RAM, plenty - I thought - for most needs. Not so for DTP. 2 Megs is recommended and more is nice. I'm sure your Apple \e, good for so many years and for so many purposes must have been totally out of its league trying to do THE MENTOR.

[Actually, the DTP program I used with the \e - PUBLISH IT 3 - wasn't bad: it worked with the laser printer I now have. And I had a 4 Meg expansion card for it - battery backed up. The one big bug-bear with the

program was it didn't format the new page automatically; which is why I gave it up. - Ron.]

Mae Strelkov writes that years back she was warned that "philologists had already "proved" that there'd never been any Ur tongue." But SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN only recently had an article describing the current status of efforts to recreate just such an Ur tongue. Linguists are tracing back words that seem most likely common to different languages by analyzing vowel shifts and constant changes and seem to feel that they are making progress. I seriously doubt that the root language of all mankind these scientists are concocting sounds anything like what that first language really did - uncertainty and Chaos theory playing their usual hob to that. But Mae's quest is not at all unreasonable.

On the other hand, Mae is flat out wrong with her supposition of Space Aliens colonizing Earth, etc. Genetic analysis has shown that not only is human DNA 99.5% identical to that of Gorillas and Chimpanzees but can also date the age when these three stock separated - roughly 2 million years ago. Contrary to Mae's hopes for a literal Elohim and Adam and Eve, we are very much a natural part of this planet.

The SF Fan Quiz was amusing. Only I had a tendency to answer "None of the Above" to most of the questions. I'm not sure how the authors would score that.

This letter would be longer but I'm one of those heathens who does not read fiction in fanzines. To be fair about it I should mention that I don't read fiction in the professional magazines either. Well, hardly ever. (13.12.91)

SHANE DIX, 2/26 Diagonal Rd, Glengowrie, SA 5044

With the long delay between issues, I thought that perhaps TM had collapsed under the weight of the recession we had to have. Then a quick read of TM 71 and I realised Ron was probably somewhere over in the USSR, getting involved in a few revolutions and what not. On which, his comprehensive report on Volgacon, gastronomical partakings and all, offered us a good glimpse into *that* country. Nice one. Mike Glicksohn: Nope, none of the nine came forward with the goods, so I'll just grovel a bit here and plead with you to do some hunting about for those issues of SF COMMENTARY. Would be muchly appreciated, and if there is anything you require down under then perhaps I could reciprocate the favour.

A mixed bag of fiction, with Bill Congreve writing the best piece of the lot. Look forward to more of his work in the future. I also enjoyed Margaret Pearce's story, though admit when I first looked at the title I thought it was going to be an ambiguous one (a way... away) and a twist developing somewhere along those lines. But no...

Andy Darlington's voyage was interesting, reminded me a little of a song from Geldof's last album called THINKING VOYAGER 2 TYPE THINGS. I'm

not implying anything here, by the way, Andy. And best artwork of #72 has to go to Andrey Karapetyan. Good Stuff.

And of course, always heaps of fun to be found in, to quote Steve Sneyd, LoCland. A section I enjoy every issue, thorns and all. Mike Glicksohn again: yeah, the Manchu film was a sad note on which to end Seller's career. His penultimate film, BEING THERE, would have been a more fitting end. Maria-Louise Stephens: that last paragraph left me a bit open mouthed, I'm afraid. "New Planet", I assume, being the bit in the news about that discovery of the first planet outside our solar system; but the rest...? Perhaps it would have meant more in an illegal state of mind? Gary Deindorfer: my personal favourite in Dr S. is when Turgidson equates losing 10-20 million lives in a nuclear attack to getting "our hair mussed".

Must go now, I can hear some bastard trying to break in via my chimney... (25.12.91)

PETER BOOTH, 83 Kingsway, Cronulla 2230.

Peter Raymond Booth, Grai baby, (cry-baby?) means "rocklike", "counsellor", "small enclosure" in Greek, Old German and Old Norse derivations, respectively. Booth itself is akin to the Gaelic word "broch" which is a small stone tower. That's all well and good. Since my real name is Wayne Greenwell, none of Hughes' coy little asides mean diddly squat.

Ms Vaux is horribly astray with the following claims in TM 72. For starters the speakers of any of the myriad tongues of the Turkic family no longer dwell in the tentative linguistic boundaries I'd ascribed, well they do, but what of immigrants? Ms Vaux also has listed the date 753 B.C. as the beginning of Republican Rome. Try 509 B.C.

753 is the date Romulus is supposed to have demarked the border of Rome; pure legend. At this time, Italy was an area ruled by a diverse people; Sabines, Marsi, Etruscans and there were Greek colonists in Sicily and southern Italy, the region known as "Magna Graecia". I will agree with her however, Asia Minor wasn't inhabited by Turkic peoples at the time... we'll go by her date of 753 B.C. The Hittite Empire was about 400 years dead at the time, Phrygian invaders had established the Kingdom of Lydia and their language wasn't Greek, it was, (or came to be known as) Lydian, which, palaeolinguistically, is part of the Anatolian family, which includes Hittites, Luwian and Lycian, all dead languages... their closest extant relative today is Armenian. The Phrygian language itself, has never properly been classified and remains an enigmatic tongue like Basque, Tokharian or Meroitic. Midas, putatively, was a king of the Phrygians.

The Turks themselves arrived about the early Twelfth Century A.D. (apologies to Ms Vaux) after coming from the Kasakh to Tannu Tuva regions of modern Russia, after making inroads into Persia, the Caliphate of Baghdad and Afghanistan. So, admittedly, I'm 1600 years too early!

The point I tried to make earlier about immigrants is that the Turkic people have scattered themselves across the world, primarily the Turkish. So, my boundaries and those of Julie are inappropriate nowadays.

But, in my defence, it wasn't any "Sigh, such appalling ignorance", it was sheer carelessness. I've a fair idea the record's straight now, and I haven't bored too many people with an historical treatise. I do hope the date 753 B.C. given by Julie is a product of the same, for I can assure you Republican Rome wasn't even thought of then, and that date is the Italian's own romantic attribution of their nation's first unity.

Pamela Boal, being a typical Pom, has refrained from just calling me a cunt. I'm 23, to be honest with you, and I'm sorry to hear how you feel "simultaneously repressed and ignored by the adult world." But to be honest, the type you described exists in all life, not just fandom... I don't equate myself as an *Enfant Terrible*, just your average Australian shit-shirrer, which so many people have taken seriously. Oh well, it's a joy to separate the switched-on from the idiots.

The stories in TM 72 weren't too bad, but if they were too good they wouldn't be ginning about in a fanzine, would they?

The piece on Volgacon was interesting and it serves to underline an important point. Bodies can be ruled but minds can't. After so many years of being told what they could read, watch, eat and drink, the Russians have shown they can still whack it with the best. I hope their domestic hassles smooth out... thanks also to Ron for the card, sticker and playmoney rouble, good stuff. I'll ask something though. Did Intourist still demand you have a guide? Did they still allocate hotels for you? As a point of interest, is Volgograd's Motherland statue taller than Liberty?

[The inserts for TM 72 were courtesy of Volgacon. I didn't go to the USSR through Intourist. I went as an individual, and the Soviet fans - both in Russia and Byelorussia - showed me around and Igor took me around personally. The trouble I had getting a visa was because of this - I didn't have a hotel "booked and paid for" before I got my visa. I don't have the figures for Statue height. - Ron]

Once again, TM's visual standard is superb. In regards to the book review section, if anyone enjoyed the SF works of Ian Banks, they'd like his *ESPEDAIR STREET*, which is about a struggling band (rock, ie). Banks, like George R Stewart and Russell Hoban, are not SF Writers *per se*, but they all are recalled more for their SF works. *SOJOURN* is the third book in the Dark Elf trilogy (*EXILE* was reviewed in TM 72) and is out as well. If any fan encounters work by Bob Salvatore; give it a go, he writes with the best of them. Don't be put off by shared world anthologies such as TSR's *Forgotten Realms* series.

FASA is indeed like TSR (re: *NEVER DEAL WITH A DRAGON*, TM 72's reviews) but are better known for *Battletech*, *Machwarrior* and *Shadowrun*..

strange to see the FASA Corporation entering the shared world market, so long dominated by TSR. Hope they fare well.

I'd like to know exactly what happened to Mark S Geston, if anything at all. He wrote four classic works of SF in the 60-70's and disappeared... is he still alive? Does he still write? (21.12.91)

SEAN WILLIAMS, PO Box 605, Cowandilla, SA 5033.

Let me say, first of all, that the artwork in TM 72 (and presumably, previous issues) beats everything I've seen in other sf magazines (with the exception of EIDOLON, a couple of INTERZONE's and some of ISAAC ASIMOV's SFM). I particularly like Jozef Szekeres' cover, and the beautiful "Golden Age" artistry of Steve Fox.

The R & R DEPT was largely incomprehensible to me, because I haven't seen the issues they refer to, but it was good to see some familiar names appearing (the incomparable Peter Booth being just one of them [Hello, Peter!]) I can't help but be impressed by the sheer amount of correspondence you receive, and the diversity of your LoCCers. (Reading through Mike Glicksohn's letter, I wonder what on earth David Tansey said in TM 70. And why so much anti-WOTF knee-jerk bullshit?)

The reviews were astonishingly diverse. Full marks for reading some Ian Watson, although I would have picked THE EMBEDDING to review first. (One thing, though: Anne McCaffrey's Pegasus series began with TO RIDE PEGASUS, a collection of linked novellas, and not THE ROWAN.)

The review of Volgacon was interesting, although it would have helped my appreciation of it if I had some experience with Cons; the highlight of it all was the collection of souvenirs included in the issue. Buck Coulson's column was great. I look forward to reading more of his material in the future. And Jim Verran's article was cool, calm and correct - nothing annoys me more than ill-informed PTB.

The stories and poetry:

A WAY WITH WOMEN - Does Ms Pearce have a grudge against men or is she so bitingly satirical just for the hell of it? I thought it might have been a black comedy at first, but, when I guessed ahead to what was going to happen (bottom right of p.3), I couldn't repress a mental shudder. (And is John Scarlett's name in any way significant?) Masculophobia aside, the story was interesting and the characters competently executed (except for the first page, where Scarlett was painted so thickly as a chauvinistic bastard that I almost put the story down; a little subtlety goes a long way). The shift away from Scarlett to the Captain (who was the best character) at the end was disconcerting, but I'm not sure that it didn't work. I liked the last paragraph.

VOYAGE FROM THE CITY OF THE SUN TO WORLDS UNDERGROUND - hey, I liked this.

Would love to ask Andrew Darlington what it means, though.

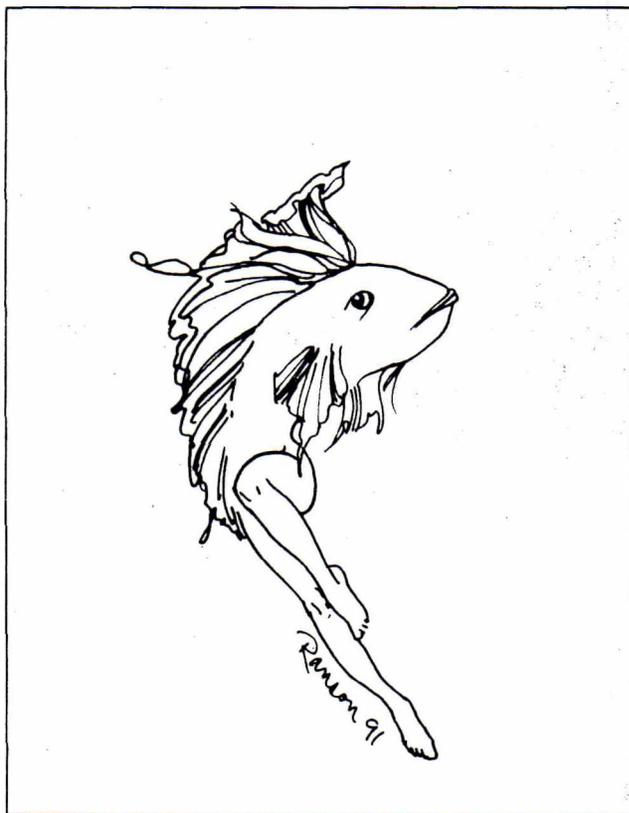
TWELVE BAR ACCESS - Australian cyberpunk? And educated cyberpunk at that. William Gibson did the right thing, I think, by keeping the technological details of his stories fairly muted. The science is difficult for the uneducated layman and too tedious to explain; better to ignore it. If I hadn't studied a bit of Computer Science at Uni, I would never have understood this story. (But how many readers of TM have had similar training? I'd be interested to know. If a significant proportion understood comp. sci. then this criticism is rendered invalid.) Otherwise fine. Loved the busker, although I didn't understand his significance.

LUCY AND THE LIGHTNING - cute. Nice one Blair.

MISSED IT BY '...' MUCH - I don't fancy myself as a poetry appreciator, but I liked this. I don't know why.

MIRRORS & SLIVERS - beautifully written, lovely imagery, but... stuffed to corpulent repletion with phrases and clauses ("Icarus triumphant in helioplarty"?), I can only marvel at the mysterious Grai's ability to fashion the English language. I cannot analyse the story because I'm not certain it has one. (1.1.92)

WAHF: Anne Stewart, Blair Hunt, Robert Sullivan, Steven Paulsen, and several others.





RATS AND GARGOYLES by Mary Gentle. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld publishers. (C) 1990. 507pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Mary Gentle has a series going which feature men and women in an secret organisation who have various levels. In one level they call themselves Soldier/Scholars. Valentine is one such.

RATS AND GARGOYLES isn't about Valentine. It is about a city in the heart of the world. A city where human-sized rats are in power over the humans; a city where the gods are manifest: thirty six gods, who hold the Universe and all its workings in their power. Times are a changing, however, and the rats find their power challenged by humans from the sewers, and by the equivalent of the Masons. By the end of the novel the gods themselves are in trouble and the Plague is running rampant.

Mary Gentle's novels are getting better and better - I really enjoyed this one.

THE MEDUSA ENCOUNTER by Paul Preuss. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1990. 275pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The continuing saga of Ellen and her strange interior additions. Preuss has taken up some of Clarke's ideas - Venus Prime and others, that show up more in this novel of the encounter with the Medusa.

The Medusa is, of course, one of the native life-form on Jupiter, one which Arthur C. Clarke documented in an earlier short story, **A MEETING WITH MEDUSA**. Preuss has integrated the vast floating forms in Jupiter's atmosphere in his latest novel about the agent of Venus Prime and the men who were out to kill her.

The novel is good space opera, with lashing of "hard" science, as befits one who is building on Clarke's basic ideas. If you like nuts-and-bolts Sf, then this series will do for you.

MAN-KZIN WARS II by Dean Ing, Jerry Pournelle & S.M. Stirling. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1989. 306pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The Man-Kzin Wars looks to be a series of volumes that may be going places. This is the first of the series that I have read. I was going to pass it by, but glanced at a few pages and decided to read on. Tsk, tsk.

The tsk, tsk refers to the fact that the two stories in the book, **BRIAR PATCH** and **THE CHILDREN'S HOUR** are very well put together and held my interest. They are both the type of stories that Ted Carnell published in the '50s and '60 in his magazine **SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES**. They are smooth flowing, plenty of action, hang together well and are interesting. The series are set in Niven's Known Space and use the background of that series for their plots. It is obvious that different authors wrote them, but still they are good reading.

BARROW by John Deakins. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1990. 336pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

A tale of magic, magicians and a town called Barrow. Actually the novel is much like a whole series of small incidents involving many people in the city.

Deakins writes in a very spare style and when one is reading along one finds that he has packed a lot of information into very little space. There are small chapters of description and then other chapters that advance the plot somewhat. The author is a high school science teacher and his training shows up in the way he has build up the background of the far off (from Earth) planet. It is a feudal background, but there is one large city on the developed land mass and most of the action takes place on it.

This is a well researched fantasy and is head of most quickly written quest novels.

DARK PRINCE by David Gemmell. Legend trade pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1991. 449pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

I have read several of David Gemmell's books - and they have been reviewed in TM in the past. DARK PRINCE is different.

It starts out in Macedonia in 352BC and ranges over many worlds of fantasy, including Olympus, Arkadia and other parts of Asia Minor. There is a Bibliography in the back listing twenty-seven books, ranging from Aristotle's ETHICS, through I. Jenkins' GREEK AND ROMAN LIFE to Zenophon's THE PERSIAN EXPEDITIONS.

I found the book stimulating - Gemmell can slip the hard facts easily into the flow of the novel and the whole thing reads easy and intriguing. There have been several authors lately who have been delving back into the times BC, and this is one up to the best of them.

HOFFMAN'S GUIDE TO SF, HORROR AND FANTASY MOVIES. 1991-1992. Corgi trade pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1991. 432pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

This is a book that readers of TM will certainly be buying... It is a first edition and has over 3,000 entries covering cinema and video, with 400 b&w photos and a comprehensive index of directors. It is up to date: including GHOST and BACK TO THE FUTURE III, among other films. Each entry give year of release, nationality, b&w or colour, running time in minutes, star rating, director, principal cast, and if released on video:

Each page is in 3 columns and a typical entry is about 23 lines of about 8 pitch type. I looked at each page and did a quick look through all those entries - there seems to be a representative sample of films, both cinema and tv. Some of TMs film fans may find this book of interest.

BORIS VALLEJO'S 1992 MYTHOLOGY CALENDAR. Workman Publishing, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishing. (C) 1991. Full glossy artwork. A\$. On sale now.

It's time for the 1992 calendars to be released. Boris Vallejo has done well again this time with twelve portraits from his Mythology past.

The twelve are: the Sphinx; the Furies; Hippocampus; Pegasus; Centaurs; Unicorn; the Pythoness; Hydra; Satyr; Basilisk; Minotaur; and Gryphon. All the plates are, of course, well executed and feature near naked men and women. Who can say Boris is sexist in his portraiture of the models?

If you want an excellent fantasy calendar then this would make a Christmas gift that the receiver will certainly thank you for. The printing is sharp and colourful and it can join the other calendars that Workman Publishing brought out of Boris's for the last few years. Well worth the price, and a collectors item later, of course.

WITCHES ABROAD by Terry Pratchett. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 252pp. A\$38. On sale now.

Terry Pratchett has had several novels featuring witches, set on the Discworld. WITCHES ABROAD follows the antics of several who we have already been introduced to: Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg and Margrat Garlick. Margrat is given a task - she is left a wand and is created a Godmother to look after a certain servant girl. Margrat's task is to make sure that the girl does *not* marry the prince. Who is a nasty type, anyway.

As usual there are all sorts of twists throughout the plot and the reader meets many odd and strange characters. Pratchett is his usual punny self, making jokes throughout the novel that the reader from *this* Earth will recognise; if there was a reader from the Discworld, they would miss many of the jokes. A humorous read.

CRYSTAL EXPRESS by Bruce Sterling Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1989. 317pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This is an anthology of some of Sterling's short stories - and shows that he is a major talent in the SF field.

The stories included are copyright 1982/87 and are set out in three sections: Shaper/Mechanist, with the stories SWARM; SPIDER ROSE; CICADA QUEEN; SUNKEN GARDENS and TWENTY EVOCATIONS. The next section is headed Science Fiction and the stories are GREEN DAYS IN BRUNEI; SPOOK and THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE SUBLIME. The last section is headed Fantasy Stories and the stories are TELLIAMED; THE LITTLE MAGIC SHOP; FLOWERS OF EDO and DINNER IN AUDOGHA. The stories in the first section are SF anyway, but the whole book is well worth reading. Stirling is first class.

IN OUR HANDS THE STARS by Harry Harrison. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1970. 217pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Harry Harrison is having some of his Golden Oldies reprinted. In fact the printing history of this novel is interesting: It has been reprinted in 1975, 1981, 1986 and 1991.

The Daleth Effect was a scientific discovery that would cause much trouble for the scientist that discovered it. Arnie Klein knew at once, when the physics lab wall was blown out with the explosion, that he had something awesome. He was determined that the secret out help Mankind, not hinder it, so he took all his papers out of Israel and went to Denmark, the land of his birth, to work on it more. He went to the top to ensure that the work remained secret, but still leaks developed and soon men were dying to keep the secret.

The first vessel flew to the top of the atmosphere - the next to the Moon. Whether the stars were next was still a question, as agents of both East and West fought over the plans. Excellent SF adventure.

EXPATRIA by Keith Brooke. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 252pp. A\$36. On sale now.

KEEPERS OF THE PEACE was Keith Brooke's first novel - EXPATRIA is his second. The blurb says that there is a follow up novel. I will be looking forward to it.

Earth had sent colonists to Expatria hundred of years before - they had rejected technology and lived simply, but they did use some of the technology in some of its basic forms - for cooking and such like. Mathias Hanrahan was the son of the Prime of Newest Delhi and stood to gain the position, until his father was killed and he was framed. Escaping to another City, he used his basic scientific talents to keep his life and not long after he went onward to another City where a Project to build up technology was in progress.

The background is well worked out and the novel is well paced. I am looking forward to reading the sequel. Worth getting.

CHUNG KUO: THE WHITE MOUNTAIN by David Wingrove. NEL h/c, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1991. 439pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

This is one series that I wait on for the next book. THE WHITE MOUNTAIN is Book Three of Chung Kuo and it looks like the whole series will be one gigantic, well constructed novel.

DeVore is still fighting on against the Seven, but one of his fortresses is found and destroyed and he himself is almost captured. The father of Li Yuan is assassinated and the council of the Seven is beginning to show cracks. The Net is showing its true colours as David Wingrove shows more and more detail of the world 200 years hence. The blurb says that the first book in the series has been translated into 4 languages. Book 3 continues the standards set by the first 2. Probably the best SF series published in the past two years. *Highly Recommended*.

DRAGON'S GOLD by Piers Anthony & Robert Margroff. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1987. 282pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

A fantasy story collaboration by two authors who work well together.

It seems that dragon's scales are made of gold, and when they moult these fall to the ground. Then people can go get them - if they dare. This is a tale of several teenagers - early teens - who have a series of adventures and who end up getting much of what they want.

There is much adventure and rough handling - and suggested sex - but all in good taste. One of the ways to tell the good guys (and gals) is that they have round ears. It seems that also, with the aid of dragon berries those with round ears can also do out-of-body experiences and other things those without cannot.

Fairly pedestrian fantasy.

RAGNAROK by D.G. Compton & John Gribbon. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 344pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

The first third or so of this novel reads like a fugitive from the 1970's. If I didn't know better I would say that D.G. Compton had a rough draft of a novel which he gave to John Gribbon to finish and polish up.

The basic plot is that a professor, his daughter, her lover and a ship's captain get together in a plot to try to stave off nuclear war. Their plan is to plant a fusion bomb in a fjord in Iceland over a fault where the magma is close to the surface and give an ultimatum to the two nuclear powers - the USA and USSR - that unless they get a working nuclear test ban together the team will detonate the device in fourteen days.

The rest of the novel is about how those powers try to stop the count-down in any way they can. What the result is - you'll have to read the book. Towards the end it was a joy to read - I was almost unable to put it down. Good reading.

THE DIFFERENCE ENGINE by William Gibson & Bruce Sterling. VGSF trade pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1990. 383pp. A\$18. On sale now.

The novel that has generated a lot of talk overseas. Set in Victorian England, it is an "alternate history" novel - events seem to have started to go astray about the time when Wellington returned from his victory over Napoleon.

The big change is that when Babbage created his difference engine - his geared calculator/computer - he continued its development and at the time of the major events of the novel - 1855 - the engines are cropping up everywhere. The government, under the Radicals, with Lord Byron at its head, has utilised them for upgrading the public service so that, for instance, everyone has a social security card.

Events are soon to change, however, as a political groundswell is set to topple the scientific regime. The novel is well researched and reads well, though the full meaning of the last three paragraphs, set in 1991, passed over this reader's head.

ALL THE WEYRS OF PERN by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam Press h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishing. (C) 1991. 494pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Anne McCaffrey is doing an Asimov and is going back to the beginning of the Pern novels and filling in the background.

ALL THE WEYRS OF PERN is all about the discovery of the AIVAS - an artificial intelligent computer that came with the original colonists and was later found. It's discovery foreshadowed many changes - to the society of Pern and to the people's needs. The discovery of all that they had lost in the years since the ship's colonists landed and their hopes was all laid down in the computer.

As was also a way to stop Threadfall for all time. This statement was nearly enough to bring some Holds to blows. But they younger Dragonriders got together and put the computer's plan into action, against words and actions against them that spoke realms. Eventually the whole planet united in the effort to stop the Threadfall at it's source. SF for the addict and the general reader.

SECRET HARMONIES by Paul J. McAuley. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1989. 333pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

This novel started out quite well, then goes slowly, but if the reader persists through this section, they will find that the action comes into its own again.

That action takes place on a planet settled by colonists from the USA; over half of them being from Australia. The planet is wide open and sparsely populated by the immigrants. In fact they are only around a peninsula and a little ways into the Outback. The natives are over the rest. The natives are one of the questions that the colonists wonder over - when anyone approaches them they freeze and if the colonist stays for some time the native dies - their nervous system "burned out".

Everything is going well until the expected supply and immigrant ship from Earth fails to eventuate...

ROBOT ADEPT by Piers Anthony. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1988. 286pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Piers Anthony has quite a collection of stories in several series now; he is still adding on to them, it seems.

ROBOT ADEPT is, of course going by the title, part of the Split Infinity series, which was continued in the Apprentice Adept series, where this is the sequel to OUT OF PHAZE. ROBOT ADEPT starts out right in the middle of the action, in fact, with Suchevene leaving Mach, the robot, and Fleta to journey on together into adventure.

The two get into some strange places, and Anthony has several places in the story where he puts to good use his knowledge of computer games. The background of PHAZE is also used for good advantage and the action takes place both on Phaze and Proton. This novel is again for those fans of Anthony's, though it might be a good idea to read PHAZE before you start this one.

GRUMBLINGS FROM THE GRAVE by Robert A. Heinlein; edited by Virginia Heinlein. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1989. 336pp incl Indices. A\$14.95. On sale now.

This volume has been some time coming to be released in Australia, but it is here now.

It is a book of Heinlein's letters, mainly to his agent, Lurton Blasingame. The letters start off with

those to John W Campbell Jr when Heinlein was selling to ASTOUNDING SF, which he sold to for about three years. When he started getting rejection slips from Campbell he sent his novels to other outlets, and got himself an agent.

The letters published were edited by Virginia Heinlein and cover many topics - writing, building their house, travels and what RAH thought on various topics. There are some censored names for which I can't see why they were cut out, but overall it is good background into RAH. What you get out of it is what you expect to find, I think. Though don't go into it thinking to get great revelations - there are some, it is true, but the book is really about how a writer works and for that in itself is worth buying for.

THE OTHER SINBAD by Craig Shaw Gardner. Headline Feature pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1980. 375pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

I haven't read any of Craig Gardner's other novels (which are listed in the front of this book, and more of anon), but I see that the publishers use the artwork of the same artist who illustrated Terry Pratchett's books, though this time he isn't given recognition.

The story is of two men - Sinbad the sailor, and Sinbad the porter; the former being the ancestor of the latter. It is the latter who sets out on an eighth adventure to prove once and for all the truth of the adventures of Sinbad the sailor. The porter also has run-ins - with a two-headed cyclops, rampant apes, talking fruit and various genies.

The style of the novel is not quite serious. That this is the usual style of the writer can be presumed by some of his previous novel titled: BRIDE OF THE SLIME MONSTER and REVENGE OF THE FLUFFY BUNNIES.

SONGS OF THE DANCING GODS by Jack L. Chalker. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 322pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Another novel of which I haven't read those published previously. Which isn't all that bad, in this case, because the author gives a quick resume in an Introduction that enables those who are in the same position as myself some idea of what went before.

The story continues with Joe and Tiana once again returning to Husaquahr and trying to outmanoeuvre the dreaded Master of the Dead. Chalker has a long novel here - 322 pages of small type and he has filled it to the brim with Sword and Sorcery adventure. The writing is smooth and polished and he gets the reader in from the beginning.

There is a lot of fantasy around and some of it isn't worth reading - this is one of the ones that is worth the dollars and time and those that like heroic fantasy with good backgrounds will find this novel, and most probably the ones that follow in the series, worth the purchase.

SOUL RIDER by Jack L. Chalker. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1984. 320pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

This time I actually received the first book in the series. The series is again a fantasy one, titled *Spirits Of Flux And Anchor*. The setting is again the quasi-feudal one of blacksmiths and small villages, visited by powerful shamen who have powers the villages can't hope to defend themselves from.

The Soul Rider is an entity that slipped quickly into the young Cassie's body and brought not only knowledge but freedom, something she would not have thought of before that presence. Soon she found herself partaking of a journey that she would not have dreamt of before.

As usual Chalker looks to have created a fantasy series that will hook the reader and let the writer trawl them in. Good solid fantasy.

KNIGHT OF SHADOWS by Roger Zelazny. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1989. 251pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

It has been some years since Roger Zelazny has written an Amber novel - *KNIGHT OF SHADOWS* is the latest, and it is well worth waiting for. Zelazny has kept the character of Merlin Corey as I remember him.

The Courts of Chaos are much the same - though the conflict between the Pattern and the Logrus is now out in the open with a vengeance. So are the attempts of his relatives to do Merlin in. The plot is not really convoluted; nor is it simple. I would say it is complicated enough to keep the reader on his or her toes.

I didn't think much of the Amber novels when I first started reading them, but now, decades later, I can see how good they actually were. They are an excellent fantasy series and if you like tightly plotted, adult (as in mature and well written) fantasy, then get these books.

THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF NEW WORLD SCIENCE FICTION, edited by I. Asimov, C Waugh & M. Greenberg. Robinson pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1961-69. 506pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Well, this is the first time I have seen an ordinary pb that has nearly broken the \$20 barrier.

The editing team of Asimov, Waugh and Greenberg have been responsible for some good collections in the past; this time they certainly have picked some excellent short novels. The "New World" SF referred to in the title of the book is apparently because these stories are grown from the "New Wave" SF published in the British magazine *NEW WORLDS SF* in the sixties, even though these stories are by North American authors.

There are ten stories included: *NIGHT OF THE TROLLS* by Keith Laumer; *HOW IT WAS THE PAST WENT AWAY* by Robert Silverberg; *THE EVE OF RUMOKO* by Roger Zelazny; *HAWK AMONG THE*

SPARROWS by Dean McLaughlin; *WEYR SEARCH* by Anne McCaffrey; *THE SUICIDE EXPRESS* by Philip Jose Farmer; *THE HIGHEST TREASON* by Randall Garrett; *CODE THREE* by Rick Raphael; *MERCENARY* by Mack Reynolds and *SOLDIER, ASK NOT* by Gordon R. Dickson.

If you haven't read most of the stories in the volume - get it. *Recommended*

ORPHAN OF CREATION by Roger MacBride Allen. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1988. 340pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

I wasn't sure of this new author. He had another novel published - *FAR SIDE CANNON*, but I haven't read that.

ORPHAN OF CREATION tells of the digging up of some hundred-odd years old bones in the American South - at an old slave plantation. The plantation is unique in that it was bought by a former slave from the estate of the owner. The bones which were dug up were mentioned in a old journal by one of the descendants of that slave. What she expected to find were gorilla bones. What she found were the bones of four *Australopithecus boisei*'s - a branch of the genus homo that had been supposed to have died out a million or so years ago.

The furore that this created in scientific circles was almost equal to that in the outside community and when an expedition set out to find the tribe that has sold the *Australopithecus* to the slave traders, in order to find out background to the discovery, events grew even wilder.

I found this to be a *very* well written and researched novel - *Recommended*.

CHILD OF TIME by Isaac Asimov & Robert Silverberg. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 302pp. On sale now.

CHILD OF TIME is an expanded version of *THE UGLY LITTLE BOY*, a short story of Asimov's published in 1958. It is the story of a Neanderthal boy who is kidnapped out of the past of 40,000 years ago by a time scoop operated by a company who are seemingly into R&D in a big way. There does not seem to be any commercial application in the time scoop.

There are two story lines running in parallel - the present day one, where a nurse is hired to look after the boy and in the process really loses herself in the job. The other follows the Neanderthal tribe after the boy is taken and its encounters with Modern Man. Judging by the writing techniques, Asimov wrote most of the "modern" day chapters, and Silverberg those dealing with the Neanderthal tribe. It is really hard to tell, though, where the styles break off - very smooth writing. And the novel is a polished product.

I presume that these two novels use some of Man's ancestors as a foil for present day man. Even the one in following review could be said to be in the same category as this.

SON OF MAN by Robert Silverberg. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1971. 192pp. On sale now.

I think this novel is one of those that Silverbob wrote in the 1970s when he was trying his "non-hack" style and got narked with the reader that they didn't appreciate him, and gafiated. Of course he came back better than before.

SON OF MAN is written in a completely different style to Silverberg's usual novel - it is more in the style of Aldiss. A man from the present day is swept up in a time flux and ends up aeons in Earth's future, where humanity is a mix of genetically altered species, though they still can be traced back to the origins of the species. Clay, the man who finds himself in the far future, journeys with some companions of the time, to see and undergoes all the strange new experiences of the New Age.

Verdict: strange and different.

BLOOD-NAME by Robert Thurston. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. A\$11.95. On sale now.

A novel that is much like a Transformers game put in written form. There are "battle mechs" and other exotic mechanical forms. The society pictured is a interstellar one, with a militaristic overtone for the younger readers of sf.

Aidan was born in the laboratory and his heritage was much superior to those woman born, who did what they were told. Unfortunately for him, he failed his test to admit him to true warriorhood and is destined to be an outcast. He is given one chance however, but this means he will have to impersonate one of those of Freebirth and hope he can attain his birthright. For the younger readers, or for those action orientated.

CRUSADE by James Lowder. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 313pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

CRUSADE is Book 3 of the Empires Trilogy, published in the USA by TSR. The other books in the series are **HORSELORDS** and **DRAGONWALL**.

The Forgotten Reams are under a menace again - this time from the Khahan and his mounted tribesmen who are sweeping all before them as they descend on the civilized lands. King Azoun tries to get the differing parties together so as to have an efficient fighting chance against the invaders but he finds the going rough. His daughter, Alusair, was a warrior princess, but her exploits brought fear for her safety to her father. Another of his problems was keeping the Earthfast Mountain dwarves as allies, what with the machinations of others in his camp.

For fans of TSR sword and fantasy. You will find these novels carry on the type of fantasy that has a simple plot and is not a strain to understand. Written in a spare style.

THE SCHOOL by T.M. Wright. VGHorror pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1990. 245pp. On sale now.

In typical TM Wright style, this book often loses the plot (such as it is) with swapping of scenes and p.o.v.'s. Basically, the theory that moments of time are caught and held in places and played over and over (a popular concept of ghostly hauntings in the past ten or so years) is taken and made into this meandering novel. The ending, the destruction of the place (an abandoned school - no reason for the abandonment is ever given) seems as if nature is wreaking havoc on unnatural places, or maybe just reclaiming the land? Hopelessly vague at times mainly because often the chapters are told from one of the protagonists p.o.v. as she is writing a highly esoteric, and probably completely unsaleable novel about such unnatural things. It implies that people who have lost someone could come to this place to see them again and since the school has had a tragic past, the parents of lost pupils come back at times to see them again.

At least we have to assume that from something that is hinted at in one of the ending chapters.

Not a great book, but it could have been, but somewhere it got lost on the way. - Susan Clarke.

TWILIGHT by Peter James. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 316pp. A\$38. On sale now.

I had a hard time putting this book down. You feel the compulsive need to find out the next step in the plot even though alternative chapters are told in retrospect. The story line is fairly simple: one man's obsession with life after death. Having had an experience such as this man (Dr Harvey Swire) had, of being clinical dead for a few moments (which seemed longer at the time), I found the story fascinating, especially his rationalisation for what he was doing in the end. His 'ending' though was the ultimate irony for him.

The heroine, a reporter, logically follows her clues and shows initiative in finding facts. When she is discovered by Dr Swire, you are gripped in what she goes through to survive.

An exciting, well-written book, although the author has either done a lot of research into the subject or has attended autopsies and operations, as these scenes are told in almost-loving detail. Worth reading. - Susan Clarke.

BEST NEW SF 5, ed by Gardner Dozois. Robinson pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1990. 617pp. A\$25. On sale now.

This is a collection of what Gardner Dozois considers to be some of the best sf stories published in 1990.

They come from a wide source in the sf prozines and several from outside those - **PLAYBOY**, for instance. The stories are: **MR BOY** by James Kelly;

THE SHOBBIE'S STORY by Ursula Le Guin; THE CARESS by Greg Egan; A BRAVER THING by Charles Sheffield; WE SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY by Bruce Sterling; AND THE ANGELS SING by Kate Wilhelm; PAST MAGIC by Ian MacLeod; BEARS DISCOVER FIRE by Terry Bisson; THE ALL-CONSUMING by L Shepard and R Frazier; PERSONAL SILENCE by Molly Gloss; INVADERS by John Kessel; THE CAIRENE PURSE by Michael Moorcock; THE COON ROLLED DOWN AND RUPTURED HIS LARINKS, A SQUEEZED NOVEL by Mr Skunk by Dafydd ab Hugh; TOWER OF BABYLON by Ted Chiang; THE DEATH ARTIST by Alexander Jablokov; THE FIRST SINCE ANCIENT PERSIA by John Brunner; INERTIA by Nancy Kress; LEARNING TO BE ME by Greg Egan; CIBOLA by Connie Willis; WALKING THE MOONS by Jonathan Lethem; RAINMAKER COMETH by Ian McDonald; HOT SKY by Robert Silverberg; WHITE CITY by Lewis Shiner; LOVE AND SEX AMONG THE INVERTEBRATES by Pat Murphy and THE HEMINGWAY HOAX by Joe Haldeman.

An excellent collection - I thoroughly enjoyed it.

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED BOOKS:

THE FALL OF THE SKY LORDS by John Brosnan. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. 284pp. A\$10.50. On sale now. The conclusion to the trilogy. The Sky Lords are having their world shot down about them - their only hope is to find the machines of the hidden base under the Antarctic ice and take them over. Rousing SF adventure.

THE FACE OF THE WATERS by Robert Silverberg. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. 426pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Silverberg's latest novel. Set on the water planet Hyros, a sort of penal colony - no-one can get off once they are there. A story of conflict between the natives and earthers. I *Recommended* the hardcover. Get the pb.

OTHER RELEASES:

HODDER & STOUGHTON:
THE HEMINGWAY HOAX by Joe Haldeman

JACARANDA WILEY:
CLAY'S ARK by Octavia Butler
WHITE QUEEN by Gwyneth Jones
GARDEN OF RAMA by A.C. Clarke & Lee Gentry

PENGUIN:
VAMPYRES ed by Christopher Frayling
SHAMBALLA by A Grant & A Ranson
JUDGE DREDD by Wagner/Anderson

RANDOM CENTURY:
MAMMOTH BOOK OF NEW WORLD SCI FI

TRANSWORLD:
THE PEOPLE COLLECTION by Zenna Henderson
THE ENCHANTED ISLES by Casey Flynn

FEBRUARY RELEASES;

COLLINS/A&R:
RAFT by Stephen Baxter

PENGUIN:
MASTER OF FLX & ANCHOR by Jack Chalker
SONG OF THE SAURIALS by K Novak & J Grubb
THE WASP FACTORY by Ian Banks
THE PLAYER OF GAMES by Ian Banks
THE USE OF WEAPONS by Ian Banks
THE GREAT HUNT by Robert Jordan
BASSINAK by Anne McCaffrey & Eliz Moon
INCONSTANT MOON by Larry Niven
SUPERSTRINGS by David Peat (non fic)
STEPHEN HAWKING A Life In Science by Gribbin & White



