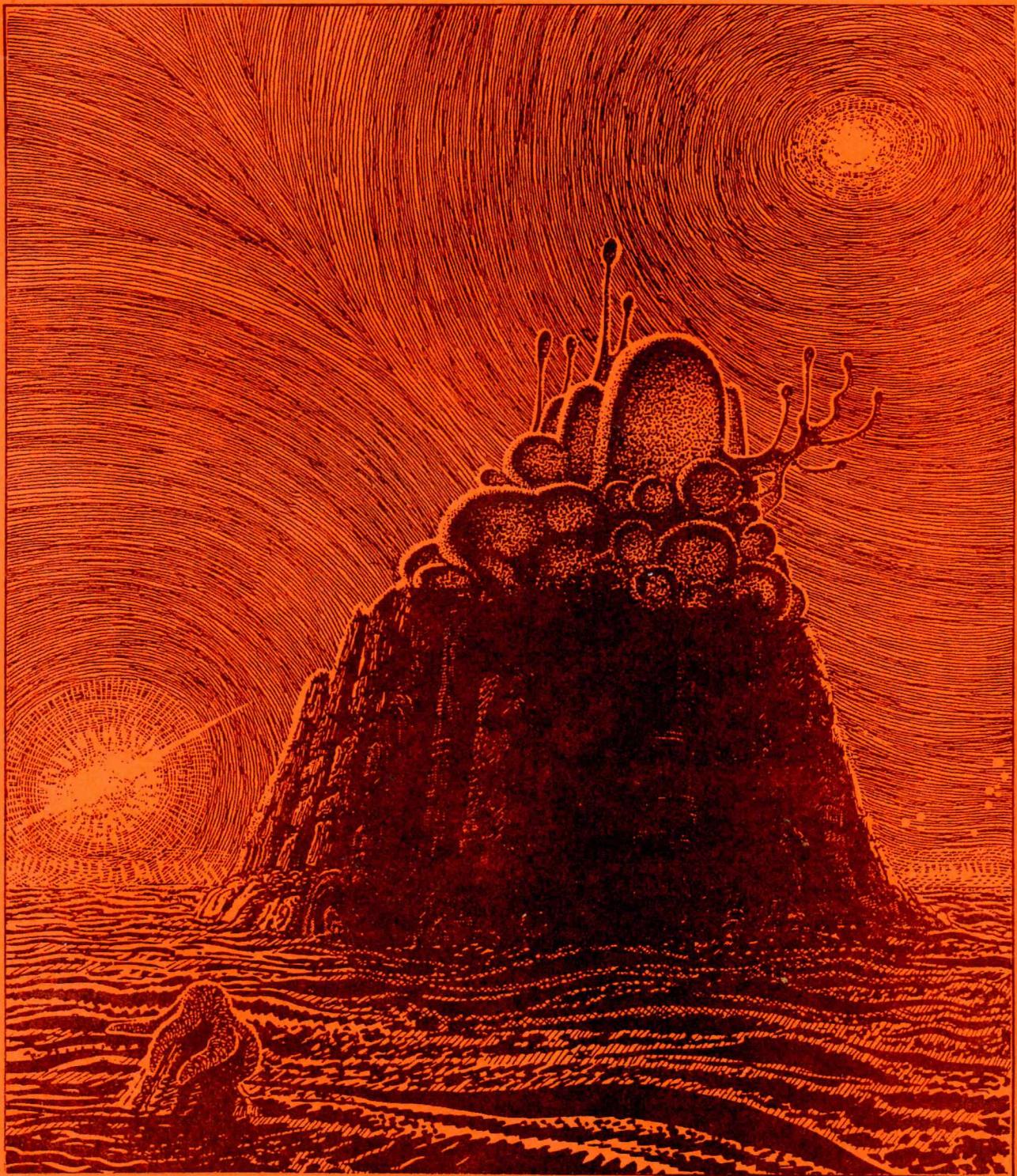


THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION



Number 75

JULY 1992

THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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The Editorial Slant

Well, here I am with another issue. It seems quite some time since I finished TM 74, but it can't be all that long because I am only now starting to receive comments from overseas, and it takes over eight weeks for copies to make it to the UK.

This issue there are quite a few pieces of fiction. And I have quite a pile for TM 76 already. The mention of this zine in the latest issue of AUREALIS helped, with many new authors sending me their works. I am still publishing fiction in TM for one main reason: to help the authors with comments and salient remarks. Hopefully this helps them to learn from their mistakes and get some comments from those who actually *read* the stories when published and thus the authors can get a wider field of comment. When I receive fiction I read it a couple of times and if I don't think it good enough for TM I usually give the author a page or so of my thoughts. The ones I publish, I let you, the readers, have a go. The stories this issue fit the theme, very closely some of them.

If you don't like fiction very much, you may notice that if you do a page count, that the fiction is much less than half of the contents of TM. It is said that the short short story (of the size I publish in TM) is not acceptable in either of the two sf magazines (AUREALIS and EIDOLON) published in Australia. There is thus no market for it here. Some of this fiction is very good, of professional quality, as you may have noticed by this issue (and the next...).

So, I have this fiction. I also have some poetry this issue that I am proud to publish - and I want more of the same style. I am also after well-written articles on sf (or fantasy, if it is good enough - though no elves, goblins, or such-like European myths, please!). I can't *really* see them in an Australian context, somehow).

I will be dropping some from TM 76's mailing list if I haven't heard from you - it is too large and expensive. Again, thanks to all those who sent in material - I hope you have an enjoyable read.

Contributions may be on an IBM ascii file (if a Word Processor file (tell me which WP), a DD or HD disk 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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SANCTUARY

by Bill Congreve

There used to be a saying, thought Tom, *bright as the noonday sun*. Originally it had something to do with mad dogs and Englishmen, but now he wondered if it had much to do with anything at all.

Now their own private saying, the one they shared between them and with no other, was *dark as the noonday sun*.

And cold.

He and Jane were alone in the ruins looking for shelter. It had been a hard search; the town had burnt in the panic and the plague and the elements were taking care of what was left.

The storm moved closer. In this climate they had to have shelter, and this town didn't seem to have so much as a roof they could put over their heads.

'No survivors.' Jane voiced both their thoughts. If there had been survivors, then there would also be buildings that had been lived in since the war. It saddened Tom. Just once he wanted to walk into a new town and find a sign that the place had been lived in recently.

A bark sounded behind them. For a moment, Tom thought, and wanted to think, that it was thunder. He saw Jane move more quickly; she turned to see if he was following.

'Hurry!' There was a sense of urgency in her voice that told him she had identified their peril. They couldn't afford to let the dogs catch their scent again.

There was some thunder from the approaching storm. Convective uplift still worked over the radioactive ruin of the cities, and mountain ranges still diverted air masses. The day was more warm and humid than usual; a drip of water came from an ice stalagmite hanging under a nearby awning. The water dripped into a puddle and then froze again.

Perhaps the warmth was an omen.

A long and plaintive howl sounded through the background gloom and thunder, and Tom knew for sure that the dogs were on their trail again. He touched the silver crucifix of the rosary around his neck and hurried to catch Jane. They were the only food fit for the animals to eat, and they had to stay in front of the hunting dogs.

Tom watched Jane in front of him. She was tall, fit and slender. He loved her body. She had no trouble setting a pace difficult for him to match.

In the southern hemisphere, salvation lay to the north, in what used to be the tropics. Only death lay in the icy wastes to the south. Near the equator there was still a chance for warmth and life. Everyone, and everything, alive was heading that way. People could feel the warmth, could hold it in their minds like lost children, and could savour it and hope. The animals felt the cold in their bones and let their instincts guide them.

The birds were long gone.

There were no crops in the fields, and the stock had died from the cold and lack of care. Humans were lucky; they could eat canned food from supermarket shelves and hope that it wasn't contaminated. Animals had to hunt or go hungry.

Tom remembered the last time the dogs had found them. That time, they had been lucky to escape with something more than their lives. He still remembered the weight of the dead dog on his shoulders, and the way the blood had run out of its beaten head to freeze without clotting on his jacket. There had been no trouble with the meat keeping; he and Jane had feasted for a week.

On that day also Tom had fingered the rosary hung around his neck. He thanked it afterwards for their salvation. He was holding it again now, as he ran after Jane, and a prayer sapped his concentration.

The dogs were well on their trail now, but thankfully they were still out of sight. Their howling got closer as Tom and Jane ran.

'We've got to find somewhere to fight them off!' he panted.

In one hand he held the staff he had cut from a dead and hardened gum sapling, and with which he had fought the dogs before.

'They're too many!'

Tom knew she was right, but his rosary and his pride wanted him to fight. He would not just give himself to a bunch of wild animals when the time came.

They ran on through the ruins at a tangent across the outskirts of the town, and their heels slid dangerously on the new permafrost which had formed just that summer. Their jackets and scarves fluttered behind them. Sweat trickled into the corner of Tom's eyes.

Jane lived now for a time when she could feel real dirt under her feet, and not the ice of the permafrost. As a child she had loved to walk barefoot, and she often had dirtied the sheets with muddy feet when she went to bed at night. She had been scolded so often by her mother that now she liked to wash her feet as well. The habit lasted as she grew, and now, at eighteen, she resented wearing boots.

* * *

In the north there would be bare dirt. Perhaps there would be grass. Jane would love it if there were grass; it was the only thing she allowed herself to hope for.

She looked across at Tom. He was nice, but he was holding that silly necklace again, as though it would save them now, as if it had saved them the last time they had met the dogs.

The dogs. The barking was getting closer; she could distinguish the sounds individual animals made. In the gloom of the dust-laden overcast the dogs still weren't in sight. They were following the fugitives by smell only.

Tom got ahead for a moment and took Jane by the hand. 'This way, we can't let them see us!' He pulled her to the side of the street, and they ran around a corner. Around them the wide-spaced houses gave way to a shabbier area of light industry. This was a town that had once gotten its hands dirty for a living.

In front of them they could see the remains of a burnt-out bridge, and, on the other side of the depression the bridge guarded, a more heavily built up part of the town. There too the buildings had been ravaged by fire.

'The river! If it hasn't frozen over...' panted Jane.

Tom understood immediately. The freezing water would cover their scent; the freezing water would deter the dogs.

They reached the bank and scrambled over a low red brick wall. All bricks are either red or brown in this light, thought Tom, irrelevant thoughts scrambling his mind for a moment. Before them stretched thirty metres of dusty, dirty, ice-covered ground, dotted here and there with old picnic tables and chairs like rusty garden ornaments peeping through old snow...

The slope ended as ice grew out from the banks of a gurgling stream easily ten metres wide. The ice was creeping out from the banks, and would soon cover the water completely. Their burdens seemed to lighten as they saw the water; perhaps this was their salvation.

The water would be cold. Tom knew that if they could escape the dogs this way then they would need shelter and warmth, and they would need it soon.

Thunder sounded more menacingly in the distance, and the gloom deepened as the storm built up. The dogs howled behind them, but they were out of sight

on the street as Tom and Jane reached the bank of the stream. What little wind there was came from the north.

'We'll go south, further into the town,' said Tom.

Jane looked at him like he was mad. For a month they had been struggling north; just for a dream of warmth that might exist in the tropics. Now Tom wanted to go south again? But then she thought about it some more, and smiled. Underneath the religion Tom still used his brains. She just hoped he didn't need the religion before he would use them.

The wind was from the north, and would carry their scent away from the dogs if they turned south. The stream lay in a north-south direction through the heart of town. They would go south in the water, and they would hope that the dogs would follow their instincts for warmth and go north when they lost the scent. If they lost the scent, she added silently. But was there any shelter waiting for them in the ruin of the centre of the town to the south?

Tom unstrapped his pack and handed it to Jane. She followed him with her gaze as he moved back from the bank, and then ran towards the freezing water. At the bank he jumped, cleared the ice, and stumbled waist deep into the icy water of the centre of the stream. He looked into the sky above him for a moment, mouthed something which Jane didn't hear, and then turned and caught his pack as she threw it to him. A moment later he caught her pack, and then Jane ran and jumped towards him. He helped her as she landed beside him.

He held her to him for a moment, and she returned his hug before he gave her back her pack.

'Hurry!'

They surged upstream, to the south, where only a hundred metres away was a bend which would give them shelter from sight. The howling of the dogs grew louder behind them. Tom surged through the water with greater strength than Jane, and he put an arm about her and pulled her after him.

They pushed through the icy water around the bend of the stream a half minute later and stopped. Hidden by the bend and the ice-laden branches of the dead undergrowth, they looked back on the old picnic area.

The dogs reached the wall almost immediately, jumped it, and ran howling down the slope. One animal couldn't stop before the water and tumbled onto the ice growing from the bank. The ice cracked and the dog crashed through into the water. The animal splashed about a lot, and clawed at the ice with its front paws, but could not break back through the ice to the shore. It was washed slowly downstream from the break. It whimpered, and suddenly let out a wail like a human baby. Jane moved in Tom's embrace. He tightened his arms about her.

'Don't move. They will see.'

The other dogs milled about uncertainly on the bank. They could sense that the water would be the death of them; the way it would soon be the death of the animal in the water.

'Come on now, this is our chance!' Tom whispered. He slowly pulled Jane back from the scene until they were entirely hidden by the bank. Then they slowly and quietly crept further upstream from the animals.

They did not see the scouts leave the dog pack and head, one in each direction, up and down the stream. But neither did the animals see them; they were too far away and they had lost the scent. They did hear the wails of the dog trapped in the water as it slowly froze and drowned.

'God,' said Jane.

'Good food gone,' said Tom.

'Forget it; we can't get at it,' replied Jane. In her mind she could only hear the last cries of the drowning dog.

* * *

Jane and Tom held to the water for as long as their freezing legs would carry them. Finally, they broke through the ice and climbed, shivering violently and involuntarily, onto the western bank of the stream. Unless the dogs found some way to cross they would be safe. The wind picked up, and blew straight through their sodden clothes. Ice formed around the hem of Tom's jacket.

'We've got to find shelter, and fast!' said Jane.

Tom looked at his crucifix. He let go of it for the first time in five minutes. 'I don't know. I rather like the idea of being a statue erected in my own honour.' He laughed.

Jane looked at him with momentary disgust. 'You can have that on your own!' She hit him, and turned to march up the bank on her own. Tom caught her, and they staggered up it together, too cold and frozen to talk further, and barely able to hold each other up. There was a low brick wall on this side of the stream as well; the old town planners had been conscientious. They reached it and fell over it.

Tom looked up. On the hill above them, surrounded by the burnt out ruins of the town, but separated from them by a cemetery full of crumbling and leaning gravestones, stood a church. The fallow ground of the cemetery had protected it from the disasters which had overtaken the rest of the town.

'Look at it. Only one corner of the roof has been damaged!' Tom touched his rosary again and silently thanked it.

Jane saw the movement and snorted. 'It's only shelter. Come on!'

Jane led the way towards the bottom of the hill, and Tom staggered after her. It took him a minute to catch up, and when he did he put his arm around her. After a moment she put hers around him, and they supported each other like that on the trek up the hill.

Tom knew that Jane did not believe in the power in his rosary, but she seemed to allow him his belief, even though it annoyed her. He was grateful for that.

The church was only a ruin because no-one would ever repair it. Only one corner of the roof was damaged, and they could see that the rest of it was quite sound as they got closer. Jane smiled as Tom patted the crucifix of the rosary, and they walked hand-in-hand into the church.

The thunder was close as they entered the portal. Tom looked up and could just make out the darker cloud of the front sweeping in above them. Lightning flashed a couple of kilometres away, and, for a moment, Tom and Jane saw the whole town for the first time.

Tom looked back the way they had come. He had first found the rosary on the body of a nun in the old city; the city that now lay far to the south. He was alone then; he and Jane had not yet found each other. The woman had been lying in a city street. On its side, and lying across her legs, was the runaway car that had struck her. At least, Tom thought it was a runaway car; there was no corpse visible in the driver's seat. It was obvious that the woman had not died immediately; she had pulled the rosary off her clothes and had held it clenched in her hand as she had waited. Tom guessed she must have been praying to her God. He had pried the rosary out of her fingers for a good-luck charm, not because of the religion it represented, but because of the smile on the dead woman's face.

In the craziness his world had become, he had needed something to hold onto. Now, he had Jane, but then he had been alone. The existence of the rosary in his pack, and then round his neck, had told on his mind.

Jane came out of the church to find him standing under the portal looking at the storm. She touched his arm. 'Come on in; you're cold.'

Tom turned into the church behind her. He shivered. They were both freezing.

It was dark inside. Very little light came through either the hole in the roof or the open door. It was dark, and cheap plastic chandeliers swung from the roof in the gloom. Old wooden pews covered the floor. Some of them had bodies in them; half decomposed bodies which were frozen now with the fall of winter.

There was enough light to break up some of the pews, and they went to work together willingly. Tom saw the bodies in the front rows only dimly through the sparse light. He guessed they had congregated there to die of the plagues which had swept the land a suspiciously short time after the bombs had gone off, only six months ago. He said a short prayer to the crucifix for them while he worked, and resolved that the two of them would stay in the back of the church and leave the bodies to repose in peace. He didn't tell Jane that he had seen them; he didn't want to upset her.

Jane had also seen the bodies. She didn't want to upset Tom's religion, so she said nothing either.

Finally they had a small pile of wood thrown together in the corner in the back of the church opposite the hole in the roof. Outside the wind was rising to a roar dampened only by the brick of the church. Inside there was only a gentle breeze. Jane pulled out one of their

many remaining gas cigarette lighters, and a moment late they had a merry blaze in front of them.

The smoke rose towards a chandelier, swirled around it, caught an air current from the door, and was gone through the hole in the roof.

The dancing light from the fire lifted the gloom, and left Tom and Jane staring at a dozen store dummies dumped on the seats in the front of the church.

'What are they...?' They looked at each other and laughed. Tom walked to the front of the church and looked at the neat way the dummies had been arranged to sit on the pews. Some care had gone into arrangement, he could see that. He opened a tiny gate set into a symbolic fence, climbed a stair, and walked behind the pulpit. There he found the dead priest.

Tom clutched at his rosary and turned from the silent tableau. The sight disgusted him: the priest and the store dummies.

'What's the matter?'

Tom didn't answer. He walked slowly back towards the fire where Jane had started removing her wet clothes. The light showed him the Stations of the Cross on the walls above the pews. He had heard of them before, in scripture classes at his old public school, but he had never seen them before. He could find in their portrayal of Christ's tortured face no disgust for the sad sight at the front of the church. He thought about it, but he could find no reason for it to be so.

Outside, the rain started. It came through the roof as sleet and froze further when it hit the floor. Their side of the church remained dry.

'Get your clothes off before you freeze!' Again, Jane had caught him daydreaming.

He looked at her. She had stripped down to her underpants and singlet, and she shivered as she picked up a blanket and stood near the fire.

Her figure always stirred him. Neither of them minded. When they had met they didn't have many blankets, and they had needed to sleep together to conserve warmth. With time, all their secrets had drifted away. She knew him well, all of him, and he knew all of her.

Tom pulled a blanket out of his pack and joined her by the fire. They laid their wet clothes on a nearby pew to dry, and then they stood, arm-in-arm, watching the flames and feeling the heat.

Lightning flashed outside. It was followed by a blast of thunder that rattled the windows of the building. One of the dummies in the front pews fell onto the floor with a clatter.

Jane flinched and curled tighter under Tom's arm. His hand rose instinctively to lay alongside her breast.

Jane turned away from the fire and pulled Tom by the hand. She spread her bed-roll down and then pulled him down beside her. She drew the blankets over them.

Tom didn't react when she drew the rosary over his head and gently tossed it to his pack on the other side of the fire. She hated the feel of it sticking into her when

they made love. Tom was long used to this ritual of hers and said nothing, but neither did he react when she touched him next.

'What's the matter?'

Tom lay beside her; one hand on her stomach. 'Something's not right.'

'After those dogs; that cold swim? I thought you would want me now.'

'I do, but that isn't it. It never seemed to matter before, but we aren't married.'

'So?' For a second, a look of annoyance crossed her face, but that smoothed over and she gently touched his cheek.

'This is a church.'

She kissed him. 'So marry me!' She kissed him again and drew him over her.

'We're alone in the world. What can be wrong?'

In spite of his misgivings, Tom began to respond. She was too beautiful, and, by now, knew him too well.

* * *

Outside, above, the storm centred itself over the hill on which the church stood.

There was no warning. Quantum forces generated the friction between two air masses of differing temperature and moisture content. On the molecular level, and smaller, the governor of all reactions is probability.

The lightning struck the outside of the church and scoured it clean. One branch of it found its way inside, attracted by the well-grounded metal surrounding the altar. One small bolt found its way to the back corner where a small piece of metal lay on the floor beside a well-used rucksack.

The small fire exploded and showered sparks over everything nearby. Two forms clung together, terrified, under a pile of blankets a couple of metres away.

The store mannequins at the front of the church burnt merrily.

Tom and Jane left the building the next morning. They were scarred and bandaged, and, now that they had lost Tom's rucksack, they were poorly equipped. They hoped to be able to replenish their supplies in the town before turning north again. Surely not everything there had been destroyed.

The wind blew from the south. They hurried.

Behind them, on the floor of the church in front of the burnt out altar, they left the melted down remains of an old silver crucifix. Of the rest of the rosary, they saw no sign.

THE END.

JAMES BLISH: CITIES FLY WORDS TOO

by Andrew Darlington

"3918 - Manhattan leaves the galaxy..."

With supernatural sleight of hand James Benjamin Blish ignites momentous events of absurd beauty. It occurs in the appendix CHRONOLOGY OF CITIES IN FLIGHT. Space Opera has exhausted its world-wrecking galaxy-smashing repertoire of B.E.M.'s, mile-long spaceships and mega-trillion-headed galactic empires. And Blish gives an extra twist to a well-twisted formula to add one of Science Fiction's most audacious images to an already outlandish literature of ideas. Cities lift physically from the face of Earth on "Spindizzy" drives to coast the rims of alien star systems... and beyond.

It's the generation ship carried to its ultimate expression, in a concept of stunning imagination. When he wrote THEY SHALL HAVE STARS, Blish not only built the first instalment of an epic fiction series, he was building innovation at a unique pitch, evolved on a higher plane. The tetralogy forms a future history in which human expansion into space meets defeats and supersedes the Vegan Tyranny, while the nascent Web of Hercules expands across the Milky Way in the first waves of a strange culture that is to become the fourth great galactic civilisation.

In a learned and maniacally detailed addition to the 1991 volume, Richard D Mullen makes great academic claims for the relevance of Oswald Spengler's theories of the cyclic growth and decline of empires in the Blish chronology. The demarcation Spengler makes between "culture" and "civilisation", the former the motivating spirit, the latter its outward physical manifestations. Blish himself uses Spengler quotes as chapter headings, and argues his own Spenglerian theories in a posthumously published article in FOUNDATION #13 (as by Williams Antheling Jr). But it's certainly not necessary to be familiar with Spengler's masterpiece DECLINE OF THE WEST to understand and get a "sense-of-wonder" kick from CITIES IN FLIGHT. It's just as germane to point out

Olaf Stapledon's use of evolutionary cycles in *his* historical development of worlds (in LAST AND FIRST MEN), or even Asimov's invention of psycho-history for his ever-expanding FOUNDATION series.

CITIES IN FLIGHT is all of this. But it's also much much more...

The origins of the history lies with OKIE - a novelette featured in ASTOUNDING SF (April 1950). It was followed by BINDLESTIFF (in the December issue). While the next instalment - BRIDGE (Feb 1952) is a prequel dealing with the construction of a stupendous experiment in stress, gravity and magnetism, a bridge 30 miles high, 54 miles long and 11 miles wide built of ice in the "raging gaseous hell" of Jupiter! Like the Humber Bridge - only more so, "it's a bridge to no-place"; Blish's protagonist adding concisely that "there *aren't* many places on Jupiter" for it to go! Yet the results of the "Bridge" - engineered by proxy from the moon Jupiter V, combine with the discovery of Anti-Agathics (antibiotics which counter death decay) enabling Earth to break the restrictions of the solar system and reach the stars. The next story segment, the beautifully titled SARGASSO OF LOST CITIES arrived in spring 1953. Both stories are sucked into the fragmentary novel of the latter's name dealing with the stellar travels of Manhattan and its deviously resourceful Mayor John Amalfi. He "flies" the city from his Empire State Building control room, with the assistance of electronic "City Fathers". Then there is AT DEATH'S END in May 1954.

The novels that grew from this story sequence came out of their correct order of thematic development. Action properly begins with THEY SHALL HAVE STARS (UK - 1956), later retitled for American publication YEAR 2018, linking the two "prequel" novelettes. Originally priced at just 5/- the New English Library edition has a startling green cover of a blurred and shadowy naked woman on a lunar surface pointing

dramatically at the planetary spheres above her where, presumably, her racial destiny waits. It's followed by a novel initially marketed as a juvenile, *A LIFE FOR THE STARS* (US - 1962), about young Crispin de Ford impressed onto the City of Scranton as it is about to leave Earth. He's later "traded" to "New York-in-flight" to visit a storm-tossed mediaeval planet called Heaven, and then to confront Scranton again in a dispute on Argus III. Subsequently serialised in *ANALOG* it was given an arresting cover-splash by artist Solonevich blurbled *A STORY OF THE INDUSTRIAL CITIES OF SPACE*, for the September 1962 issue. Then there is *EARTHMAN, COME HOME* (US - 1955) which "carried the history from about AD3600 to about 3950, and so is by far the longest of the four" according to Blish's 1962 Faber foreword. And finally there is *THE TRIUMPH OF TIME* retitled *A CLASH OF CYMBALS* for its 1958 British publication. Arrow rationalised the odd situation by issuing the book cycle complete in highly collectable theme covers matched to price-tags that run from 35p to 40p; around the same time Blish was voted 15th most popular writer in the S.F. MONTHLY readers poll of 1975. The latest manifestation, and culmination of the entire process, is the 1991 single-volume "blockbuster"-format tome with colour-art by Lee Gibbons recalling the earlier *ANALOG* cover, but now with a price hiked to 5.99 pounds (*CITIES IN FLIGHT* from Legend. ISBN 0-09-926440-0)

The full drama had unravelled over a 12-year period of writing. Each new instalment well-spaced, giving the impression of careful pre-consideration and a variety of levels of possible interpretation. The very term Blish chooses for his "migrant workers among the stars" recalls the much earlier American "Okie" migrants of Steinbeck prose and Woody Guthrie songs as *THEY* escaped the 1930's Dust-Bowl environmental disaster. The huge sweep of Blish's history travels from the Cold War to the End of Time. From involved political intrigue to pure escapist Space Opera. From the theoretical physics of the "Dillion-Wagoner Gravitron-Polarity Generator", to the Jovian jellyfish life-forms, from the sacking of Thor V to the "Diagrams of Power" engraved across the face of Mars. It begins in 2018 AD Washington, with the power impasse between equally repressive "Cold Peace" regimes in the nominally anti-Communist West and the burgeoning - and ultimately triumphant anti-Fascist Soviet Union. Senator Bliss Waggoner short-circuits the bureaucratic inertia in an "underground" campaign that pushes his schemes to break the bounds of the ten-planet solar system (the tenth is Proserpina, out beyond Pluto). He faces opposition from security-mad FBI witch-hunters and later, assassinated President Francis X MacHinery. Even from these opening passages Blish works in clever aphoristic style - "good days in Washington were the ones you slept through". With Blish on an off-day he's still as good as the best Asimov.

...But all the stars (to quote another Blish title) are his stage. And the colonial exodus of 2200 to 2400

takes people from Earth's fallen Western Culture, fleeing the world-wide totalitarian State, to "tread the alien streets and star lanes of a nomad city". The diaspora into space accelerates in stages as Earth's natural resources dwindle to an exhausted planetary Dust-Bowl. City after city goes "Okie" powered by the Spindizzy anti-gravity devices which also, as a side-effect, produce surrounding force-fields to maintain atmosphere and shield out hard cosmic radiation. Pittsburgh is relocated to Mars. Others go star-roving to reach the galactic community beyond, most of them peacefully seeking work or trade - others go "bindlestiff", becoming pirates like Gravitogorsk-Mars (IMT). Myths and legends multiply. A star-borne Los Angeles becomes the "Lost City". Then the politics and power-struggles of galactic empires are complicated not only by domed cities in flight, but by a "dirigible world" too - the entire planet of He from beyond the "rift", with Earth by now long-finished and forgotten. The series peaks in classic S.F. Golden Age style as the galaxy ends in apocalyptic collision with an anti-matter cosmos. The date is now 4004 AD.

James Blish died in his Henley-on-Thames home on the 30th July 1975, half-way through the twelfth *STAR TREK* novelisation.

Probably his most finely crafted work is the moral conundrum *A CASE OF CONSCIENCE*. While his *THERE SHALL BE NO DARKNESS* will continue in late-night movie slots as the 1974 Peter Cushing film *THE BEAST MUST DIE*. But above and beyond that, he'll always be the man who set cities in flight.

To Brian Aldiss (in *BILLION YEAR SPREE*) the Blish series is only a qualified success. The novel quartet may appear "At first blush to be staple *ASTOUNDING* diet, and in a way it was". He's critical of Blish's failure to explore the effects of virtual immortality on his flying citizens, at the expense of concentrating on the purely technical aspects of the Spindizzy Drive. Yet he concedes that the "cities sought work, rather than thrones among the stars", and this constitutes "a significant step away from (*ASTOUNDING* editor John W) Campbell's power fantasy, and a herald of the remarkably different writing Blish was to come up with later". I'd rate it higher. Blish adds to the garish visual vocabulary of Science Fiction. Adds a single unique and ludicrously beautiful image to the arsenal from which extravagant dreams are built; a surreal collage of city and stars - "an island of towers, as tall as mountains, floating in a surfaceless bottomless sea of stars". Such an intensity of vision is breathtakingly rare.

But under his nom de guerre William Atheling Jr, Blish was a savage critic of S.F., demanding and accepting nothing short of the very highest standards. In such a context he'd probably settle for the low-key verdict of *AUTHENTIC SF* #75. The unnamed reviewer writing about *THEY SHALL HAVE STARS*, finds it "a really satisfying story told in an adult manner.

HEARTBREAK HOTEL

by Sean Williams

It was sound that brought him out of it -- the sound of someone knocking at his window.

'*But that's impossible*' he told himself, and ignored it. The knocking became an irregular tap-tap, a faint scratching, and vanished altogether forever.

Then he awoke.

* * *

The air was so cold that it hurt his lungs. He shivered, clutching the mound of blankets tighter about his body. Had it always been so bitter?

'We didn't think you'd make it,' said Mike Parrish. The sometime leader of those who lived in the Hotel was a big man, red-bearded and dark-eyed. He wore a thick anorak and two pairs of trousers, clutched a mug of hot soup between two mitten-wrapped hands.

An identical mug rested on the table besides Stephen's bed but he had not yet summoned the fortitude to reach outside the fragile cocoon of warmth to sip at it, even though his stomach ached with hunger.

Parrish went on:

'I waited twenty-four hours before coming to get you. I wish now I'd gone sooner.'

Stephen forced himself to reassure the big man although his throat hurt with unvoiced questions.

'There was nothing you could do. How could you have known what had happened?'

Parrish smiled faintly. 'And what did happen?'

Stephen frowned, struggling to remember. He was far from sure he wanted to, yet.

'We followed the road as well as we could, but only made it as far as the freeway. Old Nick must have taken a wrong turn somewhere along the line. We went off the shoulder of the road into a ditch and the axle broke; we were stuck. We argued for a while, keeping the engine running for heat, and then the others went to get help. Nick and I stayed because, well ... because someone had to, I guess.'

Parrish scowled gloomily into the mug, silent.

Stephen knew the answer to his question before he asked it and the grief welled eagerly, making words difficult to form.

'Did they make it?'

Parrish shook his head slowly. 'I'm sorry,' was all he said.

Stephen closed his eyes. The truth, although it hurt, was welcome -- a reminder of life. There had been three others who had gone for help, but all he could think of was Karen. Her face, white and insubstantial, hung in his mind's eye framed by the faintest shadow of her bright red hair. Her eyes were reproachful.

'I thought I was going to die,' he said, his throat thick. 'We ran out of petrol eventually ... and ...'

'You were hypothermic when I found you,' said Parrish. 'It was a pretty near thing.' The big man had spent some time on a station in the Antarctic and knew what he was talking about. He was the hotel's only expert on the cold: how to survive it, how to go out in it, how to avoid its most dangerous side-effects. In two years, thanks to him, more were still alive than had died.

'What about Nick?' asked Stephen, opening his eyes wearily.

'He must have gone after the others. He wasn't in the Rover.'

'I can't remember him leaving. He said something about being followed, though, but I didn't know what he meant. Could he have been hallucinating ... ?'

'Maybe.' Parrish shrugged. 'Did you see anything out there? Anything at all?'

'No, but we didn't get very far.' Stephen studied Parrish carefully. There was an edge to the question. 'Why?'

'Are you sure?'

'As sure as I can be. Why, Mike?'

Parrish downed the soup in one long draught. He put the mug down on the table, next to Stephen's, and stood.

'Because we have visitors,' he said, 'and they're asking for you.'

Stephen gaped at him.

'Visitors ... ?'

'From outside.' Parrish gazed down at him past the orange bush of his beard. 'No recollections?' he asked.

Stephen shook his head, wondering if he was still asleep, dreaming.

'Drink your soup,' said the big man, 'and when you're ready you can meet them. Maybe that'll jog your memory.'

'Christ,' said Stephen, still stunned. He had been unconscious for less than a week, but he felt as though he had awoken to an alien place. Everything was different; everything was changed. The fact that visitors had arrived eclipsed even the terrible certainty that was Karen's death.

'Exactly,' said Parrish, and left him alone with his thoughts.

* * *

The view through the boardroom's triple-paned window was the same as Stephen remembered. He watched it mournfully, trying to will himself warm; the small fire that burnt behind him cast little heat and a pale shadow of light that only deepened the darkness outside.

There had once been a town in the valley below the hotel. All that could be seen, however, was an endless bowl of white, dotted here and there by the black skeletons of frozen trees and old power-cable pylons. It was hard to believe that somewhere underneath that suffocating blanket of snow there were houses like tombs, huddled together as though for warmth. And cars, and shopping centres, and ovals -- and bodies. Parrish predicted that, given a couple more years of Winter, the deeper layers of snow would start compacting into permafrost and the town would be forever out of their reach.

For the time being, however, the treasures buried beneath the snow would surrender themselves to anyone armed with a shovel and the will to dig. There was petrol, down there somewhere, and food, if only the cold could be held at bay long enough to find it.

And other people, Old Nick had thought. Living people.

Two unfamiliar Range Rovers were parked near the Hotel's front entrance; both were white and had no external markings -- not even registration plates. They might have been built days ago. The visitor's vehicles, Stephen presumed.

The door to the boardroom opened behind him and he watched the reflections in the window as ten people entered the room.

Parrish was the first, closely followed by Michelle Delguave, the only surviving daughter of Sam Delguave who had once owned the Hotel. The daughter lacked something of the old man's spark and flame, but more than made up for it with a knack for diplomacy and good cheer. Disputes were frequent in the Hotel, with twenty-five people crammed together, totally dependent on each other for survival. Her simple good looks -- short, dark hair and frequent dimples -- had soothed many an argument.

Then came Barry Farquar, grey-haired and fastidious. To Stephen he resembled very much the

accountant he had once been, in both mannerisms and appearance. The coming of Winter had almost destroyed him, and Stephen had expected him to have been among the first to fall when the difficult times began. But he had survived against the odds, clinging desperately to life and sanity with a single-mindedness that was almost frightening to watch. His eyes skittered nervously; his hands sometimes displayed an unconscious tremor.

These three -- Parrish, Michelle, and Farquar -- with Stephen, were the core of the hotel. Two others should have been present, but were not, and the room was filled with their absence. He found himself instinctively reaching beneath the table as he had often done at such meetings, and cursed himself for feeling surprise when his fingers found only the empty chair beside him, not his lover's hand.

Behind Farquar, who seemed disproportionately annoyed to find himself doorkeeper, were the visitors.

They were four men and three women, dressed in identical, white snowsuits buttoned tightly as far as their throats, from which point the silver-lined collars were allowed to hang free. Black nametags proclaimed their identities, but there was a strange similarity that blurred their individual physiques. Stephen was never entirely sure afterwards which was which, except that the one with short black hair and square jaw was obviously their leader. He looked like an American football player.

'Stephen Antonio Farrell,' said this one, as though they had known each other for many years.

Stephen turned; the man did not appear in any way familiar.

'Do I know you?' he asked, frowning.

'No. We haven't met. I apologise.' An amused half-smile touched the thin lips, and then vanished. They shook hands. 'My name is Kobol. Just Kobol.'

'Pleasure,' said Stephen. He studied the visitors more closely and received the impression that they were watching him back twice as hard.

He cleared his throat nervously and took a seat. The visitors followed suit.

'It's good to see you well, Stephen. A complete recovery, I trust?'

'I hope so.'

Kobol nodded, the grey eyes meeting and holding his with a strange piercing quality. 'We heard about your expedition. We were wondering what you hoped to find.'

'Survivors,' he replied, catching Farquar's sharp look. The ex-accountant had disapproved of the expedition on principle, declaring it a waste of resources that might have been better-utilised looking for supplies. 'We thought there might be others living under the snow, in the town itself.'

'A good cause, then,' said Kobol, approvingly, 'but a strange one. What made you think that there were others?'

'It wasn't my idea,' he replied honestly.

'It was Old Nick's,' put in Michelle, looking at Stephen and then back at Kobol. 'We all thought we were the only ones left -- even after he appeared.'

Kobol leaned forward. 'Who is this 'Old Nick'?'

'A madman,' said Farquar bitterly.

'He came from the town,' interjected Parrish, 'about a month ago. He crawled to our doorstep, saying he'd run out of supplies and fuel.' Parrish shrugged. 'He'd been living on his own since Winter began; we couldn't turn him away.'

'He was a lunatic,' asserted Farquar, more angrily this time. 'Four people died as a direct result of his fantasies. If we'd never listened to him --'

'Enough, Barry,' said Parrish wearily. 'We've been through this before.'

'He thought there were other survivors?' asked Kobol.

'Yes,' replied Stephen.

'And you believed him?'

He shrugged. 'It seemed reasonable enough. If he'd survived on his own for so long then why not others? Why should we be the only ones left? And besides,' he added, staring pointedly at the visitor, 'there's you.'

'We're not from town,' said Kobol flatly.

'Where, then?'

'Sydney.' Kobol leaned back into the chair, folding his hands. 'We represent the Restoration Council.'

'Which is ... ?'

'An organisation trying to restore world order after the war.'

'So it was a war,' breathed Michelle.

'You didn't know?'

'No. One day we lost communications, and the next the rain started. Then the snow. We knew nothing about a war.'

'It was very sudden. No-one is certain, even now, who or what started it.'

There was silence around the table as they absorbed the news. Farquar was staring at the visitors with a peculiar glint in his eyes. Stephen thought it might have been distrust, and wondered why.

'Is ... Are there many left?' asked Michelle, the first to recover.

Kobol shook his head. 'Not many. Australia was lucky in one sense; it was spared the initial ferocity of the war, but deeply affected by the aftermath.'

'And?' asked Stephen.

'And what?'

'What happens now?'

'We try to regroup. We will fix your generator, then return to the city.'

'And then?'

Kobol shrugged. 'Anything to keep people alive through Winter. We can do no more than try.'

'Exactly,' agreed Parrish. Glancing at Parrish: 'Right, Barry?'

Stephen's attention drifted back to the window as the conversation continued. It was dark outside and he had a gut feeling that the sun had set, although he could not be certain of the fact. Since Winter had fallen, the sun never penetrated the clouds to warm the Earth's surface. He imagined the dust of the old world shadowing the sky

like a dark veil, reminding all those beneath that this was a world in mourning.

'Will it ever end?' asked Michelle, as though echoing his thoughts.

'Yes,' said Kobol, with absolute, impossible certainty. 'It will end.'

* * *

Although weariness wracked him, Stephen tagged along as the visitors were shown the generator room. The ancient diesel motor had lain silent for six months -- not for want of fuel, but as a result of some malaise beyond the abilities of anyone in the Hotel to cure.

While two of the visitors fiddled with the inner workings of the generator, Farquar took Stephen aside.

'I don't trust them,' he whispered. Stephen eyed him carefully and Farquar was not ignorant of the skeptical glance. He added: 'They remind me of the CIA.'

'What, then?'

'They keep their snowsuits closed, you know? As though they have shoulder-holsters underneath. They're hiding something, I'm sure of it.'

Stephen stifled a laugh. 'You're crazy,' he said.

'No -- listen, Stephen. They've been watching us.'

'Now you're being paranoid.'

'Really, I've seen them -- and you must have seen them, too.'

Stephen turned away, but Farquar grabbed his arm.

'You've got to listen -- !'

'Get a grip on yourself, Barry,' he hissed, and yanked himself free.

Parrish was watching the repairs over a white-suited shoulder. Stephen surreptitiously suggested they should talk on the other side of the room.

'It's Barry,' he whispered.

'I know.' Parrish sighed. 'We've been cooped up in here for too long. Even I find it a bit of a shock to see someone new. Barry's feeling the same fear of the unknown -- but more acutely, that's all.'

'I don't like it. He's giving me the creeps.'

'Well, Michelle's got her eye on him, but there's nothing else we can do. We can't lock him up, for God's sake.'

Stephen shook his head. Farquar was studying the visitors' activities with a hawk-like stare; his clouded thoughts were horribly exposed upon his face.

The generator was stripped down to its component parts and laid out on a tarpaulin. Stephen watched for less than half an hour before giving in to exhaustion.

He went to his room and lay down on the bed, not quite ready to retire to his lonely bed, the bed that he and his lover had shared barely a fortnight ago. His thoughts were confused -- about Karen, the Hotel, the visitors, and the future. Winter, in less than eighteen months, had become his life. The past was gone, almost forgotten.

Sighing wearily, he went to the window and pulled the thick shade aside.

The view was occluded by a dark shadow that hadn't been there before he had gone on the expedition. A fallen tree? he wondered. He peered closer, trying to discern the object through his ghostly reflection -

- and almost cried out with shock when he realised what it was.

Someone was looking back at him.

* * *

The snow suits were handmade, sewn together from the warmest fabrics available in the Hotel. They were thick and cumbersome, but essential for any extended jaunt outside. Four hung from hooks by the Hotel's rear exit like limp, deflated spacesuits, and Stephen wriggled into one, hoping no-one would happen by and discover him.

Pulling the all-encompassing hood over his face, he tried the door. Ice had welded the hinges solid and he had to lean all his weight upon the handle before the door shifted. Eventually a crack appeared along the frame and a bitter wind attacked his mittened hands. Gritting his teeth, he forced the door ajar until there was room enough for him to squeeze through.

Once outside, the going was tough. Snow had drifted as high as his knees even along the lee of the building, and he longed for snowshoes. It took him ten minutes to struggle the two hundred metres to his window and the figure that leaned against it.

It was a man, frozen solid, one hand taking the corpse's weight on the frosted window. He brushed snow from the icy face and strands of grey hair broke away in his fingers. Beneath the crusted ice, the face was familiar.

It was Old Nick. He'd made it back. Stephen belatedly remembered the faint knocking that had awakened him from his death-like fever: not hallucination after all, but a feeble plea for help from a man dying of bitter exposure.

Stephen looked around. There were no tracks in the snow, which was only to be expected. He wondered what he should do next.

Old Nick's other hand was pointing at the window, and he looked closer. The tip of the index finger was thickly coated with ice. He studied the window. There was a message scratched upon it, crudely fashioned in the thick scum of frost:

'Take me inside. Tell no-one.'

Stephen shivered. Old Nick's glassy eyes seemed to be watching him closely, uncannily.

He nervously put a hand under each of the old man's armpits and heaved. Nick was surprisingly light, even in death, and it took less than half an hour to drag him to the Hotel's rear entrance.

Why am I doing this? he wondered. There was no sane answer he could think of, except that Old Nick had been his friend and deserved a decent burial.

When he was almost there, the power came back on. Light flooded from the cracks between blinds and boards, washing across the sterile whiteness of the windswept snowfield.

The air inside the Hotel was startlingly warm. Within moments he was sweating from exertion. There were fire stairs that led almost immediately from the rear exit; Stephen lugged the body up to the second floor and locked it inside an unused room, pocketing the key.

Later, he thought, seeing grey spots in front of his eyes. I'll bury him later.

He shrugged gratefully out of the snowsuit and went to bed. Despite the alien, yellow light that trickled into the room, he fell almost immediately into a dark, dreamless sleep.

* * *

He was awakened by the sounds of merriment. Someone -- more than one, perhaps -- was laughing. It was an alien, forgotten sound.

He climbed out of bed and went to see what was going on. He found the occupants of the Hotel in the dining room with the visitors, celebrating the return of power and civilisation.

'Drink?' asked Michelle, her eyes twinkling.

He declined, preferring a solid breakfast to alcohol. There was a saucepan filled with a glutinous stew bubbling on the electric stove, and he eagerly prepared himself a bowlful. It was the first truly hot meal he had seen in over six months.

'This is the life,' said Parrish, taking a seat next to him.

'How much diesel do we have left?'

'Enough for six months. The store in the generator room is two-thirds full and the tanks in the sheds haven't been touched.'

Kobol joined them, still in his snowsuit. The visitor was not drinking either.

'A pleasant change?' he asked.

Stephen nodded, his mouth full. 'You'd better believe it.'

'If only the others could have been here,' said Parrish, pushing his champagne to one side.

Stephen put down his spoonful of casserole, suddenly reminded of his loss. The room seemed drab and grey, without the splash of colour that Karen had once provided.

Kobol nodded noncommittally, then went to talk with one of his fellows. Almost instantaneously, Farquar took his place, and Stephen groaned internally, his appetite evaporating further. The ex-accountant had not had any sleep; that was obvious. His eyes were dark-rimmed and his hair was in disarray.

'It's warm in here, isn't it?' he said, leaning close.

Parrish nodded. 'Thank God.'

'Then why are they still wearing their snowsuits?' Farquar's eyes flitted from Parrish to Stephen, seeking support. 'Surely they don't need to anymore?'

'Barry, I know it's hard --'

'Don't patronise me, Stephen. I'm not going crazy. I just want to warn you, that's all.'

'Of what, Barry? I don't see any danger, just strangers.'

'And they're leaving today,' said Parrish, leaning forward. 'They have other places to search, apparently.'

'When?' asked Farquar, his eyes nervous and startled. 'When are they leaving?'

'In about six hours. Kobol told me a little while ago.'

'Are they leaving anything behind?'

'No.'

'We could really use one of the Rovers, or a radio, or something.'

'They can't spare --'

'Why not? Surely, if they were truly expecting to find survivors, they'd bring something.'

'Exactly what are you suggesting, Barry?'

'That they're not what they seem, that's all. We should be careful not to trust them too far.'

'They fixed the generator, Barry. What else do you want?'

Farquar was silent and thoughtful, obviously torn between arguing his case further and conceding defeat. The internal conflict was almost palpable. Eventually, he slid the seat back and walked away.

'He's getting worse,' Stephen whispered.

'Yes. I hope Michelle can keep him under control.'

Stephen pushed the bowl aside. The warmth of the air had made him drowsy and forgetful, and only the unexpected memory of Karen had reminded of other, more immediate, matters.

'Excuse me. There's something I have to do.'

He stood and left the room, conscious of eyes following him -- Farquar's and Kobol's. The latter nodded in farewell and a shiver crept down Stephen's spine. There was something strange in the clear grey eyes, almost inhuman. It was no wonder that Farquar was so afraid of him.

But heat and the inevitable process of cellular decay were foremost in his mind as he made his way to the rear of the Hotel, and the locked room on the second floor.

* * *

He opened the door and let himself in. Old Nick's body lay supine on the bed with hands folded across his chest. Stephen frowned; he didn't remember placing it in any such position.

As he crossed the small room and prepared to touch the corpse, Old Nick's bloodshot eyes opened and stared at him.

'Hello, Stephen.'

'Oh my God.' He backed away until the door was behind him.

'Sorry to startle you.' Old Nick sat up slowly, stretching his limbs. 'I thawed a couple of hours ago. Been waiting for you to return.'

'How ... ? You're dead!'

Old Nick shook his head, his grey hair swaying from side to side like limp seaweed. 'Not dead; just put on ice for a while -- quite literally.'

'But that's impossible!'

'Now it is, yes.' Old Nick waved at the dusty room. 'With this level of technology, almost everything's impossible.' He rose to his feet and put a hand on Stephen's shoulder.

'I'm from the future, my friend. From your future.'

'Jesus.' Stephen sat on the bed, feeling the blood drain from his brain. He thought he might be about to faint.

'Best you pulled yourself together, my friend,' said Nick, sitting next to him and putting an arm around his shoulder. 'We don't have much time.'

'Time for what?' His voice boomed hollowly in his ears.

'The thaw's almost here, Stephen. Another month or so and the cloud-cover will break. The snow will be gone for the most part within a year.'

'But that's good -- isn't it?' he asked, confused by Old Nick's dark tone of voice.

'In essence, yes. But not entirely.'

'Why not?'

'It means we're running out of time. There are certain things that have to happen ... or else other things won't. I can't explain it better than that. I'm sorry.'

'Like what?'

'I can't say.'

Stephen walked across the room, running his hands through his hair. A tide of panic threatened to envelope him. 'This is insane, Nick. You should be dead - - and, Jesus, I should be dead too! Frozen stiff, like Karen and the others, out there --'

'Stephen.' Nick's eyes were dark and serious. 'Calm down.'

'Either I'm crazy or in hell or you're --'

'Listen to me.' The urgency of Nick's voice brought him to a halt. 'I have to tell you something.'

He took a deep breath and forced himself to listen. 'What now?'

'There are fifty people living in the town, under the ice. Doing quite well, too -- better than your little group. They have plenty of fuel, food and medical supplies, and even a working radio. All they lack is transport, with the cars buried under metres of snow.'

'So --' His mind did a frantic double-take. 'So why haven't we seen them?'

'You have, but you're all so convinced that you're the only survivors that you've written them off as illusions or shadows. Or as paranoid fantasies, in the case of Farquar -- who once dismissed them, and now believes in them utterly.'

'But, if they have a radio, then surely --'

'Yes, exactly. Kobol is lying.'

'You ... You know about him?'

'Yes. My hearing is quite acute, for an old robot.'

Stephen could feel his legs buckling from under him. 'A robot? First you're from the future and now you're a fucking robot?'

'There's more. Kobol is from the future, too. He and the others work for the ARM -- an agency that polices the temporal lines. They were sent to catch me, and to correct any temporal deviations I might have caused. They're robots too.'

'Jesus.' He slid down the wall and rested on his haunches. It was too much for him.

Nick came and squatted in front of him. He smelt faintly of stale water.

'I was sent back to sight-see -- nothing else. My owner wanted to study what had happened after the War, planned to download my observations upon my return. I wasn't meant to intervene in any way -- it's illegal and immoral, for a start -- but I knew I had to when I saw what had happened.'

'What?' Stephen gripped the robot's collars and dragged him close. 'Tell me what you mean, for God's sake.'

Old Nick looked around nervously. 'I'm not supposed to, but I should. That's why they gave me free will, isn't it?'

Stephen hastened to provide encouragement. 'Yes, of course it is. Tell me.'

'Okay, Stephen. It has been well documented that, when the thaw arrives, you will be living in the town settlement. I was sent back to meet you, but you weren't there. A little digging and I found out about the Hotel. They knew there were people living here, but had never had the resources to contact you. You have -- or had, rather -- transport but no radio; they're the exact opposite. You had to be here, so I went after you. And you were here, sure enough. I tried to get you to town in the Rover, along with the Karen and the others, but failed. Kobol spotted me and I was forced to flee.'

'Wait, Nick,' interrupted Stephen, 'Does it really matter where I live?'

'Who knows what may happen if things are different?'

'But how can I change anything?'

'That I cannot say. I have strict instructions not to mention it.'

Stephen sighed in frustration.

'All right. So now what?'

'Everyone in the Hotel dies, as far as I can tell.'

Stephen glanced up so sharply that his head banged into the wall.

'What?'

'There are no records of survivors from this refuge, although there is a mention of a Delguave Hotel in ... ancient documents. They describe the town quite vividly, and the fire that destroyed the Hotel after the War. That's all I know. I can only assume that, sometime soon, everybody but you must die.'

'How?'

'In the fire, perhaps?'

'Christ ... So why is Kobol here?'

'To correct any imbalance I might have caused, as I said. Obviously my employer's arrangements were discovered and a trace sent after me.'

'So what do I do? Warn the others?'

'If you like. It might not make any difference.'

'But --'

He was interrupted by a sound as unexpected as birdsong:

The firing of a gun, three times.

Stephen jumped to his feet. 'What the hell?'

Old Nick cocked his head. 'Shots, obviously. I can hear shouting. Farquar, perhaps.'

'Jesus.' He opened the door to the room, intending to offer his assistance.

'Wait!' called Nick urgently. 'It's started, I think. You have to leave here.'

'Like hell I will,' said Stephen, and locked the door behind him.

* * *

As he ran down the stairs three at a time, he began to hear the shouting Nick had mentioned. There was an argument taking place in the generator room. Two more shots were fired and someone screamed. He could hear a woman sobbing hysterically.

He skidded around corners at a dead sprint. As he neared the focus of the racket, he slowed into a crouched run. Figures were clumped around the doorway to the generator room, six of them white-suited, keeping well away from the actual doorway itself.

As he approached, Parrish waved him to his side.

'Farquar?' he asked, panting.

'Stir crazy,' Parrish whispered. 'He's got the rifles, and Michelle.'

'What does he want?'

'Who knows? He's asking for you, but -- do you want to talk to him?'

He shrugged. 'If it'll calm him down.'

Parrish nodded. 'Okay, but don't try to jump him. He could do anything.'

'I'll keep that in mind.'

Parrish waved a hand tentatively around the door frame. 'Barry?'

'What do you want?' came the reply, taunted with strain and fear.

'It's Stephen.'

There was a lengthy pause, then:

'Send him in. I won't hurt him, I swear.'

'Will you let Michelle go?'

'No -- not yet.'

Parrish looked at Stephen, who shrugged. He took a deep breath and stood upright. Someone pushed a knife down the back of his jeans, out of sight beneath his windcheater, and he nodded thanks to the anonymous donor. Holding his hands in view, he stepped into the doorway.

The generator room was a mess. Bullet holes pock-marked the walls; there were puddles of water on the

floor. Michelle was crouched in one corner, sobbing and hiding her face. Farquar himself stood near the generator, which was still running; he was dressed in a snowsuit and must have been stifling.

Farquar waved the gun. 'Over here -- slowly.'

Stephen obeyed. 'What's the problem, Barry? Why are you doing this?'

'Don't ask questions. Just listen.' Farquar held up one hand. 'Hold it. That's close enough.'

'Talk to me, Barry.'

'I went outside,' said Farquar, eyes flitting nervously around the room -- from the doorway to Michelle, then to the generator and Stephen's face. There was sweat trickling down the man's cheeks and a terrifying wildness in his eyes.

'I went outside to take a look at the Rovers.'

'Why?'

'Curiosity, mainly, but I'll admit that I was thinking of sabotaging one of them. We need one, for Christ's sake, and they were just going to drive off --'

'And then what, Barry?'

Farquar took a deep breath.

'Then I came in here to check on the generator --'

Without warning, he suddenly turned and fired the rifle. The bullet ricocheted wildly, sending chips of wood flying from the door's frame. The white-suited figure that had poked its head into the room hastily retreated.

'Jesus,' whispered Stephen, 'don't do that!'

'Then tell them to keep out! Tell them to leave me alone, or I'll --!'

'Okay, Barry -- okay! I'll tell them.'

He turned to face the doorway. All he could see through it was the top of Kobol's head. The visitor's eyes were shining.

'He's insane,' said Kobol. 'Don't listen to him.'

'Just keep back,' said Stephen. 'And I mean it. I don't want you in here.'

Kobol nodded slowly, and the head retreated.

When Stephen looked back at Farquar, the ex-accountant had gone pale. He gestured that Stephen should come closer, until their cheeks were almost touching.

'The Rovers don't have any engines,' whispered Farquar. 'And I found this ...' He bent down and pointed into the workings of the generator.

Stephen stooped to look and Farquar returned his attention to the doorway, holding the rifle nervously in both hands.

In the gloom beneath the machine, Stephen thought he could see something out of place, but couldn't be sure. Craning his neck to find a better perspective, he squinted through the generator's fan belt, careful not to touch the hot, whirring metal.

And there it was: a tiny object scarcely larger than a snail's shell, entirely silver. It seemed to tremble without relation to the movement of the part it was affixed to, as though alive. It was too deep inside the machine to

reach with his hand, and he was not sure he wanted to. It glinted evilly in the dull light.

He raised his head.

'What --?'

At exactly that moment, two visitors burst into the room. Stephen covered his head as Farquar dropped into a crouch and fired desperately. There were a series of muffled thuds, the endless booming of the gun, the whining of ricochets, and a sickening crunch as something struck the wall behind him.

The gunfire ceased. A terrible silence fell in its wake, filled only by the innocent chugging of the diesel engine.

He opened his eyes.

Farquar lay in a broken, lifeless heap not metres from him, sprawled bonelessly against a wall. A white-suited figure was crouched over the body, as though expecting it to rise and rejoin the attack.

A hand came down from above to help him to his feet. It was another visitor and Stephen waved the hand away. He clambered upright on his own.

The room was suddenly full of people patting him on the back and congratulating him, and it was a moment before he noticed the body of the second visitor that had charged the room. It lay like a fallen statue face-down by the door. He pressed through the throng to peer closer at it.

Michelle was led from the room, still sobbing, as Stephen rolled over the body. There were multiple bullet-holes in the chest of the visitor, but no blood. He reached for the knife in his jeans to slice through the white snowsuit, but a hand grasped his wrist before he could make the first cut.

'Better not to,' said Kobol, and twisted the blade free.

Stephen watched impotently as the body was lifted by three of the robots and carried from the room.

'You bloody idiots!' roared Parrish from behind him. 'I told you not to rush him until I said so!'

'He was going to kill Stephen,' explained a visitor patiently. 'We could not allow that to that happen.'

'And what about Michelle, eh? And Farquar himself? Did you stop to think about them?'

Stephen slipped out of the room as the argument raged. The words ricocheted after him like an echo of the future:

'If life is so fucking precious these days,' said Parrish, 'then why did you kill him?'

'It wouldn't have made any difference,' replied Kobol, impassive and cold. 'Not in the long-term.'

Stephen broke into a run.

The second floor was empty, the lock shattered. Old Nick had gone. A note had been burnt into the wall of the room:

* * *

'Meet me out the front.'

He ran back down the stairs and headed for the rear entrance. Behind him, the argument raged on and the sobbing continued mercilessly. The snowsuit seemed to

take forever to put on. The snow outside was thick and cloying.

Old Nick was waiting for him by one of the visitors' Rovers, apparently unaffected by the dark chill in the air.

'Okay,' said Stephen, his breath pluming in the eternal Winter night. 'I believe you.'

'What changed your mind?'

He explained what he had seen -- Kobol's suspicious behaviour, the dead visitor, the silver object in the heart of the generator.

'Sounds like a bomb,' said Nick. 'And that would make sense.'

'They're trying to make history happen?'

'By the sounds of it. Crude, but effective.'

'Could you defuse it? While they're still in there?'

Old Nick regarded him for a long time, his craggy features shadowed and expressionless. 'I could try if you wanted me to, but it wouldn't make any difference.'

'Try anyway. We have to.'

Nick sighed. 'Okay, Stephen.'

'Good. I'll wait out here.'

'No -- you must go. The Rover's loaded and ready. Leave it in a side street and walk into the heart of town, towards the old Institute. They'll find you. You won't freeze -- I know you won't. You have work to do.'

And then Old Nick was gone, running up the front steps of the Hotel and through the front door.

Stephen waited nervously for a moment, stamping his feet to keep warm, frozen with indecision. Through the Rover's closed windows, he could see the keys dangling in the ignition. The door was unlocked. The vehicle seemed to beckon him to safety, but he resisted the temptation. He imagined Karen telling him to get the hell out, and smiled grimly.

As he waited impatiently for Nick to return, he noticed a strange thing:

It was growing lighter. With every passing moment, the night was retreating from around him. It wasn't the dawn Nick had promised, more as though the snow itself was glowing from within with a white, electric light.

What now? he wondered, and then dropped to his knees with his hands over his ears.

There was a muffled crump from within the Hotel, followed by the tinkling of glass. A flash of yellow and red light flickered through the cracks around window-frames as the visitors' bomb detonated.

He had a split-second to wonder whether it had gone off automatically, or been triggered by Nick's attempts to defuse it, before the shockwave of the explosion reached the kerosene tanks.

There was a deafening sound, as though the world were breaking apart. He screamed, unable to hear his own voice. A hammer-blow of air knocked him off his knees and through the air amongst a tangled maelstrom of wreckage. The Hotel vanished in a ball of fire that reached for him in slow motion.

Time froze as he fell. A white-clad arm drifted by, severed and lifeless. He watched it float past, oddly serene.

And then the ground struck him. Pain ripped his back and shoulders, severing all sensation from his twisted legs. For an instant, the night burned with fire, echoes of agony, silent screams.

Someone was bending over him, shadowed, backlit. The man seemed vaguely familiar, through the fog that clutched at him, but Stephen was uncertain. Surely Kobol had died in the explosion? Or if not, been horribly injured? He tried to move, to twist away from the apparition, but the pain was too intense.

He half-glimpsed something in the sky above him -- an enormous vehicle descending upon beams of translucent light, casting a flickering halo about the figure that leaned closer, raising a hand, passing it over his eyes.

Wait! he screamed silently. I'm not dead! I'm not --

Then his eyes closed, and he was gone.

Epilogue.

The story of how he had escaped the fire in the Hotel circulated rapidly through the small community. Mothers whispered to children of his dash through the snow in the battered Range Rover, with fire behind him and ice ahead. The crash, as they related it, was a matter for despair, and the desperate crawl from the wreck of the vehicle amazed even the most jaded. His serendipitous discovery by a lone resource-scout was already legendary, even after a few short weeks.

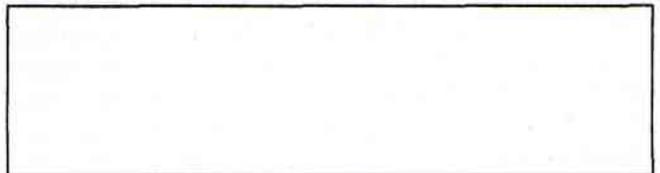
And, when Dawn came and Winter ended, the hero himself led a small party out to the wreck of the Rover to study the infamous broken axle.

He smiled when he saw it. He had thought that he would die when the Rover slewed off the road, but here he was miraculously still living. And a well-respected member of the town's survivors as well. There were those who whispered that he might become their leader within months, such was the respect he had earned.

For all that had happened since, he didn't regret his year alone in the Hotel, although it seemed strange that he should have so few memories of that time. He rarely thought about it at all, except when the intermittent stiffness in his legs returned to plague him on cold nights. Most peculiar of all, though, was a recurring dream of a woman with fiery red hair -- a woman he had no recollection of ever knowing.

Pushing the matter aside, he returned his attention to the day to day struggle of his new life.

The past is gone, he told himself, looking forward to the future, and dreams are only dreams.



THE YANKEE PRIVATEER 14

by Buck Coulson

I don't really feel like doing a column, but I have two due, so on to the typewriter. In the six weekends beginning with Easter, we went to 3 conventions, a concert of historical songs, visited friends once and were visited by friends once. This weekend and next we have off, and then it's back to another convention. Also in this period, our doctor diagnosed one of my toes as "pregangrenous", but it seems to be clearing up, with a change in heart medicine. Problems of having diabetes *and* heart trouble.

One of the conventions I think would be small even in Australia; there were less than two dozen people there, and I suspect less than 20. This was Wabashcon #1, renamed Wabashcon #0 after the fact. Held in Lafayette, Indiana, at Purdue University, its main problem was lack of advanced publicity, though holding it at a university probably helped keep membership down, since it meant no con suite and no party rooms. The lack of numbers didn't bother us, as we were there so Juanita could work out a program for the historical concert with Michael Longcor, her co-performer. We actually made expenses, largely because we stayed with the Longcors instead of at a hotel. The most recent convention, Marcon, was larger than the first 8 Worldcons I attended. The registration computer broke down, so when we left there was no accurate tally of memberships, but a committee member guessed at 1500 to 1800. When we got back from this one we put \$1500 in the bank, though not all of this was profit, by any means - not all of it was even sales. Part of it was Mike Longcor's share of our joint hotel room. This was in Columbus, OH; in between these cons we went to Contraption, in a Detroit suburb, as agents for Wail Longs. The company paid expenses and we sold its tapes. (Wabashcon is planning to be back next year, this time in a hotel and with sufficient advance publicity.)

The concert was something different. Sally Childs-Helton works for the Indiana Historical Society, and talked her boss into hiring Juanita and Michael to perform a concert of songs about Indiana history at the Society May meeting. Since there aren't all that many folksongs about Indiana, and popular tunes like "The Banks of the Wabash" don't count, Juanita, Mike and I all started writing about historical events. Indiana has some

interesting history; one of my songs was about the Reno Brothers, who invented train robbery in Indiana. They're not as famous as Jesse James, but they *were* first. (They all ended up at the end of a rope, some of them at legal hangings and some at a lynching.) Juanita did find a folksong about Indiana's earliest serial killer, Belle Gunness. She'd invite good Norwegian farmers to her hog farm near La Porte, IN, object matrimony. And bring along money; the farm had a few debts to pay off. When the neighbors finally got suspicious, they found 14 bodies buried in her orchard. No one knows how many - if any - ended up inside the hogs, but they'd be a handy disposal method. Hogs, like people, are omnivorous. Belle's body was supposedly found in the ashes of her house, which mysteriously burned, but since the body was headless, I have this suspicion that Belle got away and left someone else to take the rap. Mike had the top song, though. It seems that Lafayette man invented a version of the guillotine. He and a couple of porters lugged the parts of the machine up to a Lafayette hotel room, where he assembled it. Then he put a lighted candle under the rope holding up the blade, lay down with his neck in the proper position, sniffed some chloroform, and left an awful mess for the chambermaid next morning. Mike is now trying to track down the original blade, which supposedly still exists, somewhere in the Lafayette area.

Some of the other songs were about traditional Indiana history; the capture of Vincennes in the Revolutionary War, Frances Slocum, who was kidnapped by Indians as a child and when finally found as an old woman by her brothers, refused to return to white life, Tenskwatewa the Shawnee Prophet, Gene Stratton-Porter the romantic novelist and naturalist, and so on. I preferred the ones that gave listeners some history they didn't read about in their schoolbooks. In return for the concert, Juanita and I and the Longcors received free room and meals at the state park inn where the concert was held, travel expenses, a cash payment, and Juanita and Mike are now listed as "speakers" for the IHS, which may or may not lead to more concerts. Plus Bill Roper came down from Chicago, taped the concert for his Dodeka Records, and tapes will be sold, beginning this fall, through fandom

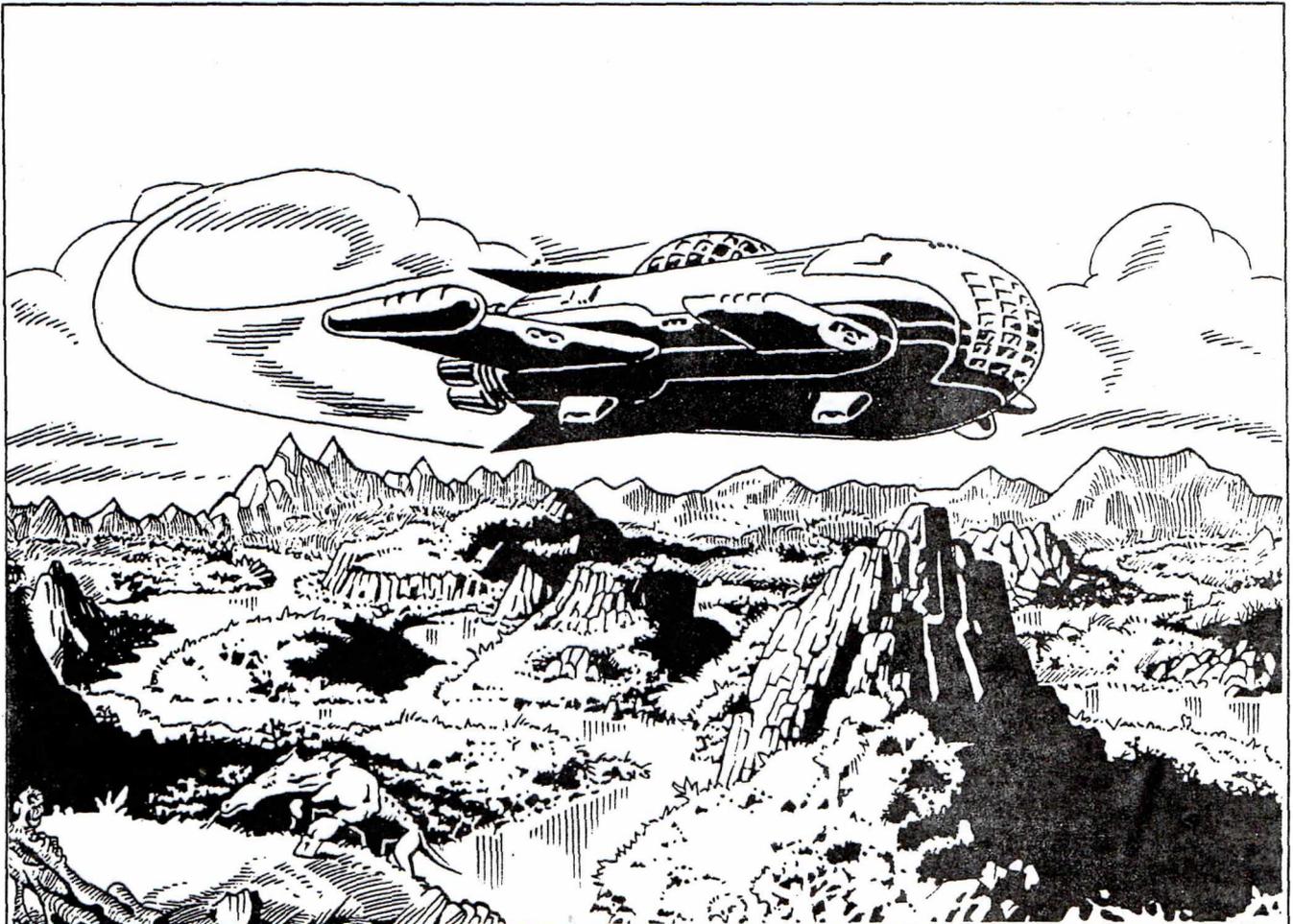
and also through the IHS catalogs, so there should be some royalties eventually. And it was a very pretty state park, though we didn't see a lot of it. You never can tell what fandom is going to lead to.

Otherwise, spring is turning into summer here, which means work. The grass is growing merrily, though so far Juanita has been pushing the lawn-mower. I was out the other day with a scythe, cutting a path to the compost heap and the trash burner so I can haul things out to each in the dewy morning without getting wet to the shoulders. When the Miesels visited, John and I spent the time cutting a fallen maple tree into firewood. The tree came down in an ice storm in early spring, and I spent a good bit of time with axe and crosscut saw, getting the top of it out of the neighbor's cornfield before it was time for him to plant. We have no way to burn wood here, and John has a fireplace, so he came up, rented a chainsaw, and we spent about 4 hours woodcutting. We'd have done more if the chain hadn't come off the saw; we didn't figure we knew enough about the machine to try replacing the chain. I cut and John man-handled the wood, and just off-hand I think 4 hours of running a chainsaw is quite enough.

I ran the tiller over the garden, Juanita planted tomatoes, corn, beets and pole beans, and last evening and this morning I put up the poles for the beans. For those who aren't acquainted with the breed, pole (or runner)

beans will climb things. The traditional method is to ram a pole in the ground - preferably one about 7 feet long - next to each hill of beans, and four poles are tied together at the top, to make a sort of tepee framework. The poles are usually made of tree branches, and should be as skinny as possible (that's where the term "beanpole" for a tall skinny person comes from.) After some years of having the tepees blow down in windstorms, I started putting up cross-poles to bind the tepees together, which so far has worked quite well. Now I need to till the garden again, burn trash, turn the compost, and write my review column that I get paid for now and then. (Payment on publication.) Oh yes, and finish restoring the target backstop, which fell down last winter. Originally it was made of railroad ties with fairly small posts front and back to keep the ties on top of one another. The posts broke, so I need to finish restacking the ties, put heavier posts in front and a lot of rocks and broken concrete behind, as support. I told the neighbor he could put any rocks from his field on our land and I'd use them, but I hadn't expected a mound five feet high. Got to use them for something. I gather he plowed into the foundation of one or more old buildings. Anyway, I want to get that finished because I haven't shot anything this year and my trigger finger is getting itchy

- Buck Coulson.



ASHTA THE FOOL

by Blair Hunt

He stood at the back of the crowded meeting hut and listened to the village sage as he explained the new truth.

'Home place is not, as we have always believed, an island alone in a great cave. The sea that surrounds us, and the reeds beyond it are not the world. I have studied the ancient masters and have come to a great discovery that was hidden even from their eyes. The world is a ball of mud and water that hangs in space!'

The thirty villagers sat in stunned silence. At last Ashta could hold his peace no longer. 'Oh wise sage, if that is so then there would be no roof to support the glow worms that light our sky at night.'

The sage smiled; 'Those are not glow worms, Ashta. They are globes of fire that hang far out in space, just like our own sun.'

'But we have always believed that our sun is a great lamp that shines through a hole in the roof of the cave.'

'Ashta, all is changed now that we know the truth. Soon we will send out explorers to find new lands and new people beyond the reeds.'

Ashta jumped to his feet; 'There are no other people and the world is a great cave. Sage, you are teaching the people to believe in magic instead of the old science!'

'And you, Ashta, are a fool!'

From that moment on he was known to the people as Ashta the fool.

* * *

Ashta's farm was near the top of the hill at the island's centre. As he trudged along behind the plough he could see first one expedition then another set out in the little boats to discover new lands.

One by one the voyagers returned to report that, no matter which direction they tried, the great reed forest proved too strong to press through.

One evening he had a visitor. The sage stood before him, his ancient face grey with worry. Ashta brought the old man in beside the fire.

'Sage, are you burdened with a sickness?'

'Ashta, I am ashamed to come to you after bringing you to shame before the people but I need your help.'

'Sage, I have thought long about the things you are teaching the people and now I believe that your words are true for your wisdom is greater than mine.'

The old man smiled; 'You are burdened with the name of fool because of me, yet it is I who have brought our people to the brink of destruction.'

'When I first showed them the new truth they were excited, but now, as the boats return without result, the people grow restless. Many have not planted their crops. Soon we will be short of food. We need something to lift their spirits, that is why I have come to you.'

'What can I do?'

'I have designed a craft to carry a man into the air so that he may travel beyond the reeds and bring back news of the greater world.'

Ashta was silent for a long time. The old man placed his hand on his shoulder; 'Please, Ashta, only you are brave enough to do this for the people.'

'But to fly! Is such a thing possible?'

* * *

The village square was alight with fires. The children ran under the grown-ups' legs as they battled to hold the basket ready beneath the paper canopy of the balloon.

Ashta fed more straw onto the fire in the brazier that fed hot air into the huge sphere.

The sage stepped forward; 'Ashta shall no longer be Ashta the fool but Ashta the hero!'

A cheer went up from the crowd as the balloon carried him away; 'Ashta the hero, Ashta the hero!'

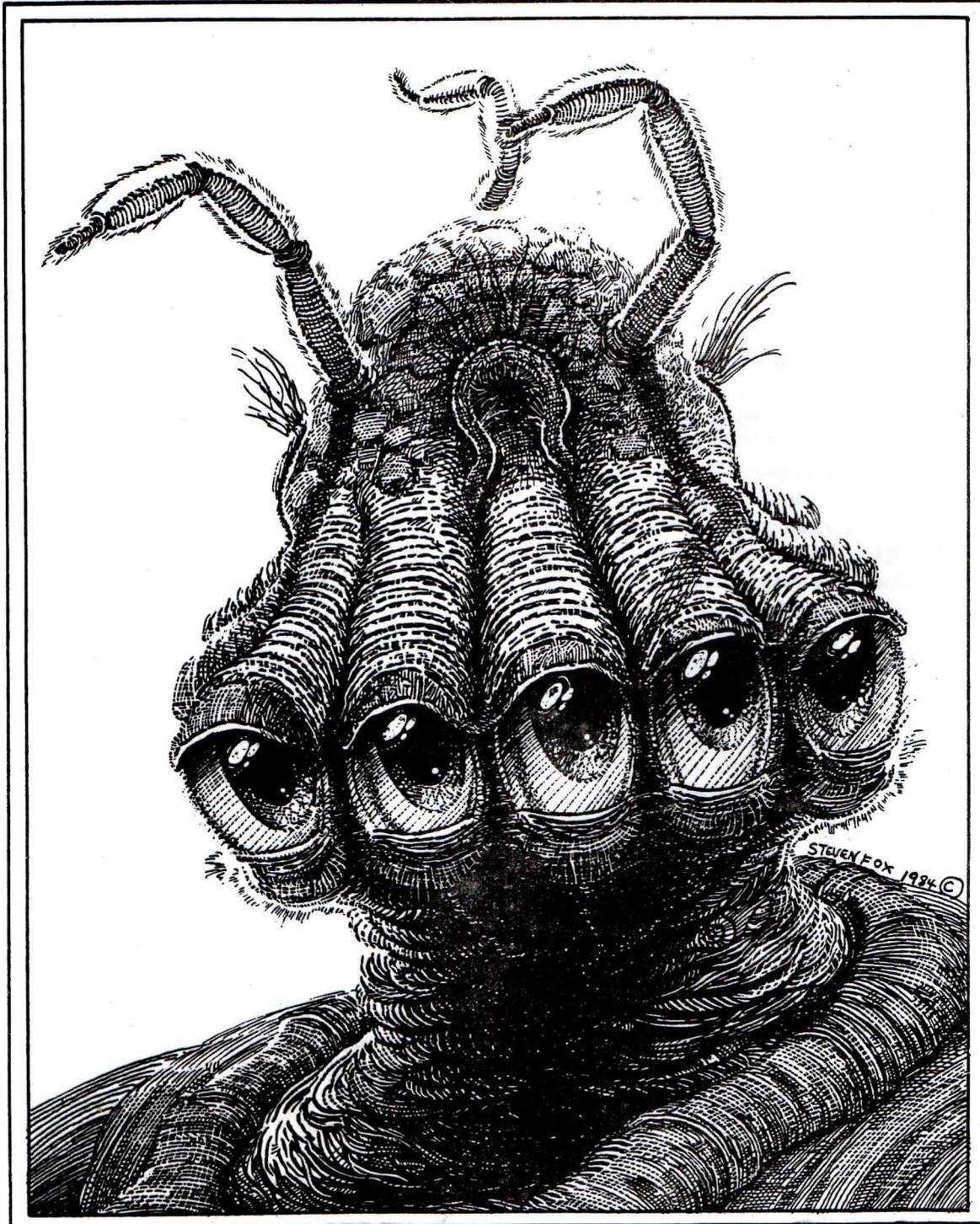
The balloon grew smaller and smaller as it rose until, when it was but a speck, there was a flare of light. In

the sudden brilliance it could be seen that the balloon had pressed itself against something and caught fire. The stone of the cave roof was now visible stretching away on all sides. Dead glow worms started to fall among the crowd.

The old man watched as the burning wreckage spiralled slowly towards the sea. Tears streamed down his cheeks.

One of the villagers patted his arm. 'Do not weep, it is all that could be expected from Ashta the fool. We are not discouraged. We will build a new balloon and try again. Soon we will have all the fine things that you have promised us.'

END



IN DEPTH

a column by Bill Congreve

Doing an odd review here seems to have become a regular thing. Either I was conscripted, or I volunteered; I'm not sure which, perhaps a bit of both. It happened at Syncon 92. I'm not getting paid a cent, but Ron's a nice guy and this kind of format gives a writer a lot of freedom.

As a column, IN DEPTH will concentrate on Australian fiction. We'll consider things in greater depth than is possible in the capsule reviews in the Review section. We have no intentions of getting intellectually deep and meaningful. I don't want to put anyone to sleep, and I don't intend to use words those of you who aren't Eng Lit graduates will need a dictionary to understand. Mostly, I'll try to be entertaining and maybe a little controversial while giving you an idea of whether or not you want to read this book I'm writing about.

Mainstream fiction publishers in Australia, as a rule, don't have to be responsible to their reading public. It's a safe living, with little decision making. They make their profits either importing foreign editions, often at exorbitant price markups, or by publishing stuff churned out by writers living on government money awarded by academics who think of Tolstoy as the ideal light reading for the train or bus trip to work and who believe the ideal Australian novel is written for, by, and about bored farmer's wives. I'm not knocking farmer's wives here, or women in general, but Australian general fiction is usually of a very limited "literary" genre. Generally speaking, our multinational publishers have, in the last couple of decades, not been forced to compete in the admittedly small Australian market with local "popular" fiction. This is a trap which the mystery/crime genre has recently broken out of with the aid of such writers as Peter Corris, who deserves any accolades he gets, and Robert Barrett.

Local SF/Fantasy/Horror hasn't made it out of the trap yet, but some inroads have been made into the corporate mentality. Therefore, much of Australian genre fiction comes from the small press. Because of this, we'll

also be looking at production values, cover art and book design.

This time around we have one gem, one sucker, and one really quite readable thing that fits somewhere in between, but much closer to the former than the latter. All are from small press publishers.

#

CALL TO THE EDGE; Sean McMullen; collection; Aphelion 1992; 245 + x pages; \$12.95.

Sean McMullen has been winning himself a few accolades recently. Two of these stories have won Ditmar awards, another made the Nebula preliminary ballot, and another was recommended by Terry Carr in 1986. This is McMullen's first book, published by the enthusiastic Aphelion Publications from Adelaide, and available, if you are lucky, from your local book store. I say "if you are lucky" because distribution is something Aphelion is still working on.

CALL TO THE EDGE is a reasonably attractive volume with cover art from Nick Stathopoulos. The title lettering is horrible. Whoever designed the book and decided to use this crap deserves one of Spider Robinson's old margarine dildo awards. The cover art is a striking but hurried rendition from the second story of the collection. Stathopoulos has once again painted an SF cover without using any of the icons of science fiction - spaceships, women in transparent spacesuits, etc. The problem this time is that the cover is more reminiscent of a literary work than an SF one. Although a nice piece of art, the cover doesn't stand out and say "this book is SF". After three stunning covers for Terry Dowling's collections, Stathopoulos has finally delivered what Aphelion paid for, and nothing more. But that too is part of the economics of small press publishing.

The collection opens with an impressive and unusually accessible introduction by Adelaide scholar and

critic, Michael J. Tolley. However, Tolley does suggest that McMullen is perhaps a writer without an individual voice. I would like to take some exception to this. As an SF writer, McMullen looks at the impact of science on the human culture he is depicting. His technologies are not of the earth-shattering nature, but are instead small and intimate things whose effect on individual characters, and hence on the whole of society, can be easily visualised. This is a rare talent, and McMullen does it so well that, yes, he does have an individual voice.

The collection opens with *THE COLOURS OF THE MASTERS*, a story previously published in *THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION* and one which amply demonstrates the above. The technology used in this case is an impeccably realised sound recording device developed early in the 19th C and used to record all the classic composers and musicians of the period. Imagine a young woman, trapped within the strictures of a morally rigid society, unable to reveal her actions, and herself a virtuoso pianist, secretly recording the likes of Liszt, Paganini, and Chopin playing their own music without having the technology to play back the recordings and hence gauge her own success. The recordings now belong to a pair of aging, flighty, twin sisters who desperately want the world to believe in their ancestor.

The next two stories move into a less than friendly future Australia where society no longer has full use of all the resources they need to rebuild a technological civilisation. The scenario is precise, and all too likely. Jerry Pournelle once wrote that ours is the only generation with the resources, knowledge, and inclination to go into space. If we wait, we won't be able to spare the resources. If we fail, who will come behind us?

The first, *THE EYES OF THE GREEN LANCER*, is part of a novel. It stands alone, but there is much more to be told of the story of the Abbess Theresa and her manservant, Llyire, in the larger and unknown world Australia has become. It is a fine story, and the Stathopoulos cover is taken from a scene near the end where men and beasts alike are driven to their deaths by the mysterious, hypnotising Call.

The second of the related stories, *DESTROYER OF ILLUSIONS* has more problems. The future nations of what is now outback NSW are linked by heliograph communications towers. We have a computer comprised of slaves who use abacuses, pull wires, and ring bells. An unwieldy, ingenious, cruel, but absolutely marvellous concept, and authentic! These kinds of ideas are what I meant when I said above that McMullen the writer has an individual voice. He writes of societies and technologies that fit marvellously together and shows how the use of technology shapes the society, and how the society then makes use of its resources.

I said this story had a problem. The only occasion in the collection where McMullen allows a character to be dragged along by her nose through crass stupidity for the sake of plot occurs here. The ruler of one of these nations walks out of her office in an emergency,

leaving a young student inside, unsupervised, without even making sure her computer terminal is securely "logged off". Sorry, don't believe it. That student then teaches herself to use the above computer to the extent she can use it to crack a complex code used by an unfriendly power to falsify data sent through the communications towers. This happens during the evening and night in one 24 hour period. Remember the computer is comprised of hundreds of humans. I guess you can make slaves work overnight in shifts, but it has consequences in both human needs, and in logistics. Nobody notices the massive demand. Sorry, I don't believe it. Lastly, the student then takes out a grisly revenge on an ex boyfriend using the secret police. Nobody notices.

Don't let me put you off here. Only one story in the nine has any problems, and for something this obvious the publisher and editor must be at least as responsible as the author. The book as a whole is marvellous, and even this one story has much to recommend it.

In *ALONE IN HIS CHARIOT* we enter a future where a drug laboratory manufactures a drug which makes a person's dream world indistinguishable from reality. What price prisons when prisoners can live in paradise in their own minds?

THE DECIAD and *PAX ROMANA* concerns Romans who travel into the future using crude cryogenics as the basis of their crude time machines. Both stories compare Roman civilisation with the barbarity that follows, even barbarity with some high tech underpinning in our own near future in the case of *THE DECIAD*. *PAX ROMANA*, in particular, questions the true values of civilisation. What is more important, roads, unified defense, good communications, or reading, writing, and poetry? Is civilisation a true measure of human nature?

In *WHILE THE GATE IS OPEN* we have time travel in the context of a medical thriller as a doctor of dubious ethics experiments on convicted criminals in Central America with a device that allows them to see helplessly into the future past the moment of their own death.

My favourite story is *THE DEVILS OF LANGENHAGEN*, a tale of Me262 fighter pilots in the dying days of WW2. No, this is not the story of the mythical dogfight between a Me262 and a Meteor. History tells us that particular dogfight never occurred. However, the pilot of this alternate history involves a couple of other combats that never occurred, between Axis fighters that were only in the prototype stage at the end of the war and standard Allied production machines. WW2 aviation history is a pet subject of McMullen's and playing the "what if" game with him in a story that pits bravery, experience and commitment against arrogance and gamesmanship is a delight. However, there are a couple of facts McMullen may have wrong. I'm certain there are other readers out there who will know the answer to these points. McMullen has British Spitfires escorting Allied bomber raids over Germany just before the war ended in 1945. Unless based in France, the Spitfire, as far as I can remember, didn't have the range for this. McMullen also

has Lancasters flying daylight raids in 1945. The British bombers were slow, cumbersome, armed only with .303 machine guns, and had no ventral gun turrets. They were slaughtered by German fighters on the only occasion they were used for a daylight raid, and that was in 1942 or 1943?

I'm certain a few people can write in with answers to these points.

CALL TO THE EDGE is an entertaining and intelligent collection from an Australian writer with much to offer the reader.

#

BACK DOOR MAN; Ian McAuley Hails; novel; Aphelion 1992; 404 + viii pages; \$14.95.

BACK DOOR MAN is the first novel from a writer we are going to hear much more from. Nice cover from The Image Bank. A badly designed blurb on the back. It's not really science fiction. It is set in a near future Sydney simply because that shows the cultural background to best advantage.

The novel is born in the frustrations of present day NSW; ultra conservative education policies designed to reproduce white anglo-saxon protestant consciousness, corporate magnates who consider themselves above the law, banks with schoolboy business ethics, charismatic religious leaders who hold the balance of power in State Parliament, white supremacist thugs who invade university campuses, bash ethnic minorities, and use Scientology-type legal harassment (My Mummy's got more money than you, and I'll sue you until you can't afford to pay your lawyer no more!) to escape with immunity; all these elements combine today to frustrate the thinking NSW citizen.

Steven Plat is the head of a small national intelligence gathering operation involved in a number of continuing investigations. Plat becomes personally involved in the death of an old friend, a computer whiz, and starts investigating. The old friend's wife is murdered. There is a cover up when a gang of racist thugs rape and murder a prominent public servant's wife. Another group imports magazines featuring semi-naked pre-teen boys in ripped army uniforms and carrying machine guns. Of course, these elements all tie together into a conspiracy theory of some magnitude. Slowly, with some violence, a bit of kinky sex, a lot of help from a rock and roll band (who seem too young to be as successful as they are), and Plat is suddenly up to his neck in the proverbial.

The novel has its problems. It is too long. There is little or no misdirection from the author. It relies too heavily on coincidence. On occasion it requires its characters to behave with criminal negligence for the sake of advancing the plot, particularly when Plat is captured and tortured near the end. It introduces too many incidental minor characters who must then remain creaky stereotypes, if they are characterised at all. It involves the head of a National Intelligence Agency who does his own legwork on the streets? The protagonist, Steven Plat, is a non-conforming individual free thinker who is not the

kind of person to advance far in the Public Service before he runs into a brick wall comprised of his own frustration.

However the novel's scenario of a white supremacist conspiracy designed simply to further multi-national corporate profit-making is quite apt. Personally, I believe such a thing may happen in NSW more as a result of the exploitation of visible trends in our society rather than as a conspiracy. The trends Hails writes about, the swallowing of the conservation movement, the official backlash against promiscuity and sex education, the rising of a patriotic "nationalist" movement are all identifiable now as Premier Nick Greiner jockeys and deals with the devil to remain in power. To assume the stupidities of our own system, and our own lack of action as citizens, is the result of a third party's deliberations is to deny our own responsibility.

This is not a heavy and depressing read. There is a lot of light hearted quirkiness from Plat, there is plenty of action, a bit of blood and guts splatter around towards the end, we've got good guys, bad guys, and a couple of memorable scenes we would all love to witness in real life. Like all the best cynical, fictional social warnings, we can see the things Hails writes about in the real world around us. It has a nice cover. I enjoyed reading it. Hails has a sense of humour and isn't afraid of taking risks. By all means, read it. If you can't afford to buy it, borrow it from your local library, that way the author still gets his royalties.

#

DARK STREETS; Huw Merlin; novel; S T W Publishing 1992; 169 + vi pages; no price listed on cover.

Who the heck is Huw Merlin? The "new master of horror thriller fiction"? Dunno. Accordingly, the novel's title, DARK STREETS, gets top billing in large, gold, embossed lettering on the cover. There's no illustration really, just a graphic design of a knife, in red, also embossed, and the lettering. Quite pretty. An effective company logo. An okay back cover blurb done in gold, red, and white. The design of this book is very professional. A lot of people are going to pick it up and buy it, more's the pity.

S T W Publishing is a small concern of persons presumably rather close to the author. They have gone to a lot of trouble and expense in the design, distribution, and marketing of this thing. A lot of people are going to buy this novel; very few of these are going to buy Mr Merlin's second book. The biggest pity is that it is all so avoidable. The greatest problems with the novel could have been eliminated with some competent editing, a lot of rewriting, and some proofreading. Did I say proofreading? It hasn't been. Those of you who live in Sydney will know that Chinatown's Dixon St is spelt as I have just done. Merlin spells it "Dickson" in the beginning, corrects the spelling near the end, and doesn't bother fixing the earlier error. This problem isn't alone. The greatest offender is punctuation. Rarely a page goes by without mistakes.

The novel opens with a prologue wherein detectives Gorman and Jones are called to the scene of the murder of a colleague. We are hysterically left uncertain whether "arachnid poison" is responsible for the grisly condition of the day old corpse, or the water-logged nature of the dead detective's notebook.

With the emotional impact of a cow munching grass the detectives then leave the scene of the crime and, without notifying any superiors of what has occurred, head off into the wind blue yonder to investigate the crime. Sorry, I don't believe it.

Fair warning: there is little or no characterisation in this novel.

The opening few pages lead us into a horribly cliched Fu Manchu-like comic book scenario (part of which bears uncanny resemblance to parts of Eddie Murphy's worst movie) where a Chinese drug lord with ambition and seemingly nether-world connections decided that Sydney's Chinatown isn't big enough for him and perhaps a move to Canberra might be more astute. We have secret doors in empty rooms. We have policemen dying of mysterious causes. We have giant scorpions. We have a Chinese detective (the only full-blooded Chinese detective in the NSW Police Force!) whose every utterance is punctuated with a pregnant pause. We have stilted, lifeless dialogue like: "If something should happen to me in there... tell my grandfather, Loa-Uen, that Quon-Gie...", and : "Ron? Ron?... Kill me... Kill me please!" You must break the key.", and : "No! No! I can't! I can't!" Yes, Mr Merlin is fond of the exclamation mark.

Finally, we have a detective who has managed to stay alive while crucified to a wall for two days utter a cryptic message and die just a moment after he is found.

Sorry, I don't believe a word of it.

This prologue runs the first twenty pages of what is, really, a rather short novel. You might wonder while reading the rest of the book when the prologue will become relevant? Sorry. It doesn't. It exists as a simple little comic short story tacked on the beginning as if to merely boost the word count. It has nothing to do with the rest of this novel whatsoever. Zilch. It's sole significance is a very clumsy and ordinary attempt to tell the reader, in the last six lines of the book, "Hah! I've fooled you! You've got to come back and buy the sequel to find out what happens next!" The prologue of DARK STREETS is part of the next novel in the series!

Okay, so what's the story about? Well, if you read the blurb on the back, you've got most of it. Society has broken down.

Again.

Sydney is pretty much in ruins, with the army and resistance fighting in the streets. What is left of the government is a rigidly stratified public service that lives in barracks somewhere east of Hyde Park. Kings Cross has become the Gratification District where female public servants, and anybody else who fits a stereotype of blonde, pretty, nice figure, etc are kept in bonded servitude as "Pleasure Technicians". The streets are full of Chinese men - identified merely as Chinese, with no clue as to

whether they are immigrants or tourists - who have nothing better to do than molest the "Pleasure Technicians" on street corners. One is left with a picture of Sydney where one third of the men are locked in mortal combat with another third, and all the women are blonde, pretty sex slaves who use their tits and cunts to drag around on their knees the other third of the men, who are all Chinese. The odd few other women in the novel are "matrons". They are fat, unpleasant, middle-aged ogres whose sole purpose in life is to keep the walking cun... sorry, the "Pleasure Technicians" in a state fit for the public servants and the Chinese.

Rather a dangerous background, right? Except the slaves can get around pretty much as they please. They can simply walk the streets. A few of them want men to rescue them, but it hasn't occurred to anybody to simply walk away. Guns are pretty well available to anybody who wants one. But does one of these "Pleasure Technicians" who is sick of being raped five times a day, and who wants a real man to come and rescue her, get a gun and blow away the next Peter-principled male public servant who grabs her by the cunt while she is standing waiting for the lights to change in the middle of the day so she can cross the street? Not likely.

One also wonders where all these Chinese men come from.

NSW has been forcibly separated from the rest of the continent, which now has a Chinese drug lord as elected Prime Minister. We see nothing of the rest of NSW. Within the book, nothing west of Ultimo, or north of the harbour, or south of Redfern, is allowed to exist. As soon as it does, the ludicrous plot gets even more stupid.

The protagonist is Goodsell, a resistance fighter who spends what little time he isn't getting shot at mooning over the lost love of his life who must be dead by now. Shane is a pleasure technician who was kidnapped five years before and now spends all her time wishing her boyfriend was still alive to come and rescue her. Meanwhile, somebody is murdering the Pleasure Technicians of Sydney. Can anyone guess what happens?

Spoiler alert! The murderer is a big fat shambling seven foot tall mongoloid idiot who loves his mother and who has been blackmailed into the crime by a psychopathic woman who likes decorating store mannequins with the heads and skin of younger and more attractive women.

There are ideas here worth thinking about. Some of the action scenes are worthwhile. In places there is some characterisation. But it isn't enough.

If DARK STREETS had been better written, I would call it an ugly, exploitive, sexist, racist, woman-hating, and poorly conceived novel. But the most appropriate adjective I can think of right now is silly. It should have been much better. It has been marketed as a horror thriller. It isn't horror at all. Instead it fits the science fiction/crime genre. I wish it had been worth buying.

This book exists because of the attitude of the Australian publishing industry to horror fiction. The

multinational distributors who "publish" books in Australia are absolutely content to import King, Koontz, even schlock like Guy Smith, and rake in the profits. Decent horror fiction isn't remaindered in the cheap book stores in Australia, whereas almost any other kind of popular fiction is. Even if we have no more evidence than this one fact, we have proof that a market for horror fiction exists in this country.

What's stopping them? Maybe it's fear of controversy. Did American Psycho and its R rating scare people off? But that controversy was quite recent. Maybe horror fiction is just different; despite the subversive nature of most good fiction the publishing industry itself is usually about as conservative as Lang Hancock's epitaph. We have a state government where every man and his dog in the Senate wants to appease Fred Nile. Hence a police crackdown on prostitution and Kathy Greiner's stand on Sophie Lee and her sex education TV programs. Ordinary

tabloid magazine publishers have been targeted in West Australia.

If the above isn't part of the answer, then I don't know what the answer is. At least we must congratulate Huw Merlin and S T W Publications for making the effort.

(For our overseas readers: Fred Nile is one of those charismatic preachers and morals crusaders who happens to have won an independent seat in a very balanced State Senate. Kathy Greiner is the wife of a premier renowned for making morally reprehensible "deals" in order to hold onto a slim parliamentary majority. Sophie Lee is a sexy, young, ambitious, articulate, and very popular role-model for teenagers who has recently been closely involved with the production of a now banned book on sex education and is the anchor person of the above mentioned TV series.)

- Bill Congreve



GREY CLOUDS

by Louise Hollingberry

He knew he'd put them somewhere, but where?
From the group crowded around the window, there were shouts of 'Hurry up, you're missing it!'

He ruthlessly pulled the contents of his locker on to the floor and spread them out - his wet weather coat, umbrella - grey and dignified, an old dark-blue hat that he'd brought in for Melbourne Cup Day and left, two wire coat-hangers, several old newspapers and last weeks lost lunch - yuk. Not there. He raced to his desk...

'You're going to miss it... Hurry up!'

Frantically he began to pull his desk apart, He didn't want to miss it. It was still a rare occurrence - still a novelty...

The Earth was covered in clouds and rarely, only very rarely did the sun shine. Continual pollution had destroyed the blue sky. At first, when the scientists has spouted "Greenhouse Effect", no-one knew, or could foresee, what it really meant - the end of the sky. Slowly, so slowly that the beginning was not noticed, grey clouds filled the once blue sky. The Earth grew humid and rain became a daily event in the twilight of day.

Rain - short bursts, long heavy downpours or just continual drizzle. There was never any warning, it just came and went and the sky remained a cloudy grey. After a while it seemed normal. No-one noticed the cloudy sky and the half-light of day. Songs like *Blue skies, nothing but blue skies do I see* became monumental hits and stories began "In the grandparents day, when the sky was blue and the day was as bright as a thousand lights..."

'Hurry, you're going to miss it!'

'I'm coming...' He shouted back, panicking in case he did miss it. He pulled the last drawer out, flinging the contents over the floor...

Then it began.

It had been happening for years but only in remote areas and only killing a few trees, after prolonged exposure. The "Green" groups had tried to warn the world but it was too remote, too isolated. Now it was everywhere in short bursts, at the moment, with no warning, over the cities that had produced it. It was still a rare occurrence and fairly weak. No-one had died, so far. The scientists

predicted that it would get stronger, perhaps strong enough to dissolve buildings, cars. They also said not to worry, that the measures they were taking would soon fix the problem. Still, a lot of buildings were moving underground, more economical, they said. In just a few years, you'd be able to walk as far as Parramatta from Sydney and not leave the safety of the underground. But now -

'Will you hurry?'

'I'm coming!..'

Ah, there they were. Between three piles of files on his desk. He grabbed them and scattered two of the piles over his desk and floor. Ignoring the mess, he ran to the window..

The acid rain was weak, too weak to dissolve metal or stone, but strong enough to damage fabric...

Drooling, he raised the binoculars.. 'Corrr.....'

"..Nothing, but Grey Clouds..."

She wandered on, not really caring where she was going. So much hard work - for nothing. She'd missed out again. Now she was too old for Garden. Garden only accepted those where were young, fresh and fertile. All strove for selection... only twelve each Spring were chosen.

She stumbled over the ledge and fell to a rocky platform, bruising her knees, scraping the skin off her hands. Getting up she realised she'd twisted her ankle in the fall. She wiped the tears from her eyes and looked around. She was on the surface, further from Home Cave than she'd ever been. Behind her was a sandstone bank. In front, to climb, was a gentle slope that stretched into a wasted valley.

Half dissolved buildings littered the landscape, while squared holes, where other buildings had been, were filled with muddy water. While she watched, a cloud burst, at the far end of the valley, and a partly demolished building dissolved before her eyes as the rain pelted down. There was no life on the surface. Humanity, with all its faults, had moved underground. Grey clouds covered the

sky and in the half-light of day, she could see ground-hugging grey, formless fog slowly making its way across the plain, billowing towards her.

A rhyme of her childhood danced through her head..

"If you go out in the fog today,
You're sure of a big surprise.
If you go out in the fog today,
You're sure it'll burn you alive..."

She panicked and scrambled to the top of the embankment. Pain shot through her.

"For fog, you know, destroys all things
There's nothing safe, when it's around
The only place for you to be is Home Cave."

She tried to walk and fell in a screaming huddle at the top. Her ankle was broken, not twisted.

Behind her was deadly silence...

She struggled to remain conscious. It was too dangerous to stay here, but she couldn't walk. She looked behind.

Fog had covered half the valley.
Slowly she dragged herself towards Home Cave.

"If you go out in the fog today.."

She looked around; fog was lapping the embankment.

"You're sure of a big surprise.."

Pain flooded her brain. She stopped. Tears streamed down her face. She couldn't make it. She could barely see the opening...

"If you go out in the fog today.."

This was it! The fog was only metres away. She tried to move again and couldn't. Her broken foot was caught in a hole.

"You're sure it'll burn you alive.."

As she lost consciousness, she could see the grey clouds of acid fog barely centimetres from her feet...

She woke to the comfort of Home Cave walls, warmth, hot sweet tea and a plastered foot... and the doctor, in awed tones saying, 'It was a miracle, it stopped only centimetres from your feet, before rising back into the grey clouds...'

"...Do I See."

They waited 'til Interval - the time between eating and cleaning, the time of News - before they spoke.

Three loud raps on the communal table and while the Remnant quietened down, they stood - the Leaders of the Remnant, the last vestige of human life on Earth - to officially tell them what they all knew.

'Friends, the Keeper of the Measure has confirmed our worst fears...' There was a gasp from the Remnant. '...The grey cloud that covers our planet's surface has eaten through the last walls of the original Home Cave.' The leaders could have heard a pin drop. No-one thought it was *that* bad. 'If the acid cloud continues at this rate... in ten growing seasons...it will reach... us.' Someone sobbed. 'As you are all aware, we have gone as far into the planet's crust as we can and

survive... Lateral movement would be useless.' Several were crying openly, while others sat stoically.. waiting. 'So far, all attempts to find a substance that will resist the acidic atmosphere have failed.... But each failure gives hope for the future.' No-one, not even the Leaders, believed this. '...Perhaps even a neutralising agent will be found.. But until then, the machines must continue to produce oxygen, Garden must flourish... We must survive.' The Leaders sat down.

Apart from the crying, no-one uttered a sound. It was as though the Speaker had drained the life out of the group, by making the rumours true. They left the table in small groups, automatically doing the tasks they were assigned. No-one laughed, no-one spoke.

Life on Earth had ten seasons left... Only ten before the poisonous atmosphere dissolved the rock above and flooded into Home Cave, annihilating all life, leaving no trace of what had been. And there was nothing anyone could do. It was far too late...

THE END



POETRY TOO

by Various Poets World-Wide

ADRIFT

by William P. Robertson

Space is the coldest of oceans
And I am alone in the sea
Drifting with burnt-out emotions
Frozen by judge's decree

My wife was a meteor shower
That lit up my sky for a week
Now she's a stone in a tower
And I am a ship with a leak

Space divorce sure is degrading
when set adrift until you die
Soon my dim star will be fading
I wonder why love is a lie.

FAR OUT

by William P. Robertson

Tripping deep in outer space
We travel to a far out place
The shuttle rocket takes us there
Where chick and dude are never square

We groove all day to 60's rock
That plays in pads around the clock
Everywhere there's peace & love
Beneath the tie-dyed skies above

Hare Krishna heals our ills
With lollipops & yellow pills
Flowers always are in bloom
Away from Earth's computer doom

THE 3RD PHASE OF THE 13TH MOON

by William P. Robertson

The 3rd phase of the 13th moon
Brought madness to our race
Every soul was out of tune
And time confused with space

Insane we screamed for 13 days
Then everything went black
There's rug burns on my stomach
And there's blisters on my back

THE OLD MAN

by Trent Jamieson

'Bury me here,' said the grey faced man.
'Bury me here as soon as you can.'
He stood beneath a twisted fig tree
talking in shadow to a group of three
'I'm old now. Times carried me far
Chiselled my face, filled my lungs with cold tar'
He coughed, then took a long drag
Sucked in the smoke of his high class fag.
Shuddered with age, at the chill in his bones
Smiled at the three, all youngish clones
that smiled right back
Two were called John, the other was Jack
'You know you're all me, grinning he said.
'Yes all of you three and soon I'll be dead.
But I'll live forever in you and your sons
Spawned at the end of test tube guns.'
Pausing,
He coughed, spat, laughed and sighed.
Then with a chuckle the old man died.

The others then smiled, puffing tar free
and buried the man beneath the fig tree.

THE MAN IN BLUE A TRAVELLER TOO

by Trent Jamieson

The Sailor once met on the edge of the shore
A bald man in blue robes with a face whipped and raw.
A traveller, like the shipman, caught in circles of time,
A poet, a bard, a creature of rhyme.

The Sailor was silent, the wind kissed his hair,
And the traveller whispered, his voice soft with care.
'We are the same, fated ages long past,
to travel the stairway, to forever last.'

He paused for a moment, let the wind sting his skull,
Then told him his story in a voice never dull.
'I was born when I died, walked when I fell
was fresh as a child, though of rot I did smell.

'My future was destined, enough decisions I made,
For I kept from the sun and hid in the shade.
I have travelled the pathways as vampire and man,
I have died on a cross, I have killed and have ran.

'I have been a creator, destroyer, a thing of lust,
I have done what I shouldn't and done what I must.
But of this pain, my loves and all that I mend
I have only one wish, that my journey shall end.'

Then bleeding and raw the man in blue turned
and walked from the sea to the land he had spurned.
The Sailor, he stood and watched him depart,
One hand touching his boat, the other clutching his heart.

THE GOAT'S SONG

by Julie Vaux

A creature much misunderstood,
With Wanton yet wise eyes called evil,
Yellow like flowers in the Wild Wood,
Yet no matter how much you try to Train,
Tame, and Breed out, my essence primeval,
Not the Devil's but Pan's kin, I remain!

TO IBYCUS
whose verse I was studying
24-5-90

by Julie Vaux

ancient blossoms open again,
reading, hearing, perceiving,
in your words, life's pleasure yet pain
willing my heart's receiving
the echos of yours through the years,
long the songs enduring,
though spun from sorrow's frail tears,
soft hopes the heart's flowering,
and now my spirit moved by a ghost
scents this perfume of uttermost
rarity - dust stirred to flame
fuelled by a haunting name

under the quiet sun two

by Julie Vaux

Under the quiet sun
the sky's a orison
in praise of light and song,
for silence is only a semblance,
the sun roars loud in radiance,
outwards waves light years long
ray in wide dance spreadin,
rimwards, inwards heading.
Our seeming quiet white gold dwarf sun,
beyond our blue sky seas,
will still be heard when our race's run
and our ghosts on the breeze
between the stars whisper,
an echo, a rumor,
a memory forever,
a wavelet's murmur

THE FULL MOON'S FACE

by Julie Vaux

they say they are but shadows
of dry seas, cold and drear and dusty,
but... oh! the moon's eyes seem so sad!

APOLOGY FOR THE SPHINX

by Julie Vaux

Slinking through dark shadows,
In whichever afterworld or far realm
That could hold a Sphinx's cat like yet false calm,
Does she dream of meadows?
In Boeotia's wide sweet marshlands,
Where rare is the stone, that still stands,
Of the giant wrought walls she saw from afar.
Does she still remember with dread and fear?

Bound to guarding a high passage
Full of burning feline outrage
At that sorcerer's unseen snare
That made a dark cliff cage and lair.
Was she glad to be as last free,
To have broken her life's dark thread?
And to rise up in final flight
Yet to fall smiling her dark delight?

Did Crooked foot's words break some chair,
Heavy, cruel, her soul's darkest bane
Or was it the rich scent of a king's blood?
Sweeter to her than any red rosebud,
Of Laios' well earned death
The howling of his ghost crying
Caught in the wind god's breath
And the shadows of his lying?

What cared she that Laios' spell
Shattered became a long curse
That would send down to Hell
Many a spirit or yet worse,
Grant them long lives of suffering,
For that sorcerer king's erring,
For her pain a price was fully paid
No one came to Jocasta's aid.

Did their spirits finally meet?
Creature of myth and moon's priestess?
Where the Styx runs so darkly fleet
Did they know and forgive and bless
Knowing that each was the Goddess's
Lunar born eternal daughter?
Did they mourning join by that water?
And speak of sorcerous duress.

So the Muses bide me sing
A curse on Thebes' cruel king
Wizard wicked ravisher fell
Catcher of souls now caught
All your cunning made nought
Folly and hubris your one spell
And self wrought your well earned bane
Now you'll wear the Sphinx's bloody chain.

MANY HEADS AND SUMMER

by Trent Jamieson

The bell rang and
Mr Polycephalous, he scratched his many heads.
The tocsin was a simple sound, one of snapping threads
of flesh and bone and things of in between
like bright red blood and stuff so vibrant green
'Alarm, you did awaken me,' he said in simple tone.
'Has the summer ended or is it just the phone?
For if the weather still is hot, tell them they
should wait.
Summer is the time of sun when I must aestivate.'
With that he closed his many eyes
and went once more to sleep.
Hiding from the summer sun in dreams
so very deep.
And so he slept and summer passed and winter
came along.
And once again, though this time true, he
woke to the tocsin's song.

LOAN

by Trent Jamieson

He offered himself to the wide
empty tin
Gouged out his dreams from its
hollow within
Thoughts flittered and ran, twice as good
as his own
Thoughts rich and wild but thoughts out
on loan
For when the plug's pulled from the
back of his skull
Once more, like blanked paper,
he shall be dull.

I hope you like the poetry in this issue. To you poets out there - I prefer rhyming sf poetry - so if you have any, please send it in and I'll have a look at it. - Ron.

THE PEASANT WITH THE PHEASANT

by Peter Brodie

Whilst strolling about the beauteous grounds
Of my magnificent manor house,
I saw what at first seemed a Hefalump
But on closer invite was a mouse.

No ordinary mouse, oh no, it was
A shady side of sneak.
And twice my size, to my surprise,
And roared as much to squeak.

I looked it in the gimlet.
I faced it fair and square.
It looked me back and snorted
With a quite disdainful air.

I reached for my revolver and
My cutlass and my knife.
It reached behind its back,
(And hear I feared my life).

For in the paw it brought to forth
A scruffy scurf named Sam,
Who tended all my grand estate
And helped the sheep to lamb.

I said 'twas Sam and so it be
But Sam was Sam no more,
For Sam had only half a head,
And dead is dead, say sore.

I looked as threatening as I could.
I postured with my bod.
The moose, er mouse, just vaguely yawned
And gave me a curt nod.

I looked again and in Sam's mitt
I noted was still grabbed
One of the pheasants of my grounds
The bastard had just nabbed!

They're all for me and none may touch
Their saintly feathered meat.
I morsel them to me alone.
I shoot them for a treat.

So Sam had poached the writhing bird,
For withered still, it did.
And want he'd been not to divulge,
But wring its neck for hid.

The blighter! The old scoundrel!
I'd trusted him to earn
An honest way with my good pay,
And this is what I learn.

I stood at grand attention and
Saluted my companion.
It smiled and popped Sam into its mouth
And said: 'My name is Grannion.'

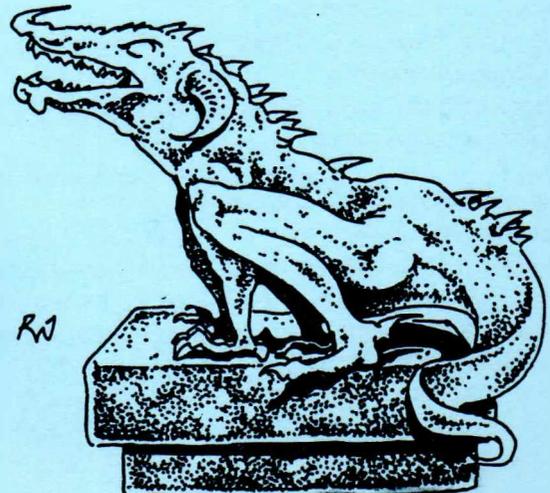
'I rarely speak with my mouth
full, just wait a moment, will you?'
I waited on the moment and it
burped then did continue:

'I saw this sod run out the hedge
And in his hand the bird.
He saw me and jumped twice his height
(Or maybe it was third).'

'Say no more, I know the scene!'
I uttered in dismay.
'The bloody mongrel got his due.
He earned his final pay!'

So now I rule my grand estate
With never fear of theft.
For known it's wide to all to know
Who know who'll be bereft

Of life and limb and all between
Should honesty not suffice
To keep my grounds for me and mine,
They'll have to face der mice.



Rock of Bye Baby!

by T. J. Brook

'It all seems like such a long time ago now! Life was so simple back then, when I wore a younger man's clothes. If we wanted to buy something, we'd simply go down to the local shopping centres and pay for what we wanted. Now, with all these new fangled computer gizmos and security checks, the enjoyment has been taken away. Life was so simple!

Trust, whatever happened to trust? It was a well respected word once. I remember going down to the local pub with Jack for a pot or three, and if I was a little short Jack would say: "No worries mate, next time"! He was the first to go you know, poor old Jack. I was married once, yeah, me who vowed never to get married. She was a honey she was, all golden hair and gleaming smile. I fell in love with her straight away. Lasted 12 months too it did, but then *death* rode in on his ebony charger and took her away from me. The doctors said it was some sort of pneumonia, but I know the truth. They can't fool me with their white coats and fancy cars. She died of a broken heart!

Damn Government, they should never have outlawed childbirth. Life was so simple back then, before the world gave up!

I've never told this to anyone before, but I can still remember flowers you know. All reds, yellows, blues, pinks and oranges, and some of the beautiful smells. I would get up early in the morning to pick a flower still kissed by the morning dew, just to take it up to Katy with her breakfast tray. Katy was my wife you know, she was a honey she was!

Do you remember pets? Dogs, and cats, and budgies? They could be bloody good friends they could, especially to the lonely and sick. I had my fair share I can tell you. It all seems like such a log time ago now!

I'll never forget old "Patch", he was a collie, and a damned good watch-dog too. Every time I came home from the Lab, he would jump up and near lick my face off. But if someone came in that he didn't know, he'd rip their throats out. Good dog, old Patch!

A Law-enforcement officer shot him because his bark was too loud. Bastard! Look like it's going to rain again. I wonder what color it will be this time?

Look at these hands, all bony, gnarled and ulcerous. They were strong once, I could even crack a walnut. Now, I'm lucky to pick up my feeding tube without straining them. Whatever happened to *peace*?

It used to be a joy to live. Everyone loved everyone else, friendships lasted, and the world was happy. Once! might call in on old Jack. Take him to the local and pay back those pots I owe him.

Damn wars! Mother Earth all shot to hell because of some trifling political difference. What's the good of honor when it can cause so much destruction and insanity? Excuse me for a minute, it's time for my treatment!

* * *

Large acidic raindrops fall from an angered sky, and the purple clouds tear apart as the neon-blue balls of lightning ravage the dead Earth.

A scream is heard in the distance.

* * *

'Sorry about that. I hope my screaming didn't scare you? Somehow the voltage was put up too high, not that I'm worried though, I'm used to it now. It can be quite a laugh sometimes you know, they get taken into the room and come out with their hair standing up on end, still smoking. And sometimes their eyes are shrivelled, or hanging out of their sockets, and their faces all blackened. Medicine *has* come a long way, now when it's time for my treatment they just plug the wires into the back of my neck. So quick and easy!

When I was 15 or 16, I used to sneak into the girls change-rooms. Or was it when I was 8 or 9? I can't remember now, but still, it was fun all the same. Damn, I missed a stitch!

Sometimes I can still hear them, and see them you know. Screaming and crying, running and dying. Some still smouldering. Lumps of melted flesh, bits and pieces everywhere still bleeding, torn. Piled up like a macabre monument or meat market for scavengers and

butchers. Mushrooms glowing, explosions echoing. Black, nauseous clouds. Thousands of people screaming and crying. *I caused it all; I'm the murdering bastard. I was the one that invented the new warhead. It was me, me, ME!*

Women, children and men, all of them. One second they were laughing and happy, and the next...? The eyes, always the eyes, staring and pleading, deep, sad. Why did I do it, in God's name, why?

In God's name, that's a laugh. I'm the only God now. I can create life, and I can take it away!

Damn you God for creating mankind, and for making me a Nuclear Physicist. Life was so simple back then, when I was happy!

They think I'm mad you know, but I can fool them. They think that their white coats and fancy cars make them superior.

Anger, hate, greed, when is it all going to end? I'm tired, pained! So much fear, and so much heartache. Government "gorgonisms" dictating what's right and wrong. Rebels wiped out by Law-enforcement larrikins. Birds and animals extinct, without a qualm. Earth is hurting, and humanity cries tears of blood. The sickness grows! If only I had opened my eyes, woke up to what was happening? How many lives have I destroyed because of that damned fission formula?

I could have stopped it, but all that governmental pressure, and those air-raided sirens, pounding and screaming in my head! Still, it's all over now. Mother Earth, nothing more than a barren, desolate shadow cocooned by clouds of death, drifting toward an empty tomorrow.

I was human once you know! Did you know, that the time it takes for the flesh to melt from the initial point of impact is 10.37 seconds, and that's within the 20 mile safety radius? That's no joke! I created the most powerful nuclear warhead in history, past and future. I'm a genius, so much so that I had a whole wall full of commendations. They had to take them down though, bad memories or something. Look at these hands, they were strong once!

* * *

Outside, the poisoned atmosphere reeks of sullen memories and the stench of death from long ago. The horrific emptiness, enclosing the world like a glass bubble, is shattered by the headlights of an air car. Stopping outside the entrance of the Gothic, temporary hospital, a tall, grey-haired man leaves the confines of the passenger compartment. A nurse approaches the visitor; 'Thank you for coming so quickly Dr. Erickson. He's back again, and this time he's fading far more rapidly than anticipated. I don't think there much hope for him.'

'Poor twisted fool! What little mind he has left just can't take all that self-pity and self-abuse. The same circumstances as before?'

'Yes Doctor.'

'Damn! Has anything been administered to calm him yet Nurse?'

'No drugs, but Dr. Ninevsky gave him electro-therapy at higher voltage. Unfortunately, it seems to have made him worse. His response has heightened well beyond maximum limitation, and his memories are becoming too real for him.'

'Well, I'm afraid there's little more we can do then to stop total deterioration. Thank you Nurse.'

'Dr. Erickson, there's something else you should know.'

'Yes Nurse?'

* * *

'It's my birthday next week you know. I'll be 33 years old. They said that if I'm very good they'll give me a birthday party, with a cake and everything.'

It's hard sometimes, being an intellectual genius regressing to childhood. And trying to maintain a facade for the benefit of the doctors. You're lucky, you've escaped all that. Damn, I've dropped another stitch! Life was so simple back then, when a person's final breath meant that they had *finally* left their pitiful existence behind.

Happy birthday to me,
happy birthday to me,
happy birthday dear....?

* * *

'Dr. Ninevsky, how could something like this happen?'

'Dr. Erickson! I'm sorry Charles, it was beyond my control. The orderly in attendance is still in intensive care after trying to stop him. Something triggered an extremely violent reaction, making it impossible to keep him under restraint.'

'Forgive me Andre? I should have realised that this type of situation would fast be approaching. He seemed to be teetering on the very edge of sanity. I had so much hope, his passiveness was finally coming through. He was actually starting to distinguish reality from fantasy. If only he didn't torture himself so much, maybe then...?'

'Charles, we've tried everything humanly possible. His piteous, psychotic mind has slipped beyond our reach. It's only a matter of hours now before total regression, and mental collapse. He's already dead Charles, give up!'

'You're right Andre of course. But why break into the morgue?'

'I think you had better come with me Charles!'

* * *

The bare, hanging globes sway to a non-existent breeze as the main generator, coughing and spluttering, echoes around the yellowed walls. The doctors follow a winding corridor leading to the high security wing, and approach a single, plate-steel door. A button is pressed next to the door's time-lock mechanism, and a panel slides open to reveal a two-way mirror. The walls of the cell

were splattered with blood, and a figure was sitting in the corner, rocking back and forth with its back to the mirror.

Dr. Ninevsky turns towards Dr. Erickson; 'He came to this cell and locked *himself* in.'

'The blood?'

'No, it's not his. A former patient tore himself to pieces trying to "escape" the radiation burns. Poor bastard! Jimmy, this is Dr. Ninevsky. I've brought Dr. Erickson to see you.'

The figure stirs; 'What does *he* want, to probe my mind again? For me to play his fool again? I don't like his cold, greedy talons trying to crush my psyche, send him away. I'm safe in here, safe from the mushrooms and the eyes, those staring, pleading eyes, and the screaming and crying.' He gets up from the corner turns to the mirror, staring straight into Dr. Erickson's eyes; 'You've done this to me Erickson, *you!*' In his arms, the body of a child made up from differing parts. His cold stare

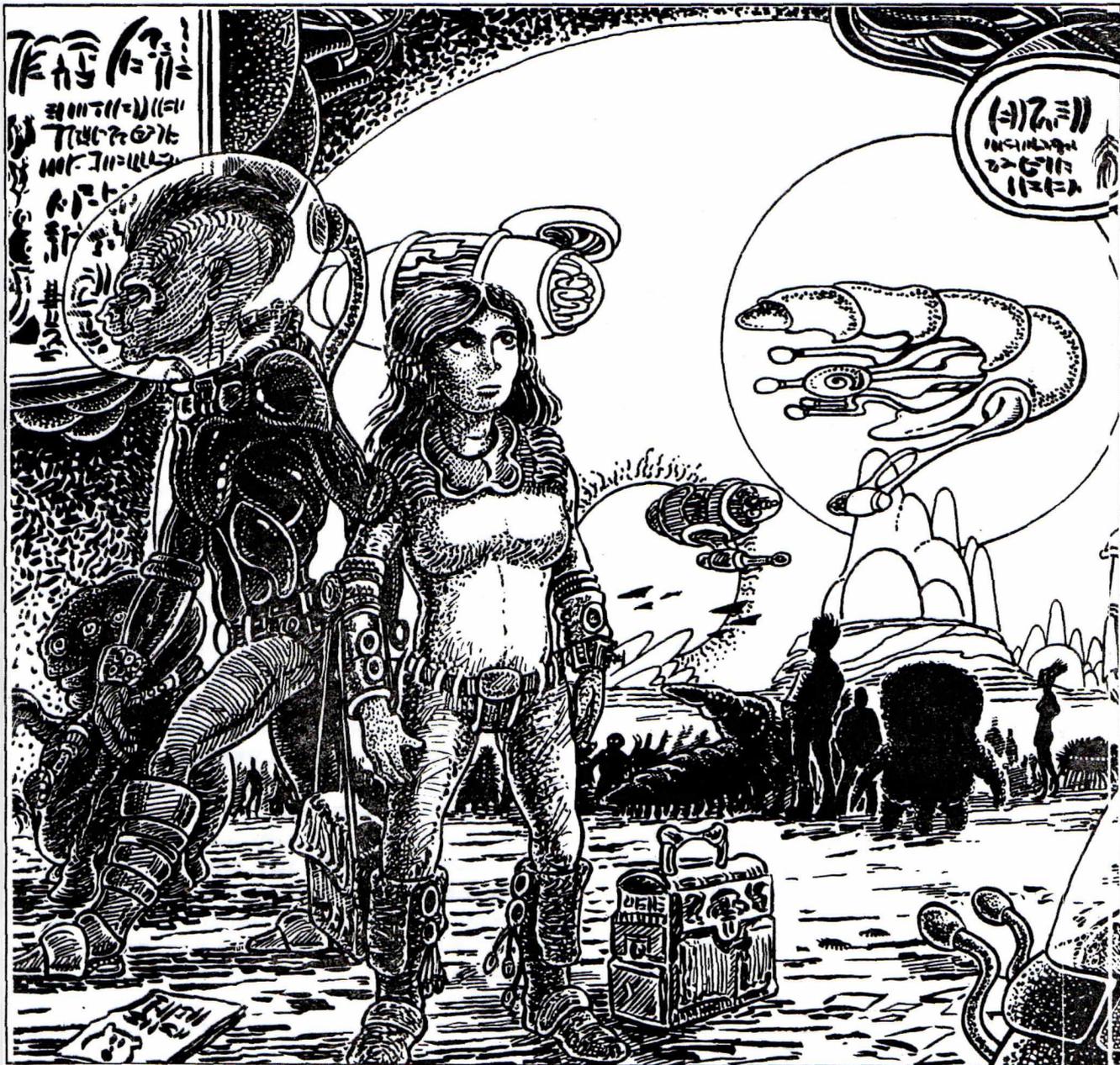
penetrates Dr. Erickson mercilessly, then he laughs as the needle and thread fall from his mouth.

Dr. Erickson stares in horror, 'My God what have you done!'

'Say hello to my son Dr. Erickson. I made him myself you know. I'm going to teach him how to be a Nuclear Physicist, just like me. Then you and all your governmental goons can brainwash him into destroying Mother Earth again, and again, and again. Just like me!

Rock-A-Bye-Baby, on a dead Earth,
when we grow up there'll be no more birth.
And if our minds snap, the Doctors
will be there, to stop all the crying
and screaming so it won't give baby a scare!

end



WAY BACK WHEN

by Michael Hailstone

The Sixties was one of the most adventurous and open minded decades for most people since the nineteen twenties. As it drew to a close riots, revolutions and bloodbaths closed many doors to young travellers; they are only now opening up again. - the editor....

Back when your bus left Sydney in 1969, I was in Eilat, Israel, shovelling shit to make enough money to get me out of the country in the spring. In those days Israeli currency was weak and could be exchanged for overseas hard currency only on the black market. Since then the Israeli pound (lira) has been replaced by the shekel, which appears on our list of exchange rates, so something must have changed since I was there. I was probably there on that very date that Arab frogmen blew up two ships in the harbour, but I can't be sure because the cuttings I took from the *Jerusalem Post* under yode singularrhosis with other cuttings I'd kept from foreign newspapers, when I was dwelling in Manly in 1973. There had been a similar attack two months earlier, but this one did more damage, actually sinking one of the ships - well, actually capsizing it at the wharf. The first I learnt of it was one afternoon sitting in the bus about to go back into town at the Timna copper-mine in the desert a few miles north of Eilat.

Every Egged (Jewish) bus in Israel had a radio, and every hour on the hour the radio was turned up and everybody shut up to listen to the news. Remember, there was a war going on all the time especially with Egypt. Border kibbutzim were often being shelled, and every morning at Timna, which was only a couple of miles or so from the border with Jordan, soldiers would go out to check for mines before the workers. At this stage the Israelis were bombing factories in Cairo, and I heard of about seventy people being killed on one raid.

Well, this time the news was unusual in that it was in English instead of Hebrew, because it was coming from Radio Cairo. There were two reports on the bombings of the ships. The first was blatant propaganda, saying that both ships were sunk with their crews. But this was immediately followed by "a French report from

Tel Aviv", which was fairly accurate: while one ship, a 500-tonner, capsized at the wharf, the other ship was successfully beached. No lives were lost, but only a fortnight or so earlier a truck, carrying mines unloaded from the ship that later capsized, crashed on the wharf and blew up, killing seventeen people outright and another seven who died later. The blast was felt all over Eilat; I heard it and felt it but thought little of it at the time, because one got so used to hearing blasts and sonic booms in Israel.

When you left Sydney, I was back on the kibbutz, Kfar Hachosh, just two kilometres from Nazareth. That was a cool breezy sabbath, a contrast to the sharav-heat of the weekend before, when I spent my birthday trying to work when I wasn't well, and got a kick in the teeth for my efforts in shit that came back to me on the evening of Sunday, the 15th. That memory and others tempt me to hold in contempt the Israelis' - or at least the kibbutzniks' - despicable uptight attitude towards work, but mitigating against that is the much rosier memory of another kibbutz named Kfar Blum up in the north of the country between the Golan Heights (taken off Syria in the six-day war of 1967) and the town of Kiryat Shemona (the name means most boringly "Town Eight" or "Eight-town", as I learnt only a few days ago from a book I'll mention further later). I yode up thither next day (the 16th) to look up an English friend named Stephen Curney, who hailed from Birmingham and whom I'd first met at Kfar Hachosh. Indeed I made some wonderful friends on that otherwise uptight kibbutz; what a shame that I lost touch with them when I went back to Australia.

While you were choking in the heat and dust of India I was enduring the very opposite conditions in Europe. I left Israel on 2nd April by ship and reached Piraeus two days later. After spending the weekend in Athens, I hitched up to Salonika with a girl from the youth-hostel in a day. And here my memory is an utter blank. I have no idea how I got from Salonika to Skopje. All I remember after Salonika is sitting one rainy evening in Skopje railway station, where I had a good lively and friendly talk with a number of people in sundry languages

including Greek with a man from Athens. There I was delighted to have the few words I'd learnt from our Yugoslav neighbors in Mosman ten years earlier understood at last. I had learnt the year before that they were not Serbocroat: they were out to be the speech of Macedonia, of which Skopje (I understand) is the capital.

I caught a train from Skopje to Zagreb, sharing the compartment with a young Canadian. The first sight to greet me next morning was that of the train plowing through about two feet of water covering the track on the outskirts of Belgrade. The Danube had burst its banks. Indeed it had been a long cold winter in Europe that year, and the snows were late in melting; there were still quite a few snowdrifts on the ground in Ljubljana.

After getting off the train in Zagreb, I hitched with the Canadian as far as Ljubljana or thereabout, where he went off for rain-swept Italy. Both he and the driver of the car that set me down there thought I was crazy hedging for snowy Austria. And indeed it snowed for part of my trip through that land, as it either rained or snowed very time I travelled through Austria. I remember the driver of a van which took me some of the way through the snowy countryside asking me whether I had seen much of the war in Israel. The two ships blown up were the only memorable event I could recount.

Somewhere in Austria I read in the local newspaper that the forthcoming launch of Apollo #13 was threatened with being held up by two things: the wether at Cape Canaveral and a technician's strike in Australia. I had to chuckle at the latter, and I wrote to my parents about it. Some time after that ill-starred mission my mother wrote back puzzled; she seemed to know of no strike. On the contrary, they received many thanks from the Americans for the part they played in bringing the astronauts safely back. But I was out of touch with the news, and knew nothing about the emergency. Indeed I had to see HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM (I think that was the title) on television many years later to get the full story. Meanwhile back in 1970 (to borrow a phrase from your lettercolumn back in 1983) my father, who worked in the PMG alongside NASA, told me on a tape my family sent me in Norway that summer, that the Parkes radio-telescope was hooked into Tidbinbilla during the emergency.

I took a rather devious route through Austria this time, curving around to the south through the mountains, spending one night in a little place called Zell-am-See beside a still frozen lake, but by then I had fine wether. I crossed the Arlberg Pass through resorts and villages buried about ten feet deep in snow and came down into Germany at Bregenz on the eastern end of Lake Constance (the Bodensee) in cold rain. Thence I caught a train to Radolfzell on the northern shore but was kicked out of the station that night with some others into the cold rain. I spent that night out in a building-site and froze my arse off. Next day, the day you arrived in Delhi, I hitched into the nearby hamlet of Horn to look up another friend from the kibbutz named Wolfgang. He was at work in the railway station of nearby Sigen, but I spoke to his mother

first. She invited me in and let me struggle along in German with her for some time before suddenly showing an excellent command of English. I had tea with Wolfgang and his parents that evening but spent that night in the local youth hostel, where I met an American, who turned out to have a rare passionate interest in wether. He had worked at the wether bureau in his native Los Angeles for some time. I have met only one other person with the same depth of interest, David Norman, at the Heathrow met. office when I first started working there in May 1968. (I'm supposed to be writing to him now - have kept in touch all these last twenty years with very long letters - but my interest in writing this latest letter has badly flagged. Quite frankly, I find wether less and less interesting as a subject as the climate warms up.)

Next day, the fateful 15th April, New Years day 2 on the Matallese calendar (and the anniversary of the Titanic disaster, in case you're interested) we hitched together northwards. We had great raves on wether; he talked as fondly of the Santa Ana as I did of southerly busters. He was of German background and spoke the language too. The day was pleasantly mild after the cold rain; we both agreed on an estimated maximum temperature of about 59°F (15°C), about as warm as it had been in Athens ten days earlier. But that balmy day ended in disaster.

The car that picked us up on the outskirts of Tübingen didn't take us far, about a few hundred yards. After starting off, the driver asked me, who was in the front, to fasten my seat-belt. I didn't know how, as I've never been good with seat-belts - indeed I'd say I'm bloody hopeless with such things. The driver tried to show me how and in doing so lost control of the car and ran into a guidepost. German guideposts are bloody solid, unlike Victorian posts. About twelve years later I was a passenger in a utility that took out a guidepost somewhere in the middle of Victoria, but in this case it was the other way round. The post was okay, but the car was written off ("*ganz kaputt*"). The other two were unhurt, but I spent the next two days in hospital. Luckily the x-rays showed no fracture, and I suffered nothing worse than a badly cut lower lip, which needed many stitches.

At this point it may be fitting to make the first mention of some television shows I saw in Europe that year. I had a set in hospital and saw one afternoon an Australian children's show about a bunch of kids, well, a family, I suppose, trotting around the Pacific on their own schooner or lugger. This particular episode was set in New Guinea (Port Moresby?) and featured a baddie who claimed that the ship was his. However, I'm afraid, since the dialog was dubbed in German, I didn't understand much of what it was about. Maybe some nostalgia buffs out there may remember that show as one of the highlights of their childhood or something.

The driver was most upset about the mishap, indeed in tears when he visited me that evening in hospital. He undertook to pay the hospital bill and to pay me further compensation for suffering (*Schmerz*) and invited me to call on him at his home in Stuttgart, which I did a few

days later. He gave me a hundred marks, which was a boon, since I was pretty poor, but it was galling to get fined ten marks for walking on the autobahn on the way to Kassel. This time I couldn't plea ignorance of the law as a foreigner, because I was with a German I'd met hitching on the autobahn.

The trip between Stuttgart and Sweden lies now only very vaguely in my memory, as the diary I had thereof were stolen in Darwin the following year. I passed through Kiel, grey and bleak and cold, then hedged up into Denmark through Flensburg. Thence I hitched through Jutland right up to Frederikshavn, whence I crossed to Sweden.

Sweden in late April was bleak and wintry. While the snow was gone, having melted about a fortnight earlier, the grass was still brown and the trees bare, and there was still some ice on the lakes and ponds. Spring is a very short season in Scandinavia, lasting no more than a month. When you reached Kabul, I was staying with the family of another friend from the kibbutz named Gunnar Lang at his home in Trollhattan, about sixty miles north of Gottenburg. Wonderful people. While there, I recorded myself playing on their piano a rhapsody I'd composed during that very creative period in Israel and sent the tape to the folks back in Australia. On the tape I also recorded Gunnar playing the guitar and singing Evert Taubes song *Brevet fran Lillan* (The Letter From The Little Girl) and an English song of his own composition.

While you were driving from Kabul to Tehran, I hitched up into Norway, through Oslo and over the mountains to Bergen. Briefly hearkening back to SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE, I passed through Voss, now under about ten feet of snow, although I'd passed through it before last summer on about the day Armstrong and Aldrin landed on the Moon. Around there the Hoth-scenes in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK were shot in the late winter of 1979. I travelled to Bergen in the vain hope of getting a job on a ship but had no luck there. At the youth hostel I met a young Australian couple, with whom I commiserated about the political situation back home, especially in relation to the war in Vietnam. By the time you reached Tehran I was probably back in Oslo, where I learnt that one could work on a farm for three months, so I yode back to the office that handled this and was sent to a farm near Lom near Otta, a little north of Lillehammer, about a couple of hundred miles north of Oslo. The wether was now beautifully warm with temperatures as high as 22°C or so, just about heaven for Norway in early May. I reached the farm around the middle of the month, a little before Norway's national day on the 17th.

The farm was the most beautiful place beside a fiord (the Sognefjord?). But I was very lonely for the three months I spent there. Norway is more conservative than Denmark and Sweden, and of course a farming area is especially conservative, so I was rather like a fish out of water. Towards the end of May the cows were brought out of the shed where they had been confined for the last eight months, and some were really agoraphobic on coming out

into the open after so long indoors. Shortly afterwards they were moved up to the *saetra* (summer pasture; the ag should be joined together) about ten kilometres away up in the mountains. There was a beautiful lake in the middle of this, and even at the beginning of June there was still a little ice on it.

That far north (about 63°N) it didn't get dark at night for about two months. The Sun just set at a very shallow angle behind the mountains to the north around ten o'clock and rose about four hours later. The sky didn't get dark, so the stars couldn't be seen, and so the night was only twilight. It was rather a relief when the nights got longer and the stars could again be seen. One needs to have experienced this to understand the significance of the fourth line in the aforsed song by Evert Taube: "*Stjarnorna syns nu pa himmlen igen*" ("The stars can be seen now again in the sky").

I hoped that the farmer and his family would take me for a trip one day to the mountains to the west. I forget the name of the range, having lost my map of Europe along with the aforsed news cuttings in the first half of 1973, but they are the highest mountains in northern Europe, the highest peak named Galdhopiggen, but in vain. However he did take me for a trip a few miles eastwards to see a truck that had been hauled out of the fjord, into which it had crashed about a year earlier. The cabin was just about gone, but otherwise the truck seemed to have suffered little from its year long immersion in the cold waters at a depth of 70 metres. On the drive back the farmer told me of two unsuccessful attempts to salvage the wreck, the second during the winter when the water was still; they had cut a hole in the ice but failed to salvage it. I wanted to ask him whether they had found the body of the driver. Had we been speaking English, I would have had no bother with that question, but our common language was German, and that tongue's word for "corpse", *leiche*, together with the thought of the body down there in that deep water, gave me a nasty creepy feeling, so I forbore from asking. However my unasked question was answered when I read an account of the salvage in the local paper: the body was not found; there was no sign of the deceased (*omkomne*). I suppose the body was never recovered.

More about television. I forgot to mention a space opera I saw during my stay in Trollhattan. Unlike in Germany, in Scandinavia foreign shows are screened with the dialog in the original language with subtitles in the local language. This was in English, but somehow I couldn't pick the accent to tell whether the show was British or American, so I watched the closing credits with some interest, to learn that the show had been made at Artransa Studios in French's Forest, just 3 miles from my parents' home in Seaforth. Although I forget the name of the series, I have seen a couple of references to it in fanzines over the last ten years. Maybe you know the show I mean?

In Norway at the farm we had only one station, which showed only two English speaking "escapist" shows (as against documentaries) a week. One was

GUNSMOKE, (I could say something interesting about the Norwegian subtitles, but that would need a tedious explanation about the languages of Norway, and I'm just not into lengthy tedious explanations any more) shown on Friday evenings. And the other Why, SKIPPY! At six o'clock on Saturdays. This was a great favourite with the kids, who would go around singing the theme song (in English): "Skippy, the bush kangaroo." Maybe this doesn't surprise you, as I was reading only a day or two ago that SKIPPY was very popular in many lands.

I left the farm on 15th August, taking the train from Otta back to Oslo. On the evening before I left, I had a good rave with the farmer, which brought about a sudden feeling of solidarity with him. For one thing they had an environmental battle on their hands, with their beautiful *saetra* threatened with being flooded by a dam to be built by Norway's version of Tasmania's HEC. But even more interesting was a talk about Quisling. Now I had never heard of Quisling until I came to that farm. I had only heard his name used by Arthur Calwell to describe Air-Vice Marshall Ky during the latter's visit to Australia in 1966. In that same year an Englishman named Ralph Hewitt wrote a book titled PROPHET WITHOUT HONOUR, claiming Quisling had been made a scapegoat for Norway's suffering during the German occupation of World War 2.

The farmer was sympathetic with this view, and we talked about it at great length. I was sympathetic too, as I saw the blaming of Quisling as yet another vile machination by the hated Establishment, about which I had quite a bit to say. It is interesting to look back on that conversation from my present stand-point. While neither the Establishment nor I have changed over the last twenty years, the world has done. Likewise my perception thereof, and I am disgusted, having realized how dangerous it is to talk about this kind of thing - that is, World War 2 and the Nazis - since I have come to think more about it over the last three years. How bloody right.

At the youth hostel in Oslo I met another Sydneysider named Tom Kelly, who talked me into coming with him for a short trip down to Copenhagen and back. We got a lift thither with an American also from the hostel all the way on the 19th.

On the day you reached Heidelberg we walked around Copenhagen. Tom yode to the Canadian Embassy for a reason I've since forgotten. As all the youth hostels in the city were full up, we slept that night at the railway station, where we also spent the night before. On the day you left Heidelberg (exactly twenty-one years ago today, as I type this) we stayed at the Lang's in Trollhattan on our long tedious hitch back to Oslo. By then Gunnar had emigrated to Canada, so Tom and I talked a lot to his younger brother Ragnar. They had their own studio apart from their flat, and there for the first time that evening I listened right through to the Beatles' SERGEANT PEPPERS LONELY HEARTS' CLUB. I was really freaked out by the last track and was glad I hadn't kept the copy I'd bought in London the year before. The next day

we left at noon and spent the following night out in the forest.

After a long slow trip we got back to Oslo at long last, where we both yode to the office of Wilhelmsen in the hope of getting a job on a ship, but we got the same old story: too many men... So instead we hitched down to Kristiansand together, where we parted. Tom wanted to visit a commune in Jutland (I wish I could remember the bloody name; eleven years later I met a man who'd spent some time there) then go on to Germany for work. I however wanted to go back to Britain, because I was itching to finish my one and only short novel. I couldn't work on it while travelling around or even stuck out in the sticks on a farm in Norway, because I needed my typewriter, which I'd bought in London two years earlier for 22 pounds and left with my sister in England. This novel was very important to me at the time. It's dreadful to backcall this now, but I believed then that I had a really weighty message to tell the world. Ah, the folly of youth... After I finished it, I hawked it around to publishers in Britain and the United States - and Australia after I got back hither. It was rejected every time, and I'm now very glad that nobody accepted it, because I see it now as quite unpublishable. But I've never even now quite given up hope of getting fresh inspiration to write a newer and more credible version. You may be interested to know that it owed a lot to the influence of C. S. Lewis's cosmic trilogy, especially the last, THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH. You can even see the influence on the title of my work: THE ACCURSED FRUIT. But since then, indeed only since beginning this article I have realised one big mistake I made.

In THE MATALAN RAVE #5 I recounted a conversation with a young Englishman named Gordon at the Minoan dig at Phestos (just twelve kilometres from Matala). He told me that the script called Linea A had been deciphered only "about a year ago" (that is, in 1968). I added parenthetically that it to my knowledge had not been deciphered "to this day" (that is, 1984). Well, it winds out that Gordon was right. It was deciphered by Cyrus H. Gordon, as I gleaned from his aforesaid book FORGOTTEN SCRIPTS, published in 1968. Furthermore, I have learnt from that book from the first time that the Minoan language was Semitic, (that is, related to Arabic and Hebrew), and therefore used shorter words than the Greek Linear B. And I was so utterly wrong in the THE ACCURSED FRUIT describing Minoan as a language with much longer words than even Greek, thus I named the Thera of 3500 years ago, before it was destroyed by the great eruption, "Reschethagsivathoria". I was rightly criticized for using such long names.

But if Linear A was deciphered now so long ago, why has the academic world kept so quiet about it? Admittedly not much has been deciphered by 1968, and maybe there's been little or no progress since then.

The semitic Minoan civilization was wiped out by the great outbreak of Thera. The early Greeks (Achaeans) from the mainland took over Crete after than. And now, once on long bygone destructive volcanic outbursts, this

brings me to another painful subject in your tale: Pompeii. I visited there during a day's stay at Naples on my way to Matala in May 1969, but I didn't go in owing to a misunderstanding brought about by a combination of my poor sight and the utterly stupid way the ticket office at the entrance was set up. You may remember that stupid bloody railing in the middle of the room, and on the far wall was a sign detailing what I took to be entry prices, which varied accordingly to the number in a group. These prices varied from something like 2000 lire up to about 4000 lire. So I thought: "Bugger this," and walked out.

I decided to see the cause instead, Vesuvius itself. Some friendly young people told me how to get up the mountain: to get off the train at a place called Trecase (the name means "Three Houses"). Getting off there, I set off walking uphill along the only road through this bloody awful village full of people calling out to this weird foreigner walking through their home. Children called out "Speak Ingleesh?" (though one small boy said "Do you speak English?" quite well), while two women remarked to each other: "*Barba rossa*," quite loudly and openly. No, they weren't talking about a long dead pirate nor some brand of plonk, but about my red beard. After an agony of this at last I got into the open country but flaked out after a gruelling walk part of the way up the mountain. However, in the end I got a lift with a couple in a car to the top, but even up there I had to fork out about 700 lire (about one Australian dollar) just to get into the area about the crater. Once there a guide took us around but spoke only Italian, but at least I didn't have to pay for him. After that the couple gave me a lift back down, back to Naples, but I forget whether they took me all the way or part way. Then I learnt that I had misunderstood the sign in the ticket office at Pompeii and that it cost only 150 lire to get in (that's one price I do remember). I wanted to tell them that, had I known that it cost only 150 lire to get in, I would have gone in, but my Italian wasn't up to tackling such a difficult sentence involving the subjunctive mood, but the man at least understood enough English for me to say it in that tongue. Later I took the trouble to learn the Italian therefore: "*Se avesse saputo, che costava soltanto cento cinquante lire, sarei entrato.*" Though a lot of good that does me now.

Still, maybe it's just as well that I didn't go in. From your description some of it seems pretty horrifying, and that could have rather freaked me out. Although that kind of thing may not bother me much nowadays, I was a very sensitive imaginative young man back then, as you may have gleaned above in the case of the drowned truck driver and the last track of SERGEANT PEPPER.

Well of course prices were always notoriously high on the Continent, but I'm surprised by your complaint of paying 17c for a coffee in Belgium. I don't remember past prices at all well, but I do seem to remember paying about four pence for a cup of tea in England, which had had bad inflation over the three years I was in that part of the world, and I seem to remember once complaining about paying a whole seven pence for a cup of coffee, until an Australian (a friend of my sister's, I think) reminded me

that a coffee cost twenty cents back in Australia. (At least though, when I left Australia in 1967, tea or coffee was automatically included in the price of a meal, and I remember having a steak in Fremantle for a whole 60c or 65c on my way to Europe.)

On the day you reached Pisa, Tom and I yode to the Sjomannskotoret (Seamen's office) in Oslo, having been referred thither the day before by the Wilhelmsen office, but again with no success, so we left Oslo that day and hitched down to Kristiansand, where we split up the following day.

I don't know what day you came back into Britain, as you don't make it clear how long it took to drive across France. It could well be that we both entered England on the same day. I came back in on 3rd September through Harwich after a rough trip across the North Sea; we were two hours late in arriving because of the wether. After disembarking at three o'clock that afternoon, I gave the immigration officer my sister's address (actually her inlaws in Barrow-in-Furness). I got a lift in a truck all the way to Liverpool. The driver was Danish and spoke no English (he and his truck must have come across on the same ship), but we both spoke German, and so I could act as his interpreter for him. I reached Barrow late the following day. My sister had had her second child on 31st August and was still in a rest-home, so I couldn't visit her. (Just last week, as I write this, I sent that same child a card for his twenty-first birthday up in Lismore.) Two days later I hitched up to Dundee to see a friend named Tony Redfern. I had first met him on the train from Sydney to Armidale in May, 1964, when he had just come out from England to take up a job at the University of New England, where I also worked, and he had come back to Europe overland from Australia and Japan in 1969. Being led to believe that it was easy to get work in Dundee - rather I should say *mised* - I went back to Barrow for my gear, then back to Dundee by train. This involved changing at Glasgow with a dreadful tramp with my stuff from one station to another.

My sister and brother-in-law flew back to Australia round about the same time as you sailed back, with their two small children, who had both been born in England during their stay there, now both well adjusted strapping young men. I stayed in Dundee for two months, unable to get a lasting job, only a couple of dreadful potato picking jobs. At the end of the month I hitched over to the west coast of Scotland, stopping at Oban, whence I took to ship to the island of Mull, where I stayed in the main town of Tobermory. Three years earlier in a rooming house in North Sydney I had befriended a young Englishman from London, who shared my love of classical music. He was especially fond of Mendelssohn's Hebrides overture, also called FINGALS CAVE and said how he'd like to visit it. He had never been north of Birmingham himself, but I resolved that I must visit it while I was over there. Well, I tried but failed because of the wether. It was now autumn, which in Scotland means one gale after another. The wether began to worsen when I reached Oban. From Tobermory I rang up the company that ran a small boat

out to Staffa, but the wether was too bad to go, and it was by now the end of the season, so that was it. With a Scot I met in Tobermorey I hitched back to Dundee through Glasgow, where I stayed overnight in his flat. Next day I bought a couple of books, one of them Tom Disch's ECHO ROUND HIS BONES, of which I'd read the second half of its serialisation in NEW WORLDS the year before. (In early May last year I managed to replace my lost copy of that novel from a second-hand bookshop in Carlton. This was important to me, seeing that the story is set over the period from 20th April to early June 1990.)

At the end of October I gave up on Dundee and moved down to Birmingham, where I had little more luck, only casual work, part of the time in a factory, where I once asked the boss to take me on as his employee, but he crapped on about "ethics in business" and the likelihood that I, an Australian, might take off next summer. The latter misgiving was not at all unreasonable. Indeed a fellow from Coventry I met there expressed interest in going to Norway that spring to work. But that was not to be..

In Dundee Tom had offered to lend me 200 pounds to get me overland back to Australia. I was at first appalled by that; it was a lot of money in those days, and I had never borrowed so much money in my life. But by that icy Christmas, which I spent with him and his parents on the Isle of Wight, I was doing so badly that I was a lot more interested when he repeated his offer. In the end it seemed to be the best thing to do.

The only highlights of Birmingham worth naming here are seeing a bit of Stephen Gurney, which was mainly going out drinking on Sunday evenings with him and his three mates, and buying a second-hand copy of THE RED PLANET by Charles Chilton, the novel of the BBC radio-serial JOURNEY INTO SPACE from the fifties. THE RED PLANET is the second story, about the first trip to Mars, which blasted off from the Moon on 1st April 1971, just three months after I bought the book, when I was by then in Kathmandu.

Sometime that January I left Birmingham for London, where I had a lot of things to attend to in preparation for my trip back to Australia. I found a good place to stay called "Traveller's Rest" in Hammersmith, where I met quite a few interesting folk, one of them an Australian newly arrived from Adelaide, who seemed to have nothing but contempt for Britain, constantly saying how stupidly the place was run. In the news at the time was the collapse of Rolls-Royce, which the government bailed out, as it earlier had Leyland (if I remember rightly). He felt the country needed a true leader and spoke admiringly of Hitler. Around the middle of January, when I definitely decided to head back to Australia, a postal strike cut Britain off from the rest of the world, so I was unable to tell my family the good news that I was coming home, until I got a Canadian I also met in Traveller's Rest to post a letter to my aunt for me. He was flying home to Winnipeg, so he could post it there. After that I could write nothing further until I reached Ostend. In early February I went back to Dundee, where I shopped around

for a shipping company to send a trunk with the bulk of my stuff back to Sydney. Once that was done, I went back to London to get everything else in order. I got at least a day's work in London together with an American and wondered why on earth I'd friggged around in Dundee and Birmingham, when work was much easier to find in London.

On 15th February Britain adopted decimal currency, whereupon the price of a meal in the cafeteria of Australia House, where I regularly ate, yode up from 5/6 to 28p. The new price should have been 27.5p, but London for some reason abhorred the new half-penny and wouldn't have a bar of it, although it was used outside - at least in Dover. On the evening of the 16th, my last night in London, I saw HAIR, of which I saw the new production here in Melbourne on 3rd August this year.

On a gloomy afternoon, 17th February, I left London for the last time on the 1540 train to Dover, where I spent that night. This was the third anniversary of the day I left London for my first trip to the Continent. Next day I did some shopping for such things as enterovioform (apparently since banned) agenst diarrhoea and other such nasty infections lurking in Asia, before catching the 1300 ferry across to Ostend. For some reason I seemed to have a habit of embarking at Dover on the 18th of whatever month. I spent that night in Ostend. Three days later I reached Koln, which was rip-roaring with its carnival, but there I must leave this tale, for the tale of the trip thence to Iran has been published in ANZAPA.

Interesting comment on your weight. You were even lighter than I was. I weighed 135 pounds when I left Australia, about the same the following summer in England, but only 122 pounds in Rome on the way to Matala. I was told that I was too light by meny folk, but nowadays, now that I'm heavier, I get surprised by how light everybody else seems to be. (A bit like getting depressed by how young nearly everybody else seems to be.) I hate to think what I weighed when I left England for Australia, let alone when I reached Darwin two months later.



LORD OF THE EARTH'S ELDERS

by Andrew L. Sullivan

****Our race has bided its time on this planet, my Son. For millions of years we have lived and co-existed with the rest of our kith, living and dying as the times have dictated. I have lived a long time, Son, I have seen many things. I have seen races come and go. I have seen our brethren slowly strangled by infidel invaders. I have seen kin who have slaughtered the Short-Lived, destroyed their creations, created havoc for their descendants. I have seen all this in my time, my Son, but I am afraid that our time is nearing its end. It will be us who will soon depart this Earth.****

<<But why, my Father? Why must we depart? You have told me many times that we alone amongst the Earth's races have lived the longest. Why must we depart now, whilst others, others who have only recently come upon this Earth, may stay? Should it not fall upon us to rid the Earth of such vile heathens? They defile and abuse our world and it is we that must leave? I cannot agree with this.>>

****My Son. I feel... I feel very much the way you do. I have worried at this problem from many decades. It has gone before the Council and after many years consideration it was agreed. All must abide by the decrees of our Council of Elders. The wise ones, older than myself, have felt this coming since the birth of the Short-Lived. We must accept. For in acceptance comes amity and through amity we achieve knowledge. Accept, my Son. It is our fate, it is the Nature of existence. Accept. Receive. Grow.****

<<Grow>>

****You still worry, my Son. Contemplate what our World would be like if we were to live forever. It is Nature that we must pass our burden of responsibility on to those who follow. Contemplate this in your dreams.****

<<But Father! I am young, my roots are strong and deep. I have much to learn and much to give. Am I

to be denied my birthright of long life? Must I cast away all that I have worked for, all that I have Dreamed?>>

****Oh, my Son. All I can say to you is Grow and be Strong. You will find counsel in your own heartwood. Grow, my Son.****

<<Grow, my Father.>>

For many Short-Lived generations I have waited and watched. I felt much the way my Son, Grindlegraine, felt before he dormant and began his contemplation cycle. I watched, the rapid flickering of Light and Night presenting a grey gloom through which to witness the death of my people. My Son is young and does not yet know why or where the Short-Lived came from, or the Fast-Lived weeds and stranglers that followed them. He has yet to contemplate the grey gloom through which we perceive the Earth. That will come. He is young and strong willed and strong of heartwood but I fear for him. He is like an innocent sapling lost among the worst Nature can bring forth. But he is no longer a sapling and it is not Nature who brings forth the evil of the world. I fear for him. And for myself.

Grindlegraine had not even been a breeze in his SeedFather's branches when I felt the first tremors vibrate through the thick crust of the Earth. Others felt it too but none of us could explain or reason the phenomena. Here, in the Heart of the World, safe from prying eyes and vengeful teeth, we felt that nothing could harm us, nothing could destroy a dynasty that stretched beyond the memories of even our oldest, wisest Clan members. We watched but took no notice, our over inflated pride and willingness to believe in our own immortality easily overcoming our natural instinct for survival that had long since been reduced to an uneasy feeling in the tips of our roots. For many thousands of seasons we lived with the uncertain dread that was in every one of us. Many scoffed.

Many felt the idea of a threat had been planted by recessionist reformists attempting to inflict their trade religions on those unwary enough to believe and went on with their lives certain that there was only one true Right in the World and they were it.

The myopic attitudes continued to control our race even when the unmistakable rumblings of slaughter and death were felt though the bed-rock of Earth and beyond. But still no one thought to act, although now, I realise, there was not a lot that the Elders could have done. We are not a numerous or very innovative race. What little could have been done those many hundreds of years ago would not have changed our destiny.

And then came the invasion. The invasion was preceded by a population explosion unprecedented in our long history. No other race has spread so quickly and so completely. Before the coming of the Short-Lived there were vast tracts of forested lands, as far as the Clan could feel there were wilder lands, untouched by invaders. But, as the seasons passed with barely a flicker of recognition, the invading hordes of the Short-Lived and their infidel parasites that seemed to follow them like a constant companion spread like a plague across the land, devouring and defiling as they went. Killing and slaughtering our kith, kin and enemy alike.

Then came the smoke. Like a foul exhalation of breath the Short-Lived befouled the air with their machines and factories, blocking light and destroying soil. We felt it, we breathed in the fumes, we failed under the black light but yet we did nothing.

They chopped at the once great forests of the Earth, bit by bit at first and then in huge gashes that were left bereft of life except for their invincible weeds and stranglers that grew with a vigour and speed that was phenomenal and, ultimately for the Clan, fatal.

And then the Clans fragmented. No longer connected through the living tissue of the forest, the Clans lost contact with each other and slowly sank into a kind of deathless death. I watched and felt the forests around me die and turn to mud. What once had been the greatest of civilised communities became no more than a collection of wizened, old, gnarled, hermits who gathered together less and less, the great Council of the Elders becoming nothing more than a memory for those who cared. The passing of the Great Lords of the Earth's Elders threatened to be more than just an idle possibility. I was afraid.

I am still afraid. I watch the Short-Lived come into my domain, erect their puny shelters made from my kin, destroy the life giving land around them, defile it with their weeds the strangler plants, ivy, blackberry; plants that know no life-force, are beneath even a modicum of intelligence. They come, blithely covering every surface with their sticky, prickly fronds, sucking the very life from the Earth, forever producing their endless gets. Mindless. Fast. Fatal.

A tremor. Through the very bed-rock upon which the Earth sits. Grindlegaine awakes from his centuries

long contemplation. He is worried. I do not blame him. I myself feel the tips of my roots contracting, squeezing, breaking rock. Fear, for the first time in my long, long life, wends its way through the fibre of my being. Like a parasitic borer, it worms its way into my heartwood, weakening what strength I had.

<<What has happened? What was that?>>

**I, I don't know, my Son. Something. I feel it, everywhere. Something. I...*

<<The Great One! The Great One has fallen! The Great One has fallen! Flee! Inform the Clan. The Great One has fallen!>>

**StoneCrusher Huon? Where are you? I recognise your voice. What has happened?*

<<MerrewildLeafer! It is awful. The Great One has perished. Felled by the Short-Lived! We are doomed. We shall fall. Flee! Flee! We must gather the Clans and flee before it is too late.>>

**But it already too late, StoneCrusher! We are already too late. StoneCrusher? StoneCrusher? STONECRUSHER!*

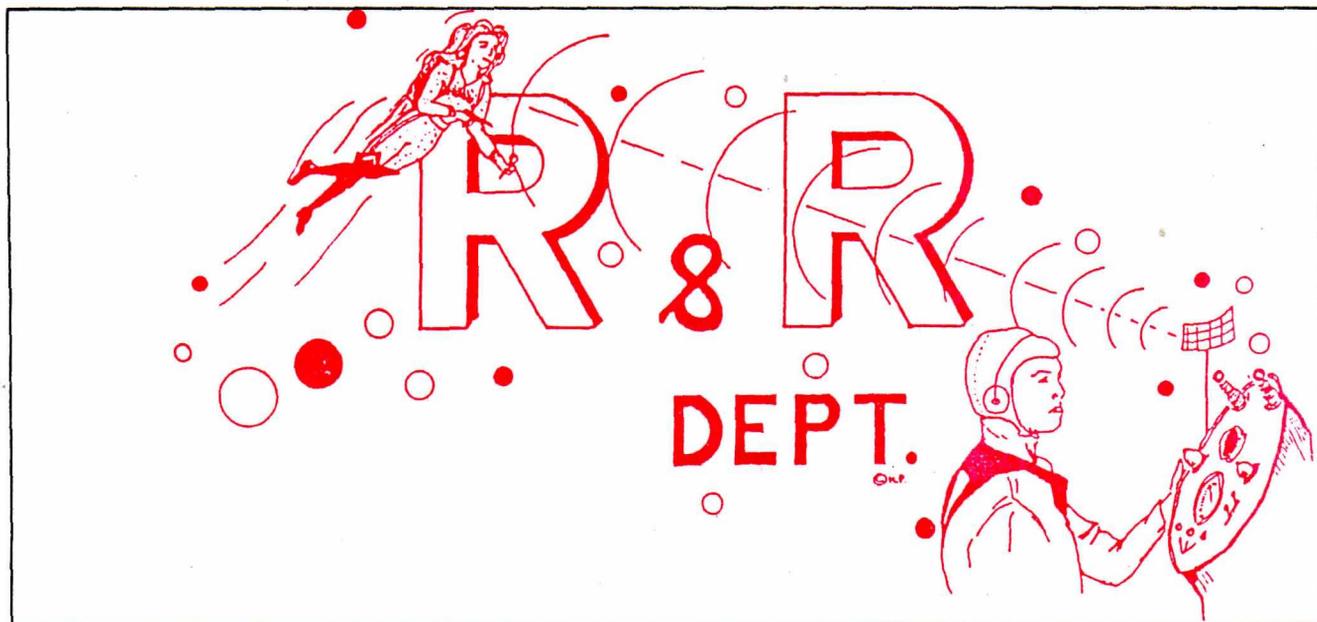
<<My Father? Are we going to die? I have contemplated these past few centuries as you said but still I have no answer. I am confused and afraid.>>

Yes, my Son. See how already the Forest withers and dies. The LifeForce seeps into the dead soil. We are....

<<My Father? Father? Mother? StoneCrusher? Father.....?>>

Silence.





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

Last week I was in an automobile accident, and while nobody was injured, my pocket-book will take a beating. This is because of the insurance companies. Anyway, here it is a bright and cheerful morning, and I can relax in my nightdress sipping tea, munching toast, and typing away. You don't list fanzines you receive, so I have no idea what your workload might be.

I guess the biggest thrill I had from THE MENTOR 73 was the article by Andrew Darlington. Why? Because one of the very last comic strips I bothered to read was EAGLE magazine, up to 1958. 1958 was when I came to the USA and EAGLE was no longer available. But I still remember Dan Dare, and his spaceship ANASTASIA, and the evil Mekon of the planet Venus. EAGLE was the only magazine I could afford when I lived with my Grandparents. So I have never read any of the other comic strips mentioned in the article.

But I wonder... there seems to be a small but thriving market for the reprinting of old comic strips. I wonder if DAN DARE has been so honoured? In reality, I'd probably be very disappointed if I re-read the strips. I am 47 years old now, not 13.

...Now back from my 9th and last day of Jury Duty. Tomorrow I resume my normal work schedule. I missed the 15th April madness. Translation: Here in the USA, 15 April is the deadline for filing Federal and State income tax forms. To avoid a penalty, the postmark must be before midnight of 15 April.

So at 6 locations in the greater LA area, the Post Offices stayed open to midnight. Hundreds of clerks were paid overtime to do nothing but cancel the piles of last-minute returns. The next few days will be devoted to moving the piles of returns on their way. Routine.

I suppose it may seem silly to you, but the fact is that the majority of citizens do not file returns until the last minute. I filed early in March. This makes me a weirdo.

[I file my return as soon as I get my Group Certificate from work. This is usually the last week in June. Returns must be in by the 30th of August. I am usually owed a refund, which is why I put the return in early. - Ron.]

Thank you for the continuation of your trip report. Obviously, I am envious. It will be interesting to see how contacts develop between fans in the former USSR and the rest of the world. For most USA fans, the main problem is the very slow and very unreliable mail service from places such as the Ukraine. I am supposed to be trading with a couple of clubzines, and about half my mailings seem to get lost. Air mail letters can take up to 8 weeks to arrive. I am not joking, that is what it took for a postcard with chess moves to arrive at my PO Box. 8 weeks and it was clearly marked airmail. Hot balloon?

[Maybe someone's Security Forces thought the chess moves were something else... Usually air mail takes 2 weeks to get to me from the Ukraine, Russis or other countries over there. - Ron.]

As for Sean Williams' article, I can only say it is too late for me. I tried to be a pro writer, many years ago. Most of my friends seem to have tried to become pro writers many years ago. None of us made it. Many are called, but few are chosen.

I suppose I could lay out the money and buy myself a word processor. But what could I write about? Most SF stories I see nowadays for sale are dozens of fantasy trilogies. Or maybe the same trilogy written dozens of times. Heck, most of my reading is science fact books and magazines. Now in an ideal world, I could take over Isaac Asimov's science column in the MAGAZINE OF F&SF. In practice, I doubt if I have the discipline to make a monthly deadline. Indeed, I have a hard time making the FAPA deadlines.

As always, the artwork is impressive. Indeed, THE MENTOR may have the best artwork in the fanzine field. Not that it will do you any good. I nominated THE

MENTOR for the Hugo, but I doubt if you have much of a chance to win. Here in the USA the majority of voters have a mindset that the only good fanzine is an imitation of the 1950's style of "faanishness".

I noticed this at the last CORFLU, held here in Los Angeles last February. Talk about "The Greying of Fanzine Fandom". Some of them (not me of course) were pining for "the good old days" of the 1950's. But when it came down to topics such as recruiting new fanzine fans, nobody knew what to do. For myself, I blame TV for the inability of most fans to sit down and *do something*. And nowadays if they do want to do something, it is most likely to be done on the computer nets.

I suppose that is all for now. I need to make supper, then head off for my dance class. Hope all is well with you in Australia. Alas, the US newspapers and magazines rarely carry stories about Australia and New Zealand. If I ever get rich, I would like to subscribe to some sort of Australian news magazine. For example, I would like to know whatever became of the proposal to build an international Spaceport on the north coast of Australia, with help from what used to be the USSR. (17.4.92)

[As far as I know, that is still in the pipeline, though as a State (Queensland) government concern. What with the recession, it is very slow burning... - Ron]

SHERYL BIRKHEAD, 23629 Woodfield Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20882, USA.

I love Peggy's cover (I've seen the original). THE MENTOR is gorgeous and I can well believe the price for putting it out. I'd love to contribute something if you think my material might fit - just let me know.

[I'll never knock back good artwork - Ron.]

Beautiful artwork and I love seeing the pictures. The zine has all the looks of a semi-prozine. Some of the illos aren't quite up to the standards of others, but that is a small creeb. For some reason David Haugh's little tin can robot men sprang to mind. Something tells me you ought to ask him for artwork - little spot illos. I don't have his address handy, but someone ought to. I believe it is Woodburn Oregon, but can't remember the rest. Not sure why he comes to mind - but I can picture his work sprinkled - especially among the poems.

I can't remember who the pro was, but he was talking about the cards for writers. I forget the particulars, but you dealt out hands in categories - like hero/heroine/conflict/secondary interest/villain - which were pre-set descriptions and then did the writing from there. The task was to work with the discipline of given parameters. Sounded like a nifty brain bender. I don't recall the name of the deck or if it is commercially available, but Sean might keep an eye and ear out for it.

The portfolio is eerily dark - nice.

I liked Shane's piece, but that is a weak comment. The mechanics were handled well even though the idea is not a new one. It didn't come out sounding hackneyed as so often is the case. (27.3.92)

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

I hate SF poetry!

If I do this often enough Uncle Ronald will probably pub an ish of THE MENTOR filled with nothing but that drek; being the notorious shit-stirrer that he is; but in a family kind of way.

I could also say that I hate SF pottery, which is even worse because you can actually see it. Not a pretty sight on the pillow at seven of the A.M. Though this is nothing compared to the sheer chills engendered by SF origami. A sadistic band of mutant Filipino guerrillas specialize in creating public hysteria in the islands with their mass demonstrations of this nefarious art. You're actually going to sit there and tell me that you've never heard of the dreaded Manila Folders?

Aha, Glen, that bloke with the goggles and protective gear was actually the ID's alter-ego (second cousin twice revolting) giving him a helping claw. Shit. Now I've got to halt work on my thesis for the entrance examination to Chris Masters' Correspondence School of Fart sniffing and Anal Retention and write a twenty page in-depth article on the psychic ramifications of non-linear phenomena via module access. Thanks a lot. Wot a pal.

Anyway, I promise the article will be at least as boring as one of Mae's mindless rambles, though perhaps not in the class of John Alderson's epic rampages through the back catalogues of dusty infinity.

Hang on... Mae's last letter was all chatty and interesting. It actually made sense! And she promises to make her style more accessible?? Is the world coming to an end? There's no depending on people, I tell ya.

Actually, there was a film made in the thirties called FORBIDDEN PLANET. Well... it started out as an anti-drug film along the lines of COCAINE MONSTERS FROM BEYOND DEPRAVITY (or am I thinking of the triple-X version of WIZARD OF OZ?) Anyway... it's title was, of course, FORBIDDEN PLANT, but one of the titling unit's sub-gophers was a former member of the Manila Folders (see above) and was suffering withdrawal symptoms such as phantom paper cuts on the finger and so on, and simply forgot all his English lessons during a severe bout, thereby adding that one little letter to the title. In the haste to get the movie ready by the promised release date, the title change wasn't discovered until it was too late and it then didn't really matter because the first night audience were too stoned to notice. Boy... ain't that funny how everything connects in some way?

By the way, Chris, did you know that if you say "The making of FORBIDDEN PLANET was the single greatest event in the history of the human race" backwards that you sound like a fucking idiot? (1.5.92)

TONY J. BROOK, "The Dread Master", PO Box 512, Baccus Marsh, Vic 3340.

Allow me to introduce myself? My name is Tony Jonathon Brook, and I have the honor of being the editor of a fantastic, brilliantly witty, fab little magazine known as DAARKE WORLDE. And now that my ego has faded off into the distance, maybe I can tell you a tad about this

publication. DAARKE WORLDE is the official magazine for The Melbourne Horror Society, and will be "unleashed" onto club members and interested parties every two months. Like most small-press magazines, DAARKE WORLDE will contain news, reviews, artwork and fiction, and is devoted to the horror genre. Although, unlike EOD, TERROR AUSTRALIS, VANDEMONIAN and the like, DAARKE WORLDE will not be to the professional standard as the mentioned mags (not yet at any rate).

As to the reason for this letter, it's two-fold: firstly, as an introduction to myself and my alter-ego, "The Dread Master", who you will meet as you read through the DAARKE WORLDE sampler. He's actually quite a mongrel, sarcastic, maniacal, and down right nasty, and created by me in the best possible taste. His derogatory manner is not meant to be offensive in any way, and is strictly for fun.

As to the second reason? To see if you would be interested in an exchange of magazines. In the small-press market, I am but a virgin, as a matter of fact this is my first baby, and am hoping for it to be successful. The reason I say "hoping", is that I don't own one of those turbo-thrusting, silicon-cell simulated, techno-whatsit, compu-doohickey thingimybobs as yet (What, no computer! Disgusting. Unheard of). This tends to make things a little awkward, as Chris A. Masters (President of the M.H.S.) has to do the finished magazines at the moment.

With a lot of luck I will have my own D.T.P. set up which should make things easier for all concerned, but that's in the future, so until that time I'm still learning. Having said that, if I'm approaching you the wrong way, I apologise.

[I suppose you have one of those primitive things called a "typewriter", I think they were called(?). I have heard by impeccable sources that you can actually make masters for a magazine with one, the only thing it can't do (with the older models) is justify right margins... - Ron.]

The above address is usually for submissions or correspondence in relation to DAARKE WORLDE, but as I am also the official librarian of the M.H.S., it is convenient.

"By the defecations of DIABOLICUS, if your refuse to reply to this letter I will personally infest your nauseous little nightmares created in that simian mind wearing a *Darth Vader* mask, suffering from a nasty cold. By the way, have a nice day!" : The Dread Master. (20.4.92)

PAVEL A. VIAZULKOV, PO Box 344, PO 502, Moscow SU-125502, Russia.

I've read a copy of THE MENTOR you sent to Vsevoid Martynenko. I found it rather interesting - the Volgacon piece, though, seemed to me a bit more like a personal diary/timetable. If I did not know what the con was I'd never know from the article. But I enjoyed the letters, stories (esp. DEFENCE MECHANISM by D. Tansey), and poems. Your cover was very good, too.

Though you say you publish only Australian SF, I'd like to show you a piece of my own. Perhaps you'll like it - and perhaps even publish it as it is, after all, *not* SF but, I believe, a small fantasy - by the opinion of some of my friends, a *poem in prose*.

I'm the editor-in-chief of the Editor's Dept. of the Russian Beauty House. I was editor of the Soviet-Indian magazine for children, JUNIOR QUEST. Graduated from the Moscow University (Institute of Asian and African Studies).

IN THE FARAWAY LAND BY THE SEA

And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side

Of my darling, my darling, my love and my bride,-

* * *

Love comes to me in the spring when the snow melts and the first spring buds, the serpent-manes, appear from the last year's mouldy leaves and the morning mists are thick and smell of the awakening earth.

Love comes to me when I awaken from my winter sleep in my high castle, and sit at the window combing my long hair.

When flocks of birds returning from the south circle over the fjords and the grey cliffs, on which the heavy waves break into thin water-dust, crowned with quick rainbows;

when for the first time in many months the sun rises over the jagged wall of the Foggy Mountains and its rays wake up every living thing in the Valley;

when the scents of spring make the body quiver, - then I sense that my time has come, and I wait.

And here it is, the sound that makes my head ring as if from the thundering of bells - the soft patter of hooves on the wet ground, on the fallen leaves, all black and carpet-like after the snow, - and I know it is He, my Prince, towards whom my soul has been straining for so long.

I hastily run down the spiral staircase and throw open the black bronze doors - but he has already gone past and is nowhere to be seen, he hasn't even paused, because as soon as he saw the mossy walls of my fortress and realized where the road had brought him he urged his steed to gallop away. He can't yet love me, but having looked into my eyes he will not be able to reject me, because his heart is promised. All what's left to me are the imprints of hooves in the soft earth... But do I possess the strength to resist the call of Love? and who ever has the strength to resist it? and does He have the strength? He is my intended one. Not chance, but Fate herself brought him into the Valley.

And therefore I pursue Him, and I will find Him because He is my intended one, and my heart yearns for him. "My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven. His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely.." - I repeat these ancient words which foolish people take as either the word of God or words about God - or words to God - but which is really the prayer of Love, and I am Love.

I pursue Him. I hurry along the faint path and the beating of my heart is like the beating of His horse's hooves, the

grey boulders along the road are like His shoulders, the slender tree trunks are like His slender waist, the sun's rays are like the golden wreath in His curls, and I see His curls in the spring foliage.

"I will rise now and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth..."

I stop by some black oaks in the forest thicket where a humpbacked wizard with a beard like forest lichen gathers his toadstools and secret herbs, and I ask without fear, because Love has come to me and I am stronger than he, -

"Tell me, where is my beloved?"

The wizard, covering his face and dumb with fright, waves his arm towards the distance, toward the south, toward the pass still covered with snow. I pursue Him anew, pursue until the heavy spurs of the Foggy Mountains rise up before me, the mountains which surround my Valley from the east and the south. I run until the sun's last rays expire. My feet are sore and bloody, but I feel no pain because my love is stronger than pain. I ask everyone I meet:

"Tell me, where is my beloved?"

I ask the mountain gnomes, and those who have just two faces but many guises, and those who turn into rocks when a person might see them. And they, hiding their eyes because my love is stronger than their witchcraft, they show me the road, unable to disobey. I run in the dark, not afraid of falling from the cliffs, not afraid of landslides or vampire bats which are the curse for all who try to challenge the Grey Mountains... My love is strong. It is stronger than me and stronger than the mountains. It will lead me to my beloved.

It's dawn, when I finally see Him - there, in the distance. His crown shines on His crest and His scarlet shield gleams against His steed's white flank.

I hurriedly overtake Him, because His steed is tired and its hooves have been battered on the mountain paths, and because I am led by my love. He senses my approach and turns in horror, but now He is too weak to tear His eyes away, because my love is so strong that my thoughts have become His thoughts and my feelings His feelings. I say:

"How beautiful you are, my beloved!"

And with shaking disobedient lips He repeats:

"O, how beautiful you are, my beloved..."

And he unclasps his hand, letting the medallion with the portrait of that girl whom he loved before me fall on the rocks. What does she matter to me!

"Come to me," I say to him, and he repeats, never taking his eyes from me:

"Come to me!"

"My life is yours," I say, "And your life is mine!"

"Yours..." - he gasps out. He turns his steed.

In the tower of the fortress above the grey cliffs on which the waves break, I get up from the couch on which my beloved lies dead, and I go to the window. Our love was brief, brief but bright like the life of a falling star. He gave all of himself to me and was happy.

There, beyond the grey heights of the Foggy Mountains, many rumours and legends exist about the woman who every spring combs her long golden hair by the window of her castle on the fjords at the sea shore on the edge of the earth.

Minstrels sing about her, strumming the strings of their lutes, swarthy hunters tell stories about her around the evening campfire, the pages of an ancient tome whisper about her; all talk about the female vampire who takes life away from those who love her, about the beautiful queen of the Valley, eternally young, whose love is barren.

But still they go to the Valley, striving for knowledge of Love, because it is said that Love is life, and it is said: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death..." - and therefore the burning flames and the mysterious gloom attract people, even if they fear it too. But her eyes are darker than night and her lips burn hotter than flame, and her love is indeed not barren because with it she is resurrected to a new life and a new youth, - she gives love, but in exchange takes life. For this is the law of love, and there is no grief in it. And people rush, rush to the Valley, - there beyond the Passes, there where her castle stands high on grey hills by the side of the sea.

Above the grey hills on which the heavy waves break rise the walls and the towers of a fortress. A woman stands at the high window of the tower. Behind her, on a velvet couch lies her Prince. The woman turns to him, and her eyes are dark, and her lips whisper silently - "My beloved!"... - and glistening drops roll down her cheeks.

But this is only sea-water, this is only dew, brought by the wind. Only dew.

- In her sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the side of the sea.

[*Sorry, Pavel, but I only intend publishing Australian fiction in TM. - Ron.*]

MARK MANNING, 1709 South Holgate, Seattle, WA 98144, USA.

Thanks for sending THE MENTOR #73! So, tell me, Sir, how did you run across my name? I can't really recall seeing much in print about you, and surely nothing that indicated that you did anything like THE MENTOR.

[*I got your name and address from a US fanzine, and thought you might like to see a copy, me being on the look-out for LoCCers. - Ron.*]

Your editorial states that printing and postage runs you around Aust \$5/copy. My rough guesstimate is that you might be exceeding this by a little bit, and that you're probably closer to \$6.50/copy for \$73. Insofar as my costs are about US \$1.50/issue of my genzine (an average cost, allowing for both low domestic and high overseas postage), I've got to wonder what life must be like for independently wealthy fans such as yourself. *sigh* I've just got to win the Lotto soon...

[*I can't remember if I included postage in that figure. I know that printing costs are about 3c a page, both sides. Wealthy!! We've got 4 kids and both work - and both put out zines, though Susan said she is putting out 14 titles this year (Media zines) with an average page*

count of about 100. I don't usually have any money in my building society account. - Ron.]

Well, I certainly enjoyed your zine. I don't take much notice of zines specialising in amateur fiction, but all the stuff you ran was somewhere between competent and commercially viable. (Hmm, frankly, if you should decide, based on this paragraph, not to keep me on your mailing list, this would seem a perfectly reasonable and honorable decision to me.) More down my alley was your letter column, which included long samples of epistolary excellence from some of my favorite letterhacks, and a few people who probably should be among my faves. (3.5.92)

[Actually, *THE MENTOR* is a '60's genzine. Back then genzines included fiction. And you'll continue to receive *TM* as long as you *LoC*. - Ron.]

BLAIR HUNT, PO Finch Hatton, Qld. 4756.

TM 74 has just arrived. There will, no doubt, be comment on the lack of a coloured cover but to me Peggy Ranson's painting more than compensates for that. Who did that interesting illustration on page 9?

It was good to see *FUGITIVE* in print. Like stray cats, I worry about them until I find them a good home.

The other stories seemed to be of a high order. I especially liked the whimsy of Janet Cooper's *THE TREE*.

While my inexperience probably disqualifies me from commenting I have included a report on the N.Z. Convention that I attended over Easter.

The Discontinuity Convention was held in Auckland N.Z. during Easter and was my first experience of a science fiction convention.

To my inexperienced eye the whole thing seemed to be very well organised. The fact that, with only about one hundred and fifty people attending, they had managed to entice Terry Pratchett out from England to be the Guest of Honour speaks for itself.

After a six hour wait in the Brisbane transit lounge, (I never managed to get a connecting flight) and another few hours to Auckland I was feeling a bit second hand by the time I cleared Customs.

You can imagine how pleased I was to see someone holding up a sign with my name on it. It was Anne Shephard, the conference Co-ordinator and her friend Les, who had stayed up half the night to collect me from the Airport and run me back to the hotel.

Friday kicked off with a writers workshop given by Terry Pratchett who, it turns out, is even funnier in real life than in his books. Hidden among the humour was a lot of good advice.

Then on to a talk from Jonthon Gunson on the writing of the TV series *THE BOY FROM ANDROMEDA*. Writing for TV sounds pretty frightening to me.

The Convention was run in two streams so that you were always presented with an alternative. My brother, who I only see once every three or four years, had come up from Tasmania to join me at the Con, so when it became necessary we could be in two places at once, though there were still things that we missed.

As a kind of back-drop to everything else that was going on were the Roll Playing games. At any time you could find yourself confronted by one of the players in full dress and make-up as Death or The Fire Goddess. Those people get right into the rolls and, while you have no idea what they're up to, it lends a great atmosphere and vitality to the convention.

Day two: A demonstration of Latex and moulded polystyrene in mask making. Now I know how they make Klingons look like that!

Later a talk from an American guest, Maureen Thomas, on the subject of the big U.S. conventions that are getting bigger and bigger and more expensive to attend every year, though they do sound exciting for all that.

Then a talk by Terry Pratchett that mesmerized the crowd for two hours, he's very good indeed. Always ready to chat, "Just buy me a drink", he made a lot of friends there.

Day three: A talk on photographing models and another on organising games and yet another on Electronics Technology in costume design!

A couple of hours talk from Caterina De Nave, the Producer of *THE BOY FROM ANDROMEDA*, a very impressive lady.

Summation?: That Terry Pratchett is a witty good-natured fellow who wears his success with unassuming grace. And that those Science Fiction people in N.Z. really know what they're doing. (6.5.92)

STEVEN PROPOSCH, 2/344 Moray St., Sth. Melbourne, Vic 3025.

It's been a while since I last wrote, but it seems an awful lot has happened in the interim. I've got onto part-time work so that I can concentrate more on writing and music, I've moved house and bought a cat, I've started classes in Poetry and Editing at RMIT; and...umm...I burned my previous house down. Not, necessarily in that order, of course.

Perhaps that is a slight overstatement. Actually, only the bedroom was gutted. The rest of the place was badly smoke-damaged, but largely salvageable. Unfortunately I lost a lot of books and magazines, including my back copies of *TM* and a few other fanzines. I hope that doesn't sound like an appeal to your charitable nature; I don't mean it to... honest!

[It wouldn't matter anyway. I haven't any back issues of any issue except one of #72 at the moment. - Ron.]

The upshot of it all turned out to be putting the rest of my life on hold while I sifted through the ashes. I think I'm back on track now anyway, typing away on this heat-buckled Atari keyboard, and writing the letters I've been meaning to write for a long time.

I wanted to answer a couple of Rachel McGrath-Kerr's questions of issue #74, not as an expert, but as an interested party. I consider myself only an "apprentice poet" at this stage. Firstly, I don't agree that poetry not on an SF/Fantasy theme is mundane. I know of some fantastically exciting stuff about monkeys, written by Mao

Tse Tung! But it is a far more difficult task to write SF poetry. When dealing with matters for machines that are as yet undiscovered, and situations that generally require a heavy dose of imagination, it can be a huge struggle to stir *emotion* in as well. Especially within such an articulate framework as poetry, where every word can count.

I loved MOLOTOV by Wade Robertson because it made me *feel* the gritty danger of that bar. Then again, I frequent the Esplanade Hotel in St. Kilda and I guess I've had a lot of experience with Aliens fighting in pubs. What I couldn't understand was Steve Sneyd's ode to the long title. - Hmm...

GOLEM by Wayne Edwards was fantastic but I believe it would be just as comfortable in a contemporary writing magazine. His images certainly have the aspect of Fantasy but I can see little Science Fiction. DISTANT MIRRORS was great too, and much closer to a SF theme. I really think Wayne should try writing some contemporary stuff as well. (8.5.92)

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

Highlights aplenty in issue #74, but a couple of disappointments too. Thanks to everyone who liked HOW TO BE AN SF WRITER and wrote in to say so; will be thinking of expending/enhancing it one day, so all comments have been noted. Suggestions are welcome. (Especially appreciated Glen Chapman's note of my omission of time-travel, although his comments regarding characters are perhaps a little premature. When the characterisation displayed by commercial SF warrants it, I'll withdraw that section, or change it.)

Andrew Darlington's article about Juvenile SF stimulated some long-forgotten memories, and was *the* highlight. If anyone's looking for copies of the novels by Hugh Walters, I know somewhere that has a complete set: the library of Nightcliff Primary School (in Darwin). I read them all pretty much in order through grade six, and loved every damn one.

Bill Congreve's in-depth analysis of THE STAND hit the nail right on the head, I think, as well as being an entertaining read. The severely overweight middles of King's later books (especially such corpulent tomes as THE TOMMYKNOCKERS) weigh down the pace of his plots and should have been edited. I know his books sell regardless, but so do a lot of things that rely on past success. (The name of one major SF writer springs to mind, but I will not name him out of respect for the recently-deceased.) Whatever happened to artistic integrity?

Buck Coulson's article was a bit flat, I'm sorry to say. A little too anecdotal, in a pedestrian way, to sustain my interest.

The new OUT OF OZ column is a good idea. One thing you missed, though, regarding horror publications, is the bimonthly newsletter of the Melbourne Horror Society, DAARKE WORLDE.

Excellent to see SF poetry still appearing, but I must confess that I didn't read this issue's offerings. Prize for best title goes to Wade Robertson's SO FAR.

There wasn't much to look at as far as fiction goes. Blair Hunt's FUGITIVE I found enjoyable and well-written, although the stop-startedness of it all might put most readers off. The opening scene was too long, I think; could have been shortened without harming the mood of the tale.

THE JEWELLED MIRROR almost didn't get read at all, because of the shamelessly glaring error of tense in the very first sentence. ("The streets *were* quiet, only the dust *rises* in puffs..") I browsed through everything else before coming back to it and forcing myself to read the rest of the story. The rules of grammar were made to be broken, yes, but before you break something you have to know how to build it in the first place, and how to put it back together again. The other errors I came across in the text smacked of carelessness, rather than mistakes made in transferral or deliberate experiments, so I feel justified in mentioning them here. Amongst them:

- I find it hard to imagine a situation in which a "tunnel ... beckons... into", or "jewels... turn and twist (and) move sinuously like snakes".

- Sentences are only connected by commas under the hands of lazy writers. (I'm as guilty of this as anyone; I'll admit it.) Look at the first sentence again, or check out, "Her right hand moves to touch the surface, she sees painted nails..." (And there are more.)

- When they pulled the heavy curtains... and let them fall behind them..." Clumsy. Which "them" relates to "they"?

Now, I know I'm going to be slammed for being hyper- and hypo-critical, but you can't pick and choose grammatical styles, especially not if intrudes on the flow of the story. If you're going to flex the rules, go ahead and do so by all means, but make sure you get it wrong *right*. All in all, though, I ended up liking the story. Nice, "gentle" twist that I hadn't anticipated. Moving prose and well-drawn characters. Poignant, one might even say.

THE TREE is last on my fiction-list. Loads of flexing in this one (but it works this time, or is at least consistent). Didn't like it, though. Sorry. Would anyone like to tell me what it was about?

Artwork varied from excellent (Szekeres, Ranson) to "how can I put this without hurting anybody's feelings?" (Lempert). The only thing I didn't like about the cover was its pus-snot-green colour. (The ad on the back was interesting; bit of an early bid, isn't it, to hold the WorldCon in 6661 AD?)

Enjoyed Harry Andruschak's reminiscences of Viking Lander One. This, plus the discussions of DNA and language and the evolution of consciousness, raises the collective pool of R&R above that of cheap verbal shots at each other. (But nothing beats the latter for sheer entertainment.)

As for naming pets and/or children after favourite sf characters, I fail to find this unusual. I have a similar fetish for naming pets after people who have worked for or are related in some way to the musician Frank Zappa. (Thus far, I have had cats named Frankie, Zappa, Diva (Zappa), Chester (Thompson), and Ruth (Underwood), a budgie called George (Duke), a stuffed bear called (Terry)

Bozzio, and two canaries both called Dweezil. I dream of one day having a pet rock named Billy the Mountain. And, deviating only slightly, I once had a pair of goldfish that went by the name Pete & Kate (Gabriel and Bush respectively.) It would seem to be a natural instinct to name loved ones, be they animal or human-animal, after other loved ones, real or unreal. (Are there any "Bilbo"s out there, I wonder?)

I am one who does not object to seeing my address printed in R&R. It has, so far, had no detrimental effects on my well-being -- quite the opposite, in fact. A couple of months back, I received flyers from TAL Publications (as did a few others, I think). They got my address from THE MENTOR. I now have a story on the short-list for their anthology BIZARRE SEX & OTHER CRIMES OF PASSION.

Incidentally, the blues can be in any key, although most commonly in E. It's the progression that makes a blues song, not its tonic chord. B is unusual (G might be the next most common) but is far from forbidden.

Lastly, apart from the LocCol, the other regular feature of THE MENTOR is one far less obvious. I refer to, of course, the erratic instances of "creative spelling", eg coup/coupe, humanoid/humanist, etc. I guess that might be one of the reasons why THE MENTOR has not gone completely small press...

P.S. For those animal libbers Out There who might be concerned about the shocking mortality-rate of my feline friends, I can offer no reassurance. Ruth is the only one still living. But I refuse to acknowledge that this has anything to do with their names. Frank Zappa is not the ogre he appears, and might even be construed as being a media fan. (Two songs in particular, THE RADIO IS BROKEN and CHEEPNIS, are tributes to his love of B-grade horror and sf films.) So there. (8.5.92)

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

Another good article from Andrew Darlington. Keep 'em coming. In the list of Collectable "Juvenile" SF there was only two Heinlein books mentioned, whereas I seem to recall a lot more coming from Heinlein's pen around that era. Is this right or does my memory deceive me? Bill Congreve's review of THE STAND was also a good read. Never been a King fan, but have for a number of years had all good intentions of reading this particular book. This article might just be the impetus I need to go out and finally do it. And the "preferred" version phenomena is not restricted to books. There is a lot of films being reissued at the moment with additional footage reinserted (most notable being THE SHINING, ALIENS and BLADE RUNNER. Nice to finally get to see & read these things the way they were intended.

All short "n" sharp fiction this issue, with the best coming from Blair Hunt. My only complaint with this was the abundance of misplaced semi-colons, as in: He slid away along the seat; "That's all right..." A full stop is more appropriate here. And: His voice came from the doorway; "Give me any trouble..." This semi-colon should be replaced with a colon or a comma (I believe that the

colon is the correct punctuation, though the comma is acceptable with most editors). This comes from my own readings on punctuation, but if it is wrong I welcome correction. (Peter Booth: you pride yourself on grammar so perhaps you'd like to shed some light here.)

Sean Williams: a few professional sales, WOTF finalist, placing in a couple of anthologies... Guess I got in just in time.

And what about EIDOLON winning best fanzine? What a bloody joke. I mean, its an excellent zine - but a fanzine?? Sort of endorses all the negative comments I've read over the last couple of years concerning the awards. Doesn't it just give you the dits?

The bulk of this issue was taken up with R&R stuff, which was good. Many thanks to all who offered comments (both good and bad) to my ENCOUNTER story. Of the comments, two require a response. Pamela Boal suggests that my character of Susan cannot be a very successful writer if she cannot write a more vibrant companion for herself; to which I concur. Though it must be said in Susan's defence that she was somewhat restricted by her own creator's limitations as a writer. I might also add, however, that "thingy" is in the eye of the "whatsy". Glen Chapman was rather vocal with his condemnation of my piece, saying it "stank" and "sucked" in a single sentence. So while I go and look for a razor (to have a shave) why don't you go and find yourself a book on punctuation (and have a read). (8.5.92).

MICHAEL HAILSTONE, PO Box 15, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vic 3005.

Are you aware, that Alan Stewart's poem, MISSED IT BY... MUCH, was originally published in THE MATALAN RAVE 18? You published it agen in THE MENTOR 72. I don't mind your republishing it, but I would have appreciated your giving credit for the earlier pubbing. I understand that this is the normal thing to do, or at least what you normally do.

[Sorry, consider it done now. - Ron.]

I am wondering whether your intend to use the trip report I sent you a few months ago. I must own, that, if you don't, I am not very interested in publishing it myself or elsewhere, as I really sent it to you as a kind of comment on your trip, since it is a tale of what I was doing at the same time.

[Yes, as I said in the letter I sent you, I do intend to publish it (see this issue), but not too close to my original trip report. Such reports don't go too well in large doses. - Ron.]

There isn't a great deal of work to do on the next MATALAN RAVE to get it redy to go to press, but somehow I fail to raise the energy and will and make the time. The reasons for this are rather beried in my subconscious, but I'd say one of the reasons is discouragement at no longer hearing from quite a few folk who used to be regular correspondents. One of these is Don Boyd, so it is a plesant surprise to see him in your letter column, as I thought he hadn't been on your mailing

list for years. But it's specially good to know that he's still interested in seeing another rave. (10.5.92)

RACHEL MCGRATH-KERR, 2 High St, Evandale St, Tasmania 7212.

At last! A real typewriter that doesn't fly into a panic when I type too fast. My boss has lent me an Olivetta Lettera 32, so that you can decipher my typing (typos and all) instead of my (thoroughly delightful and original) handwriting.

I'm now working as a sort of cook/companion/au pair instead of a mother's help. I'd rather hoped for great personal re-assessment and philosophical breakthroughs this year, in taking on a job with fewer hours and less stress. Dream on! Part of that precious time has been taken up with television watching, something which had become a luxury when marking exams.

Much to my surprise, I've found that I like the THUNDERBIRDS. It takes practice to ignore the strings and just enjoy it for what it is. THUNDERBIRD 2 has me puzzled - I can't work out what such a cool bunch of dudes would want to be associated with a flying green woodlouse.

QUANTUM LEAP has gone down well. Well, that was, until the novelty wore off and I started picking holes in the plot, dialogue, and so on. There's obviously a fair amount of the series that I've missed out on, too. I still don't know how "our hero" got into time-hopping in such a major fashion in the first place. Any help?

Big grumble: the snooker championships have pinched DR WHO's screening time. Yeah, I know they're repeats, and maybe not the ones that I would have necessarily chosen. Nevertheless, something that has survived 27 seasons must have something going for it, and I still don't know exactly why the BBC isn't making any more at the moment.

My mind's wandering again. I've got the TV on again because it's a programme on the Eurovision Song Contest. The last time I watched it was in 1986, and I suspect they've regurgitated many of the old songs. Little novelty here, just standard early 80's (or earlier) chord progressions, and excessively brief phrases. Actually, by comparison, the British entry is quite good.

One thing that I'm particularly enjoying is that I have access to a good number of science fiction/fantasy books at the local libraries, and, moreover, the time to actually read them. I have been momentarily side-tracked by Ellis Peters' Brother Cadfael series. One of the things that has deterred a formerly intrepid fantasy reader is the fact that many fantasy books are in trilogies or worse. It can be extremely frustrating to find the other books in the series in a public library, even using the reservation system. Obtaining them from a non-specialist bookshop can similarly bring tears to the eyes, and, depending upon the shop, an additional hefty sum for wasting their valuable time with "minority" books. Waiting for the sequel can, for the dedicated, be nailbitingly tense. I had read the first three books of Julian May's SAGA OF THE EXILES only about three weeks before the fourth was released in Australia, so I only had a short wait. Those

who had been waiting much, much longer had the joy of bringing the last book to school as a triumphant trophy.

(4/5/92)

JOHN TIPPER, PO Box 487, Strathfield NSW 2135.

Another excellent article from Andrew Darlington; in fact the most enjoyable read in TM for many years. John's ten space books sat on my shelves until quite recently. In a moment of madness I sold the last seen to a desperate collector who had pleaded with me to part with them for five years. Readers interested in knowing more about John's writings might be interested in subscribing to BIGGLES & CO, an English fanzine which comes out quarterly. I also remember certain events in these stories with crystal clarity. I first read NOW TO THE STARS, the third in the series, and it took me a number of years to pick up the first two books. At that period in the mid-60s, I could read these superbly crafted tales again and again. I used to alternate with Arthur C. Clarke, Heinlein and of course, E.C. Elliot's KEMLO. The latter were enjoyed - almost equally with the John's tales. But the premise that Kemlo and Co could exist in space (requiring special equipment when visiting Earth) was a little over the top!

What made the Kemlo tales was the superb artwork, beautifully presented by Bruce Cornwall. ZONES OF SILENCE, which sits before me as I type, is the Best of the best. His work was far better than Stead's generally dismal efforts in John's books, which had to stand on their content.

One title you didn't mention, Andrew, is PRISONERS OF SATURN, by Donald Suddaby, illustrated by Harold Jones. This fantasy, first published in 1957 by The Bodley Head, creates "an undreamed of world which will long linger in memory". A jacket blurb which tells the truth for once. Cambridge musician Mark Travis leaves Cherry Hinton one morning on a joint Russian/US space vehicle. Poetic, memorable, even moving, find yourself a copy and enjoy the 50s flavour with a twist of something unusual.

Moving on to other contents in ish #74... another outstanding cover illo from Peggy, a brilliantly sharp, short, short story from Blair Hunt. No pretensions, no waffling on, no profound statements. Loved it! And Buck Coulson's article - enjoyable and informative. Going great but what's this? THE JEWELLED MIRROR. Ho, hum... Bill Congreve's article on THE STAND was very interesting. I'm a recent King convert, having read his Bachman novels only recently. Lack of spare time prevents my delving into this door-stopper.

Onto the letters where I find good old Peter Brodie in a "feel-good" mood. Keep on with the FP list Pete - and stuff the critics. I'll second Shane's remarks regarding Sean Williams' writing talents. One of our best, judging by his work in EOD Magazine.

Glen, you're seeing things - that was no ordinary man in goggles you thought you saw in the final climactic scene in FORBIDDEN PLANET - it was Peter Brodie giving you two fingers, old chap!

Young Michael from Canada does his best to amuse readers. I'm sure the cover artist (TM 72) has breathed a sigh of relief upon reading your remarks. It's all in the eye (if one possesses same) of the beholder. You've done well to get the behind-the-scenes trip story out of Ron, though. Ahh, self-abuse... one of the more pleasurable pursuits available to all. (21/5/92)

MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy, Argentina.

THE MENTOR 73 just came. Another startling cover - from gently-dreamy covers you switch to startling realism. The whole gamut of moods! Very effective.

Your Russian friends sound so loveable. But, Lord, are their dream-images so nightmarish? (Andre K's art!)

Oh, dear! Poor Chris Masters! A Satanist, is he? And wants to start a Horror Club! (Thrills at second hand?) If he wants to be a vampire he should cut down on over-eating and wait for pretty girls to come along dying to be scared. Does he wear fangs, in the dark?

Again, I loved you selection of stories.

Brent Lillie writes very well.

Tell Brian I'm delighted to learn our DNA is 99.5% like chimps' etc. I *never* said I believed in a literal Adam and Eve, did I? But I still think Space visitors may have messed around with human genetic evolution long ago. (6/5/92)

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

Getting fancy with your overseas shipping, I see; sealed in plastic, no less. Ah, for the good old days when a paper bag was sufficient and we didn't worry about how many trees had been cut down to make the bag.

[Actually, the reason I use plastic bags is that they are much more resistant to tearing. And they cost about 3c each, while envelopes cost about 3 times that. - Ron.]

Darlington's article on Captain W.E. Johns was very interesting, since I'd never heard of the author before. The only juvenile science fiction I read in the early days was by Carl H. Claudy, and was short stories rather than novels; Claudy did some novels, but I never saw copies of any of them. I do have a paperback, *FIRST ON THE MOON*, by Hugh Walters, but I don't think I ever finished it. Of course, by 1950 I was reading adult science fiction, and I was an adult. Oddly enough, one of Claudy's novels was also titled *RETURN TO MARS*; the first instalment of it was in *AMERICAN BOY* magazine, but my subscription lapsed, and by then I wasn't reading serials until I had all the parts at hand. If I'd been the right age, I think I'd have liked Johns.

[Johns is, of course, more famous for his Biggles books, of which he had 44 titles in print by 1955. His sf was another branch of his writing which has received less attention. - Ron.]

My own verse in the last couple of months has been historical rather than fantastic. Juanita and Michael Longcor had a (paid) concert for the Indiana Historical

Society, and I did the lyrics for a couple of songs for Juanita. One about Indiana author and naturalist Gene Stratten-Porter, and one about the Reno Brothers, who were the first American train robbers. They seemed to be appreciated. I liked *PRECIOUS*, by Wayne Roberts; it's nicely gory.

The magnetic window-cleaners Steve Sneyd mentioned sound like the sort of gimmicks that are sold for awhile, and eventually, when the public discovers they don't work, are dropped from the mail-order catalogs.

There's a simple answer to John Haines' comments about needing to live in the house instead of store stuff in it; get a bigger house. Juanita and I started out life in a slightly crowded 3-room apartment, but now we have a slightly crowded 10-room house, and if it becomes overly full, there's always the barn...

I remember Phil Harbottle, though not all that favorably; we published the first version of his material on James Russell Fern, and remarkably dull reading it was. I can't say I found Harbottle himself all that scintillating as a correspondent.

Some of those pulp magazine ads really worked. I answered one from International Correspondence Schools, took their course in Electrical Engineering, and on the strength of it got a job as a draftsman (draughtsman, Terry) for Honeywell, which lasted until I was promoted to technical writer.

I expect Suzette Haden Elgin's church is genuine enough, and it certainly isn't being promoted; I'd never heard of it before, and we correspond with Suzette off and on. I suppose she might have mentioned it, but she didn't persist when I ignored the mention - *if one was ever made.*

I don't know if Chris Masters considers me one of the SAGPOFS - I certainly don't consider myself one - but if he does, I'll warn him that a chain saw doesn't stack up well against a .357 Magnum. (I was using a rented chain saw yesterday, cutting up a maple tree that went down in an ice storm. From that and one other experience with them, I'd say they're almost as hard on the user as they are on whatever one is cutting... My arms were still vibrating for several hours after I took the saw back to the rental agency, and I slept most of today.)

What annoyed me about the first version of King's *THE STAND* was that the early pages were totally believable and I got involved with the characters, and then in the middle of the book he started repeating himself. He quite often does this; *CHRISTINE* is a fine example. The same idea presented in slightly different ways so the stupidest idiot in the readership gets the idea. Meanwhile, I get bored. I finished *CHRISTINE*, but the monotony of *THE STAND* began with too many pages left to go, and I wasn't about to wade through them. I didn't even try the enlarged version, since the original had been much too long. (10/5/92)

YVONNE ROUSSEAU, PO Box 3086, Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000

Like so many of your other loccers, I've immensely enjoyed every moment of your Volgacon trip

report. And in THE MENTOR 74 I was especially interested by Andrew Darlington's "Captain W. E. Johns and the Kings of Space". Last year I found in a thrift shop one of the books that Andrew discusses, THE QUEST FOR THE PERFECT PLANET (1961), and was much struck by two passages. In the first, Professor Lucius Brane recalls a disappointing imperfect planet: "Progress, or even a comfortable existence, would not be possible under the shadow of impending disaster. When we landed on that charming little planet which we named Arcadia we thought it perfect. So it was - then. When, on a later occasion, we returned, we discovered why there was no one there. Its long elliptical orbit periodically took it so close to the sun that all life, animal and vegetable, had been scorched to death. The fact that this only happened at intervals of many, perhaps hundreds of years, made no difference. There could be no future on such a world, no incentive to do anything."

Evolution moves very slowly, so why (I wish I could ask Johns) are there ever any animals on this planet? (One can just believe that there might be vegetation of types like eucalypts and bracken, which begin new growth after bushfires.)

In the second surprising passage, the Professor is on the spaceship TAVONA, hearing about other planets from some old friends who come from other regions of the galaxy. He knows that these friends have never exchanged information with anyone on Earth outside his own small circle. Yet, when they mention a "solar system which we call Zora", the Professor objects: "I can't recall hearing on Earth of a constellation called Zora" - whereupon he is reassured that the reason for this is that the system's sun died, and thus the planets are invisible from Earth.

Setting aside the difference between a constellation and a solar system, it is clear that the Professor would not have approved of the way the VOYAGER makes allowances for natives Out There who cannot be bothered to learn that there is one correct name for everything: the one that the British use, revealed to them by God.

Andrew's article also answered a question I have asked myself from time to time for many years; who wrote the "Kemlo" books? KEMLO AND THE SKY HORSE was lent to me when I was in primary school, and I remember it as having a rather entrancing cover-illustration, with a rocket-powered merry-go-round kind of horse being ridden through space by young Kemlo. (18.5.92)

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

Guilt strikes me again. I really should write more often, but I have the standard length list of excuses which would push this letter into the next postage bracket and then I'd never get around to posting it.

As I read Blair Hunt's FUGITIVE, I thought I'd fallen into a time-warp. People don't really write stories like that any more do they? The whole planet is saved from war and the anonymous hero looks like getting the equally anonymous girl. Then I got a few minor clues

that the story might indeed be more modern. Back when they were still writing stories like that, they knew when to include an apostrophe in the contraction "it's". Back then they would have segregated their metaphors better than those in "A white pencil of rocket fire from a(sic) ascending craft flickered again the black of the night sky." Okay, I'm being picky, but I can't see the point in writing this sort of story, except as a copybook exercise. Science fiction has come so much further than this. Why look back?

Maria-Louise really needs to go back to a writing class to get a few things sorted out. Certainly she is descriptive, but good descriptive writing consists of more than simply throwing phrases together. Tense is also a rather basic skill, and one that requires consistency. Remembering what your character is wearing also helps. Sigh - yet another nameless character.

Enjoyed Andrew Darlington's piece, despite the fact that the only one of the books I'd read was KEMLO AND THE SPACE INVADERS. Despite an early interest in science fiction, I think I went straight from THE EAGLE and BOYS' WORLD to Crispin's BEST SF collections.

Damn. Janet Cooper has a nameless character. (Don't any of the characters in THE MENTOR have fathers?) She seems to be suffering from terminal arborophilia too. A piece that short really cannot carry the weight of that many "the tree"s.

Despite my critical comments, I trust you'll allow me to throw my full support behind the Faulconbridge in 1999 bid. If Australia has to bid for another Worldcon then that's the sort of bid I can happily support. (31/5/92)

BILL CONGREVE, 1/26 Central Ave, Westmead, NSW 2145.

Received TM 74 the other day. Sorry to see it has become a little shorter. Not sure the cover is up to recent standard. Very interested to read of the worldcon bid for Sydney in 1991. Thanks for publishing my review of THE STAND. There is one paragraph there I kind of wish I'd cut out, but I wrote it, so I've gotta stand by it. As I've never been a female sociology student I don't know how offensive it is. If I had been writing from a female student's perspective I would probably have mentioned something about hot stoves, clotheslines, and baby making machines. They're all cliches, but cliches only exist because we are all so busy creating the conditions their words describe. I'm looking forward to any comments in the reader's column this issue.

I would normally much rather let my stories stand on their own two feet, but there has been some comment on my story, TWELVE BAR ACCESS, in the last couple of issues. Generally the comments have been informative. The biggest complaint seems to be that it is a little obscure. I plead guilty. Cyberpunk, and the entire virtual reality scene, if described accurately, is so bloody obscure only those who've played those games in their own mind, or who have experienced some kind of sensory deprivation,

because that is the void virtually reality fills, will understand the concept.

So readers either like cyberpunk, or they don't. No problem. Some people wondered at the significance of the busker. As stated in the story, he is a friend of Dor's son. He is present for exactly the same reasons, but he represents a value system so alien to Dor that she can't understand him, hence the aggression. However, he watches Dor's back while she is helpless with her consciousness exploring the space station's computer networks. Moreover, he has succeeded in this duty, witness the extra coin earned from a passer-by. These things are implicit in the story, but are perhaps too subtle.

To answer John Haines from Warrington, Dor is feline because she has deliberately custom tailored her body to look that way. Otherwise she is fully human. This is explicitly stated, I don't know why you have a problem with it. The busker is human for the same reason most human beings are human. We got born that way. As for being a hippy? He is what he choses to be. I could have made him a yuppie accountant from Sheperd's Bush, but then he would have had no place in my story would he? Do you always question authors on the characterisations they invent? It is part of the story. Finally, blues can be played in any key signature the musician choses. The most common is G-major. My guitarist friends assure me that A is also popular.

Anyhow, I'm glad Ron published the story.

GRAI HUGHES, Blaxland, NSW.

A reflexive opening, (!). Curious that mathematics was once also philosophy, its symbols necessarily conjoined by "meaning" with language (that proposed to be descriptive of "reality") and prior to that, a mathematical arcanology (a metaphoric language that proposes to connect to mystery). Echoes of these (for most are self-continuing in material and discursive; nexus: culture and semiotics (broad pattern repliprogressions at relativistic rates, cultural constructs, physical practices of sciences, Cabal, particular discourse that are entities unto themselves.

A reflexivity is the turning back on itself, the infinity symbol, the mobius strip, the Dynamic Ribbon (Cf: Coca Cola) similar but proposing a directed and rather iron control: the \$. And mystery; the Christian fish.

(Just before I proceed to my actual point of reflexion (the R&R Department) I'm running a campaign to establish a Dynamic Democracy (logo: Cf; Coca Cola) via the use of a Computer Mediated Comm. System in the Students Union (trying to write poetry in that most resistant medium, culture) at the U where I delve into such matters.

(Here's to the jolting metaphoric conceptualization, the attack and creation on mystery.)

An interesting conceptual artheology of Forbidden Planet, hey Brodie, all SF is revolutionary, for it proposes what isn't, a metaphoric relation: thus poetry.

Regarding "Ur" tongues. The similarities of different languages, from which Indo-European is

theoretically retroplotted, it seems to me, is a result of similarities of grammatical overcoding, the imperialist domination and conflict when cultures [*unreadable - Ron.*]. Anthropomorphic familial coding of the relation of language to language (Levi-Strauss perhaps?) demonstrates only a metaphoric, constructed relation.

Terry Jeeves take your medicine, "MIRRORS AND SLIVERS was unadulterated codswallop in my book." (THE MENTOR 74) Your book must be rather boring, but then, you must know how to read it.

Bill Congreve's review of Stephen King's(TM) THE STAND tends to confirm my view of King as cliché; in plot, theme, and detail. Saves me reading it.

Haven't submitted very widely as yet, but thanks to Ron's OUT OF OZ fannishing happenings found motivation to sub MIRRORS AND SLIVERS to the Canberra SF Society. (Under a fictionalized name of course. Steven Thorn. The full moniker: Steven Iron Stone Thorn.)

On the fiction in 74. A moment while I sharpen my instruments. Blair Hunt, FUGITIVE. Surely this is parody, otherwise it is beyond redemption. Bond and Star Wars meets Mills and Boon, with little to say beyond expressing the patriarchal power over women (necessarily constructed as beautiful). I think I've seen the movie. The dialogue is drivel "We have to let the President know." Mythical and simplistic, cliché is a subtle mode of US imperialism.

Read some fiction Buck (or write some) its good for the soul.

Maria-Louise Stephens, THE JEWELLED MIRROR. Fatalistic, but a gentle and beautiful piece.

Never read juvenile SF when I was one, and the 50s stuff sounds atrocious.

Janet Cooper, THE TREE. Whatever it is its beyond my reckoning.

Poetry doesn't sit well when pertaining to fantastic genres: the metaphoric is displaced, positioned in a further metaphoric order. The referent veiled, rather than revealing. Wayne Edwards pieces held my scattered attentions momentarily... (23.5.92)

LORRAINE CORMACK, PO Box 983, Woden, ACT 2606.

I want to say thank you to all the poets who responded to my letters - my friend is very appreciative of your permission to use your poems. If I get any feedback I'll pass it on to you.

I liked the cover of TM 74. It had a kind of charming simplicity which more than allowed it to hold its' own with the beautiful, lavish color covers we've been treated to recently. And because of its' simplicity, it didn't need that kind of production anyway.

I guess I'll just start at the beginning and comment my way through. Nothing struck me enough to stand out as the first thing I need to comment on.

FUGITIVE struck me as very silly. The idea could have been used as a base for a good story, but this - while not actively bad - isn't good, either. The dialogue needs work. The plot needs more depth - tell use

something about the president so we can imagine realistic motives for his wanting to start a war. (In fact, is this really what he wants to do?) Lots of other options here. Flesh out the relationship between the lawyer and the thief. And was the little radio pod really intended only to let the nasty people think they'd killed our heroes? Also, there was no tension in any of the dramatic moments.

Blair barely glanced off the surface of the possibilities in FUGITIVE. Picking up on only *one* of them would have made for a vastly better story - picking up on several could have been fascinating. Oh yes, and I'd ditch the unnecessary and boring first sentence.

But, not to be totally negative, the prose was clean and clear, and the story didn't get cluttered with unnecessary detail. (It's just that Blair went overboard.) Apart from the first sentence, I enjoyed the first section - it was easy to picture those scenes clearly.

As usual, Buck Coulson was fascinating in his detail. Although I often want to stick paragraph breaks in some of the longer parts.

And that was a lovely illustration at the bottom of his column - appropriately, beautifully flowing.

THE JEWELLED MIRROR, on the other hand, left a bit of mystery but worked well nevertheless. Anyway, I enjoyed it. Only two smallish quibbles - the first section gives the impression that it's from the point of view of the girl. So in the fifth para, when it says "This is her first visit", it jars. It doesn't sound like her knowledge. And if it is, where does she get it? It doesn't fit there, and I don't think it's really needed for any other part of the story.

The other is that, at the end, the boatman speaks in a strange language and the girl responds and then translates. That's awkward too. I don't think the "foreign" language is necessary. Already, the strong sense of place and atmosphere have removed us from our world - we don't need more. It seems a very false attempt to take us somewhere else.

Andrew Darlington's article was okay. I stopped reading halfway through. It was reasonably interesting, but not enough to keep my attention for that long, unless his style of writing was much more lively than it was. And I'm sure you could write a very lively article, giving how funny some of the early science fiction sounds now.

I quite liked THE TREE. Although it could have been longer, dwelling on the fear of the children, I think the length was quite well judged. A neat little piece.

I hated the illo on page 39.

Although I don't read Stephen King, I found Bill Congreve's discussion of THE STAND rather interesting. Except I don't understand how the second paragraph under section 3 connected to *anything*. It didn't seem to belong in this article at all. You could cut it out and not even notice it was missing. Apart from that, the rest of the article was quite intelligent while that sounded rather like a juvenile fifteen year old boy.

I heard Terry Pratchett (DISCWORLD) speak recently. Although I always enjoy his novels, I think he's an even funnier speaker than writer. I suppose it helps to

have an audience of adoring fans, but he was good. (9.6.92)

[I met Terry Pratchett at a book launch in Sydney - he was pretty quiet there. - Ron.]

Dear sir,

Although presented in a light hearted fashion, Sean Williams' "How To Be An SF Writer" in TM #73 contained a fair helping of useful advice. In his article he suggested that some editors may consider making it compulsory to enclose a stamped, self-addressed rejection form with unsolicited manuscripts.

This idea may not be all that far fetched; some editors give the impression that they are doing writers a big favour by deigning to read their work. Many actually seem eager to "stick it up" any writer with the gall to submit something less than a sure-fire best seller.

The time has come for editors and writers to give a little each way. If writers were to supply s.s.a.r.f.s, would it be asking too much for editors to list honest reasons for rejection? To be fair, writers should be given a say in the drafting of such a document.

After studying several check-lists, rejection forms, the following reasons for rejection were gleaned by carefully reading between the lines.

GENERAL PURPOSE STAMPED SELF ADDRESSED REJECTION FORM

Publisher's name:
Postal address:postcode.....
Standard promotional spiel:

Dear.....(writer's name)

Your submission was deemed unsuitable for publication for the following reason/s.

It needs cuts from beginning/middle/end: preferably all three.

Story concept and plot does not offer an old slant on new ideas.

Editor's dog/spouse/mother-in-law did not like the story.

Editor's dog/spouse/mother-in-law liked the story. Editor was too tired and emotional to care if it was read.

The editor hates successful writers.

The editor's boss hates the editor.

The editor had a psychiatric appointment.

Spelling or grammar was better than our readers expect.

Characters and dialogue were too believable.

Gay, Land-rights stories about whales are no longer popular.

Our paper consumption cutback precludes your story from publication at this time.

The editor spilled coffee on it before the cleaning staff could read it.

We require more extra-galactic, chainsaw-wielding, dragon killer stories with an environmental message.

Please insert an excuse of your own choice
.....
.....

Thank you for sending your story to us. Our rejection should not be considered a reflection of its literary merit, but upon your ability as a writer.

Further comment:
.....signed

We apologise for the postage-paid, self-addressed check-list format. So long as you are paying, this is a situation that we have no intention of altering. This form should accompany all future submissions. If its use makes you feel uncomfortable, we suggest that it be typed or copied onto softer, more absorbent paper.

(JIM VERRAN, 12 Ellis st, Port Noarlunga, S.A. 5167. - 24.5.92)

JOY BUCHANAN, Lot 1093 Andromeda Dr, Cranebrook, NSW 2749.

This cover (TM 74) is a bit of a letdown after THE MENTOR 73, but not too bad. All I can say about Peggy Ranson is more, more.

I enjoyed Blair Hunt's story THE FUGITIVE though I wish it was a little longer. Blair could you solve a argument between Ron and me. I say you are female, Ron says the way you spell your name is male. Could you please let us know.

Buck Coulson's article about the World science fiction convention was very good, I wish I had the money to go to some of those big ones. It was very entertaining - you and Juanita sound like you had a great time.

Maria-Louise Stephens' THE JEWELLED MIRROR was another good story, but I felt it was a little rushed at the end.

The article by Andrew Darlington brings back many memories to me. I was 14 when I was given Heinlein's book RED PLANET and I've been hooked on SF ever since. It's amazing just how many of the books mentioned I've read.

THE TREE by Janet Fox was amusing, but I couldn't work out what actually got blown away. Sorry, did I miss something?

Bill Congreve's IN DEPTH was good, but THE STAND is definitely not my type of book.

I agree with Peter Brodie, I also hate SF poetry - each to their own I suppose. I feel I've a very lucky person as I've only moved to my new home a couple of months ago and I feel very "at home" living in a street called Andromeda. Anyone out there with a good, SF street name like mine? (17.6.92)

[It is all well to have a road with an sf name, but just you try to find it on a dark night when it is too new to have on the road map you have. I had to check it out in the daylight so I could find it at night. - Ron.]

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

My awful handwriting to blame on that pc - editor of TIME FRAMES Terry, not Petty, Garey - wd not want her to think I was aiming a veiled insult of some sort!

THE MENTOR 74 arrived today - proved a very pleasant distraction from doing things I ought to do/have done. This is a bit of an "interim" response .. in particular, Rachel McGrath-Kerr's very interesting question (nice to have a change from "Why do you write SF poetry?") deserves a succinct but reasoned reply - unfortunately in some ways it's a question which fits that paraphrase of Auden, "to ask the hard questions is easy, to give the easy answers is hard", and rather than a top-of-the-head inadequate response, will let it simmer a little while.

Responding to other content in roughly sequential order - FUGITIVE a nice action tale, tho bits maybe a little too telegraphic - Stockholm Syndrome set in a bit abruptly, for example, to my taste.

Buck Coulson's piece enjoyable as usual (amazed to know there are still UNCLE fans - can't even think how many years since it was shown over here, maybe it still gets repeats Stateside?). I've just once had the experience, at a poetry reading, of having spots(light) straight in face, was godawful trying to see the words I was reading - moral I suppose being to be more professional and memorise things. His mention (Buck's) of an onset of hugging - I've noticed cases of this phenomenon recently among (non-SF) people here, I assumed it was something to do with more contact with less inhibited Europeans, but if it's happening in America also can't be that. Perhaps release of "writer's cut" of STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND is the hidden cause, all that hugging of water-brethren.

THE JEWELLED MIRROR is delicately and colourfully written - I found it, tho, impossible to relate to the heroine or her dilemma, but that is an empathic fault on my part I'm sure. (Egyptian archer shooting the moon a'wk great, by the way, such a simple visual bit of lateral thinking and works immaculately... only other art that tempts me to comment this time is the Lempert full-pager, which for reasons I can't work out I find oddly irritating - I'm sure the Hall of Mirrors' distortion effects are deliberate, the apparent artlessness the result of skill - somehow seem to be saying "ha, fooled you" in a knowing sort of way, perhaps that the rub.)

Andrew Darlington yet again succeeds in making fascinating reading out of accounts of books I've never read, having got into SF via the Dan Dare/Heinlein route... I join with the loccers who call for more of these articles wholeheartedly, (I hope he covers Badger Books sometime, those I *did* read, cheap "brainwipe fodder" as a student - "come back Pel Torro, as is forgiven!").

THE TREE, again, I didn't relate to, smoothly written but "hookless" to me, tho mood fantasy isn't really my taste anyhow.

The poetry I'll react to when trying to answer Rachel's question.

Terry Jeeves' brings back fond memories of the weird "smalls" .. two I remember vividly from the '50s, as do others of my acquaintance, are the X-Ray Specs (wonder how many teeny wd-be voyeurs fell for them?) and the incredible SEEBACKASCOPE, which supposedly let you see behind you, look around corners, etc - must've been a lot of folk walked straight into lamp-posts (or large indignant coppers) trying to use that (sadly, I never had the money for one - my pocket money was going on stamps and second-hand p'backs).

Re Mae Strelkov's mention of fz language - odd words of "Fannish" cd move from being in group lingua franca to wider creolisation - eg some words can be used outside fandom .. I certainly use *loc* and *ish* for convenience in writing to "mainstream" little mags, and no one has queried meaning, so must be readably graspable even by "mundanes", others, including *gafiate*, do fill a gap in the language" so wd naturalise well outside fandom, certainly no odder than other "neologisms" which have caught on. On the other hand, things like *typer*, *pocstard*, *ghu*, are either clumsy or pointlessly daft in any other context than fandom (and in some ways within it) so cdn't de-ghettoise.

Couple of other things in locs I'm tempted to react to, but space is dwindling.. for example, Boyd's comment "Early in SF definite walls were put up to say "No fantasy here... no spooks or magic" is I think an oversimplification, quite apart from the question of what he means by "early", and of course the fact that for a long time "fantasy" was an umbrella word which covered SF as well. For example, the US genre studies mag FANTASY COMMENTATOR covers mainly SF, because its title dates from the 40s.. similarly A.C. Clarke, writing in '38 of the need for a poetry of SF, titled his article THE FANTASTIC MUSE - now, cunningly, I insert the plug - viz said NOVAE TERRAE article, along with an ACC poem of 1939, have now been reprinted as a chapbook to mark ACC's 75th birthday - with illos refurbished from his own '30s originals by Harry Turner - by my Hilltop Press. (25.6.92)

JOHN FRANCIS HAINES, 5 Cross Farm, Station Rd., Padgate, Warrington WA2 0QD, UK.

Many thanks for TM 74. Best story this issue has to be THE JEWELLED MIRROR, though it is unfortunate that the very first sentence should contain a jarring mistake in tense: "The streets *were* quiet, only the dust rises in puffs when her sandles kick a stone." (My emphasis): That apart, it's a super little story, very atmospheric, packing an enormous amount of material into a small frame.

Once again, Andy Darlington has done his homework well, managing to present a balanced, yet affectionate, overview of an important period in British SF. I'm afraid I was a KEMLO fan many years ago... not quite sure why the (now) obvious inconsistencies didn't seem to be a problem at the time....

I liked MOLOTOV best of the poems - I'm glad you've kept the "mini-anthology" format for them, rather

than just squeezing them into odd corners as so many mags do. The coloured paper helps give the poetry section a special feel too.

I've only read one King novel - THE SHINING, and though I enjoyed it, I've always been put off by the sheer size of most of his works - life's just too damn short to spend it wading through such huge tomes: I'm sure Bill Congreve's excellent article has captured the essence of THE STAND in a minute fraction of the length taken by the original, and probably twice as enjoyably.

Your reviews are well-tempered and enthusiastic - I hope you won't hesitate to warn the readers of any turkeys you may encounter, as well as recommending the goodies. (27.6.92)

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Paul Voermans, Steven Proposch, George Ivanoff, Duncan Evans, Douglas Guilfoyle, David Tansey, Tim Jones, David Marler, Alan Stewart, Marie Louise-Stephens, Richard Young, Trent Jamieson, Sean McMullen, Mark McLeod, Sean Williams, P.J. Roberts, Chris Masters, Andrew Darlington, Don Boyd, Greg Sallis, David Fong, and Eugene Drozd.





PRAYERS TO BROKEN STONES by Dan Simmons. Headline trade pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1982-1990. 311pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This is the first collection of Dan Simmons' short stories I have read. They are mostly horror, but include fantasy and some sf.

The stories have introductions by the author and there is an Introduction to the collection by Harlan Ellison. Included are: *THE RIVER STYX RUNS UPSTREAM*; *EYES I DARE NOT MEET IN DREAMS*; *VANNI FUCCI IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN HELL*; *VEXED TO NIGHTMARE BY A ROCKING CRADLE*; *REMEMBERING SIRI*; *METASTASIS*; *THE OFFERING*; *E-TICKET TO 'NAMLAND*; *IVRSON'S PITS*; *SHAVE AND A HAIRCUT, TWO BITES*; *THE DEATH OF THE CENTAUR*; *TWO MINUTES FORTY-FIVE SECONDS* and *CARRION COMFORT*.

CARRION COMFORT and *REMEMBERING SIRI* were expanded into the novel *CARRION COMFORT* and *REMEMBERING SIRI* was incorporated into *HYPERION*. All in all they kept me reading, and lasted me several train journeys and lunchtimes. I enjoyed them.

BURYING THE SHADOW by Storm Constantine. Headline trade pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1992. 406pp. A\$24.95, H/c \$36.95. On sale now.

BURYING THE SHADOW is the first story of Constantine's I've read, though I have seen comments on his stories in overseas magazines. It was quite a pleasant surprise: I'll look out for his other novels.

The novel is about vampires, and it joins the like of modern fantasy novels featuring vampires such as Brian Stableford's *THE EMPIRE OF FEAR*. The novel takes place on Earth, but an Earth that could be the far future: an alien race has appeared and nearly succeeded in living with the human race. What sealed its fate was its practice

of drinking the blood of the humans. A great war had nearly destroyed the race and the remnants had sought Patrons, offering an extended life-span in return for somewhere to live.

Humans had a thing called the Fear which erupted in a person's mind and threatened that person's life. There grew up a group of humans who learnt to deal with this by entering the mindscape of the people concerned. All was well until the immortal eloim start to suicide. A human soulscaper is sought to try to ascertain the cause of this... Excellent work.

THE SAPPHIRE ROSE by David Eddings. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1991. 525 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Another of Eddings' series ends with this novel. This time the series is the Elenium, of which this is Book Three. There were times reading this book that it started to get tedious - I hope in Eddings' next work he tries something completely different.

That is not to say that the novel is not worth reading - the author still has his grip on the story-telling process and the reader. Herein Sparhawk, after obtaining the Bhelliom, attempts to get it back to the city his wife is enchanted in. Even if he manages to bring his wife back from her poisoned state, he must still defeat the evil God Azash and his minions. Of course, Sparhawk has his friends, most of whom are Knights of the Church, but others are also there - mostly thieves, this time around.

I like Eddings - he puts characterisation into his books and has a feel for the characters he creates. Some readers say that the stories are too slow; they may be thus, but the reason they are is that the author is putting much more into them in the way of background information and so builds up the image in the reader's mind. Though I do think that Eddings, like Donaldson did, needs a change which, in the long run, will help his readers as well as himself. Excellent quest fantasy.

ISAAC ASIMOV'S UNIVERSE ed by **Martin Greenberg**. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1990. 260pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This is volume 1 of a series set in a Universe Asimov created especially so new authors could set their stories therein and use his name to help their careers.

There are six races in that universe and the five stories feature some of them; though one alien race features more in the foreground. The stories are: **THEY HIDE, WE SEEK** by Robert Silverberg; **THE DIPLOMACY GUILD** by David Brin; **MYRYX** by Robert Sheckley; **THE BURNING SKY** by Poul Anderson and **ISLAND OF THE GODS** by Harry Turtledove.

All the stories are well crafted and worth reading. The majority have a solid science background - though Robert Sheckley's story is a good illustration that he is *not* a hard sf writer, and one wonders about the science. Not bad, though, though I would hope that the second volume would have some up and coming authors.

WINTERLONG by **Elizabeth Hand**. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1990. 440 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

I wish all the publishers would give up quoting other authors who have read the book and who rave about it. It all sounds so incestuous.

WINTERLONG is Elizabeth Hand's first novel - and going by this one, she is someone to watch. It is also a good example of women writing "soft" science stories. There were times when I thought she would veer off into fantasy, but she didn't.

The novel is set after civilisation has collapsed. The events take place in Washington, around a huge cathedral, which (presumably) is to be built in our future. There are not many political units still functioning; those that exist are pounding each other with chemical and biological weapons and sports abound. The action follows a brother and sister through the sinister landscape as they strive to attain some life for themselves and don't seem to be aware that their search is reflected in the wide world as the fight between good and evil. A thoroughly interesting novel.

SERPENT MAGE by **Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman**. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1992. 388 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Volume 4 of the Death Gate Cycle. Set in one of the four worlds the original World was sundered into - this time the water world - Haplo the Patryn comes across dragon-snakes that are attracted by people's fear and zero in on that when they attack.

Chelestra is the sea world - giant islands which circle an inner sun, surrounded by bubbles of air, which in turn are encased in water, which spreads throughout their universe. The islands have been inhabited by humans, dwarves and elves and all these are threatened by the dragon-snakes.

Weis and Hickman are well into the seven volume series with **SERPENT MAGE**, and with the upcoming last

three volumes to be full of action that will create the fate of the four worlds, it will be quite an interesting series.

FIRE SEA by **Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman**. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1991. 414 pp incl Indexes. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Volume 3 of the Death Gate Cycle is out in paperback. It is set in the world of stone, which is a world of caverns running through an area of stone, beneath which is lava.

The inhabitants of this world are dying out. The humans, elves and dwarves have disappeared, leaving the Sartan. They are a powerful people, but they too are dying out. When Haplo arrives he finds that the realms of Abarrach - Death's Gate, the Underworld and Fire and Ice, are areas that it is dangerous to venture into. He visits some of the areas where people live - Kairn Necros, Kairn Telex and the Celestial Sea, but danger is everywhere, and sometimes magic nearly fails to keep him safe.

For those who can't afford the hardcovers, the paperback versions are worth getting if you like these author's fantasies - or you can ask your library for the hardcovers.

SOUL RIDER by **Jack L. Chalker**. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (c) 1985. 374 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Book 4 of The Birth of Flux and Anchor. People with bad eyesight may have trouble with this 9 point typeface...

For those who read and liked the first three Flux books - this one is not of that series per se, but is background for it. Rather than writing indexes et cetera, Chalker wrote a novel giving more explanations for what went on. In this novel, the background is given to how the scientists discovered how to duplicate matter and how the Gates were set up, as well as giving details on how anchor was set up and colonised.

The author mentions in the Introduction that some readers could not make up their minds whether the series is fantasy or science fiction. Soul Rider is written, I think, to give a solid basis for the other three novels to be sf, or at least, science *fantasy*. And because of the small type, there is a lot in those 374 pages....

HUNTING THE GHOST DANCER by **A. A. Attanasio**. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (c) 1991. 445 pp.

There have been several sf stories set in the far past, when the last of the Neanderthals fought with the emerging Homo Sapiens. Some have been just adventure stories; some have been written better, with a deeper meaning behind them.

The Ghost Dancer of the title is the last of the Neanderthals - Baat, the giant who was still tender when he could be. He befriended Duru and the two males with her and helped them when he could. However, he was pursued by another human - Yaqut, who was determined to kill the last of Baat's species.

Attanasio writes with a flowing pen of those long-ago days - he creates the right atmosphere and really get the reader believing and involved. An enticing read.

FIREBIRD by Peter Morwood. Legend trade pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (c) 1992. 304 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

The sequel to PRINCE IVAN. Set in Russia in 1235, it continues the adventures of Ivan as he finds himself fighting against the Teutonic Knights. He also is fighting against his old enemy, the witch Baba Yaga, who is putting all she has into an attempt to bring Prince Ivan down to his knees.

Even with all this, there are other things to keep Ivan busy - the Inquisition is also helping the Knights along and there is rebellion at home. There are also shape changing wolves and the Firebird - an entity that leaves charred remnants behind it when it passes through.

I don't know what the Russians would think about this update of their history - probably laugh uproariously. Still, it is well written fantasy.

BORN TO EXILE by Phyllis Eisenstein. HarperCollins trade pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (c) 1971-8. 172 pp. A\$19.95 (h/c \$32.95). On sale now.

At least the trade pb prices are getting reasonable - both this book and the one above are listed as UK8.99 pounds each, which is about the right exchange rate.

The novel is made up of 5 short stories about Alaric, a young minstrel, who is on a quest to find his father. The stories are: Born to Exile; The Inn of the Black Swan; The Witch and the Well; The Lords of All Power; and The Castle Under the Hill. If, like me, you missed these when they were first published in the Magazine of F&SF, you will be pleasantly surprised when you read them.

Alaric has a little magic in himself. He can teleport and this is eventually how he thinks he can finally find the family that he has been searching for. He was a foundling, found naked on a hillside, with a bloody hand clutching his ankle.

IMMORTALITY INC. by Robert Sheckley. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1959. 204 pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

IMMORTALITY INC. has/is being made into a movie. Hope it turns out like BLADERUNNER did for P.K. Dick. This novel has stood up very well, even though it was written over 32 years ago.

The basic story plot is a man from the 20th Century is kidnapped into the 21st Century by a large business concern as an advertising gimmick. The world of the 21st Century is as violent as the old world of the 50s was - at least in New York. The hero, Thomas Blaine, was a junior yacht designer back before the kidnapping, and he found that in the future world he found it very hard getting a job. In a world where the Afterlife was a scientifically proven fact, and you could talk to those of the

departed who survived the death trauma, there were many other things that were new.

As I said above, this novel is still good reading - if you haven't read any of Sheckley then at \$9.95 this is an excellent buy.

STORMING THE REALITY STUDIO ed by Larry McCaffrey. Duke University Press trade pb, avail from Marketing dept, Duke Uni Press, 6697 College Station, Durham, Nth Carolina 27708, USA. (C) 1991. 383 pp incl bibliography. US\$17.95 (h/c \$49.5). Avail now.

I met Larry McCaffrey at VolgaCon in Russia last year. His talk there had the same title as this book. In the talk he condensed somewhat the article he leads off this volume with. I confess that at Volgacon, when he started talking of "Postmodernism" without explaining in simple terms what it was he started to lose me. It was a talk on cyberpunk and postmodernism in literature, and probably confused the fans from the former Soviet Union more than me.

This book then, has been edited by a professor of English at Duke University who knows his sf - as is obvious by the material herein. It is a good background text for anyone contemplating attending or running an sf class in TAFE or University. There are essays and fiction on and by cyberpunk authors and critics. I had not realised that so much diverse material had been written on the subject. The material is well written and researched and if you are all serious about sf **STORMING THE REALITY STUDIO** is one book I can *Recommend*.

GREENMAGIC by Crawford Kilian. Del Ray pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (c) 1992. 311 pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

I read EYAS this author some time ago - he has not had anything in the English editions since, that I know of.

GREENMAGIC is a quest novel, of a sort. It is a fantasy, in a world where magic works. The protagonist, Dheribi, is schooled in it, and until a counter spell is used to keep him from using his art, he is quite proficient. His mother was captured by pirates before his birth and he was determined, after he was thrown out of his village because he killed a guard, to find his people.

The novel is very smooth and well written, and the reader will find that the adventures followed by the hero are believable. The characters are filled in and the other species - dragons and gods, are not too unbelievable conceding the premises given by the author.

A satisfying and relaxing read

FEAR by L. Ron Hubbard. New Era h/c, dist in Aust by New Era Publications. (c) 1991 & 1940. 188 pp. On sale now.

This is a very nice looking edition - the binding and layout is very good looking. The cover illustration is a little less blaring than the Mission Earth novels, though the snake looks as though it would choke on its own tongue.

FEAR is one of Hubbard's more well known fantasy novel. I confess I was surprised by how spare the prose was and how "modern" it read. The plot line follows the adventures of James Lowry as he goes to his job at Atworthy College. The dean calls him into his office and tells he that he is dismissed - an article deriding devils and demons had been published in a newspaper and the dean thought it outrageous that Lowry had given his college title in it.

On the way home Lowry calls in to see his best friend and on the way home loses four hours of time something... This is the beginning of the horror and the end for his normal life. Excellent fantasy. It this comes your way, read it.

DAMIA by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (c) 1992. 365 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

For those who read and liked **THE ROWAN** and **PEGASUS IN FLIGHT**, here is another in the series.

DAMIA is the name of a protagonist in the novel; she comes in about halfway through - the earlier protagonist is **Afra** - a son of the Rowan. He is a strong Esper and grows up in the Tower and is given the usual schooling for Earth's strongest espers. One of his jobs is to try to contact the incoming aliens. Later on in the book he meets Damia, who is a baby the first time he sees her. She grows up in a third of the book and by the end she is old enough to have his child.

McCaffrey is writing a kind of romantic novel these days - more so than she ever did with Pern. I suppose that her target is those female readers who are only just getting into sf. The writing is descriptive, and the concepts easy to grasp. Though entry level sf, this is still good sf - it is kind of an "adult" juvenile.

THE WORSHIPPERS AND THE WAY by Hugh Cook. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1992. 380 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Looking at this series, **An Age of Darkness**, I find I find I have volumes 1, 3, 4, 6 and now, 9. The book is a fantasy, and has fighting and lots of action. The writing is a little purple: "Side by side the two men were marked by superficial similarities - skin likewise purple and robes similarly styled, albeit of different colours. But Hatch - Hatch was tall and strong by the standards of his people, a warrior in the prime of life, washed, deodorised, delipated and very faintly perfumed by the miraculous machineries of the Nexus, whereas Sesno Felvus -"

There are silver Emperiors who desire the expermination of mad scientists and other archaic and fantastical subjects. Some authors try hard to be humorous...

LORD OF THE TROLL-BATS by Alexis A. Gilliland. Del Rey pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (c) 232 pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

I like the covers of these US editions - they are more like paintings than sketches. Another tale of

Wizenbeak - the old wizard with the kingdom that was roiling under his rule. This fantasy novel is well written and easy to read, though it too has some strange prose: "Doubt expressed itself as long-dead fish. Leather and ginger came back at the caged troll-bat, sarcasm enhanced by musk and hot oil."

Gilliland writes at time with tongue firmly in cheek - it is fun trying to work out when he dos so and when he is writing for the plot without leaning toward the outre. The others in the (loose) series are **WIZENBEAK** and **THE SHADOW SHAIA**. Even with all that scent the book is still an interesting couple of hours read; get it and enjoy.

HEARTS, HANDS AND VOICES by Ian McDonald. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 320pp. A\$38.95. On sale now.

Another sf author who I haven't read before. His other novels were **DESOLATION ROAD**, **OUT OF BLUE SIX**, **EMPIRE DREAMS** and **KING OF MORNING**, **QUEEN OF DAY**.

HEARTS, HANDS AND VOICES is certainly a unique novel, even as science fiction. It is set on an Earth which could be anywhere or when: it may be this Earth in the far future, or an alternate Earth. There are clues that it is an alternate Earth - the story takes place some thousand years after the Green Wave, when bio-technology took over. There is *some* mechanical technology, but it is mostly 20th Century: helicopters, machine guns, pistols, tanks and cars, etc.

I found the whole novel fascinating and could not guess where the author was going in the first 4/5ths of the book. The characterisation is well done and the societies depicted are also well drawn. The novel is leaning towards speculative fiction, but it is still firmly (even though the heroine visits the land of the dead) "hard" science fiction. Worth getting.

AND DISREGARDS THE REST by Paul Voermans. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (c) 1992. 254pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

This novel is set in Australia and is written by an Australian, which is probably why I read it a bit more critically than usual. The author is an actor and uses this background very much to the good in the characters in the novel.

Briefly, a theatre company puts together a play out in the outback and while they are performing, nearly the entire cast and all the sets are destroyed by a freak storm. Two of the surviving male leads are convinced that, somehow, the act (no pun intended) was deliberate and, years down the track, get together to do something about it. Mixed in with this are mysterious voices and visions in the head, aliens coming in to land, a mysterious telekinetic device and the CIA.

AND DISREGARDS THE REST is Voermans' first novel, and though he acknowledges the help of Chris & Leigh Priest, Christina Lake, Richard Evans and Judith Hanna, it is obvious that he is a "mainstream" writer (ie no background in the sf field *as such*.) This is not to say the

novel is not any good as sf - I enjoyed it. There are some passages in it that seem to be written for overseas readers (Australia wildlife, etc) but others need an intimate grasp of Oz slang. Some references threw me... though they probably are future (or current English) slang.

JACK THE BODILESS by Julian May. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C)1991. 421pp. A\$35. On sale now.

There are three authors whose books I await with anticipation - one fantasy write and two sf - Julian May is one of the SF authors. I find it particularly hard waiting for a new novel by one of these three - and when I find I have missed one ...

JACK THE BODILESS is the first in the Galactic Milieu trilogy, and continues the novels written by Rogi Remillard, whose family originally came from one of the French speaking areas of Canada. This time the tale is of Jack the Bodiless, the most powerful human metapsychic who was born in seclusion because his mother was refused the ability to have any more children. Jack was possibly the next step in human evolution - the title of the book hints at the how - and the novel follows the events just before his birth, through it and on.

Julian May's novels are, as those who have read the Pliocene Saga know, intricate and extremely well written. They are also well researched and as those published since the Pliocene Saga show, the names are easier to follow. This is another trilogy that I will be eagerly awaiting the author to complete - as it is, this is a nice, thick, juicy volume. Get it, or get your library to get it. *Recommended*.

THE NEW SCIENTIST - INSIDE SCIENCE, ed by Richard Fifield. Penguin trade pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987-1990. 356pp incl index. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Yum Yum. Just the book if you want to keep up to date on some of the Inside Science supplements published in **NEW SCIENTIST** for the more enquiring members of the public.

The illustrated essays herein are: (*Physical & Chemical Sciences*) The Big Bang by Marcus Chown; Four Fundamental Forces by Christine Sutton; Subatomic Forces by Christine Sutton; Quantum Rules, OK! by John Gribbon; A Theory of Some Gravity by John Gribbon; Life of a Star by Nigel Henbest; Origin of the Chemical Elements by Tony Cox; Radioactivity by Christine Sutton; Rocky Dwarfs and Gassy Giants by Nigel Henbest; (*Earth Sciences and Environment*) Structure of the Earth by Richard Enfield; The Earth's Magnetic Field by Nina Morgan; Acid Rain by Fred Pearce; The Ozone Layer by John Gribbon; The Greenhouse Effect by John Gribbon; Plants, Water and Climate by Ian Woodward; Plants in the Greenhouse World by Ian Woodward; (*Life and Cell Biology*) Life and the Universe by Nigel Henbest & Heather Cooper; The Human Immune System: Origins by Linda Gamlin; The Human Immune System: The Lymphocyte Story by Linda Gamlin; The New Genetics by

Omar Sattaur; The Nervous System: Getting Wired Up by Georgina Ferry; The Nervous System: Repairs to the Network by Georgina Ferry; The Nervous System: Remaking the Brain; The Body's Protein Weapons by Frances Balkwill; Cancer and Oncogenes by Richard Vile, and lastly (*Some Chancy Mathematics*) Risky Business by Ian Stewart.

Clear and easy to follow essays - good for keeping up with the latest ideas. Another buy for the local library and for those who missed those supplements and would like them for the kids, ahem.

PAPERBACK RELEASES (Previously Reviewed as h/cs):

THE REVENGE OF THE ROSE by Michael Moorcock. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. 233pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. I enjoyed the hardcover and the story of Elric and the Rose of the title, a woman who had been banished and was now after sweet revenge. Stormbringer fantasy.

THE DRUID OF SHANNARA by Terry Brooks. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. 471 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Book 2 of the Heritage of Shannara. Walker Boh's task is to find the aeons lost city of Paranor and call forth again the Order of Druids. There are many adventures before him, not the least the quest to find the Black Elfstone.

THE CRYSTAL PALACE by Phyllis Eisenstein. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. 416 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. The sequel to **SORCERER'S SON**. The story of Clay Ormoru and his love for the beautiful sorceress Aliza, who is trapped in a palace of crystal, of which she is almost as cold...

ALL THE WEYRS OF PERN by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam Press trade pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 493 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now. Another volume harking back to the first landing on Pern. This time an artificial intelligence is discovered from that era, and some of its ideas prove *very* interesting - including one to rid Pern of thread, forever! Less mushy stuff than her Rowan series.

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE by Stephen Donaldson. Fontana pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. 569 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Donaldson's sf series. The storyline is space operish, but the characterisation makes it worth reading. The novel is still pretty dark, however, but I found it enjoyable - buy this if you like adventure sf with that extra bite.

STALIN'S TEARDROPS by Ian Watson. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. 270 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. A selection of 12 speculative fiction stories from Ian Watson: Stalin's Teardrops; Gaudi's Dragon; In the Upper Cretaceous with the Summerfire Brigade; The

Beggars in our Back Yard; From the Annals of the Onomastic Society; Lambert, Lambert; Tales from Weston Willow; In Her Shoes; The Human Chicken; The Case of the Glass Slippers; The Pharaoh and the Mademoiselle; and The Eye of the Ayatollah.

THE DIFFERENCE ENGINE by William Gibson & Bruce Sterling. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. 383 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. A "really early" cyberpunk story. Set in Victorian England, this is the tale of how the Information Age started in the 19th century and, with mechanical computers, surged ahead. This got a "Recommended" for the hardcover. Get the paperback!

REUNION by John Gribbin & Marcus Chown. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. 285 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. In the distant future the moon is being bombarded with comets in order to give it a sustaining atmosphere. However things have been going a bit wrong and when some of the inhabitants reach a hidden Earth communication station, they found that no-one on Earth even knew they existed... Excellent adventure.

LION OF MACEDON by David Gemmell. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. 420 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. A historical fantasy - the main character being Parmenion. Other characters are Xenophon, Eapminondas and Philip of Macedon. Events are the battles at Thermopylae, Leuctra and Heraclea Lyncestis. The books is well written and the action flows well. A solid read, and which also gives one something to think about after you have finished reading.

DINBIG OF KHIMMUR by Philip G. Williamson. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (c) 1991. 589 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Book 1 of the Firstworld Chronicles. The peoples of Rull are various and violent - though the counties have been deadlocked for centuries. Then another outside force became involved and bloodshed and terror erupted. A novel mixing magic and wry humour.

FOOTFALL by Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (c) 1985. 700 pp. A\$17.95. On sale now. This English edition has been reprinted each year since 1985, with the exception of 1987, so the readers obviously love it. It is basically the story of an alien invasion of earth and how the natives fought the invaders. Now one of the classics of the genre - if you haven't got it now is the time to buy it.

REAPER MAN by Terry Pratchett. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1991. 287pp. A\$10.95. On sale now. The h/c was reviewed several issues back. Another of the Discworld series; this time Death has taken a holiday and nobody dies. You think this is good? Well, read this novel and find out... after all, *what* takes Death's place when he goes on to the farm?

Terry Pratchett can still churn out the best of humorous fantasy.

MAPS IN A MIRROR, Vols I & 2 by Orson Scott Card. Legend pbs, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1990. 552 & 552 pp. A\$11.95 each. *On sale now.* The original trade pb of this was in one volume. I won't list the stories - they will take up most of this column. Needless to say, Card writes down to earth sf and fantasy and this is a definitive collection of his short fiction. It covers both sf and fantasy and shows his reach. If you are building a representative library of good sf and fantasy you will need these volumes in it.

DIVERGENCE by Charles Sheffield. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (c) 1991. 281pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. The second in a series - the first being **SUMMERTIDE**. I haven't read the latter, but one can read **DIVERGENCE** before reading **SUMMERTIDE**, though the plot sequence would seem to be clearer if both are read. Sheffield has created a hard sf adventure novel here. With the artifacts of the Builders scattered sparsely throughout explored space, most of them were not obviously active, until the planet Quake was destroyed by something stirring in its depths. Then the quest was on....

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

Penguin: N-Space by Larry Nivel
The Waste Lands by Stephen King
Great SciFi Storis V.13 ed. Asimov
A Spell of Empire by Michael Rohan
Learning and Running MS-Dos
Alien 3 by Alan Dean Foster
Death of Sleep by McCaffrey & Nye
Generation Warriors McCaffrey & Moon

Jacaranda Wiley:

Strength of Stones by Greg Bear
Imperial Earth by Arthur C. Clarke
Vampire Junction by Somtow
Windows 3.1 Self Teaching Guide
Earth Light by Stewart
Fireside Astronomy by Moore
Seeing the Deep Sky by Schaff

Transworld: The Zenna Henderson Collection by Z.H.

Random Century:

A Call to Arms by Alan Dean Foster

AUGUST RELEASES:

Penguin: The White Rose by Glen Cook
Magic's Promise by Mercedes Lackey
Dragon Reborn by Robert Jordan.

Jacaranda Wiley: Microsoft Word for Windows 2
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