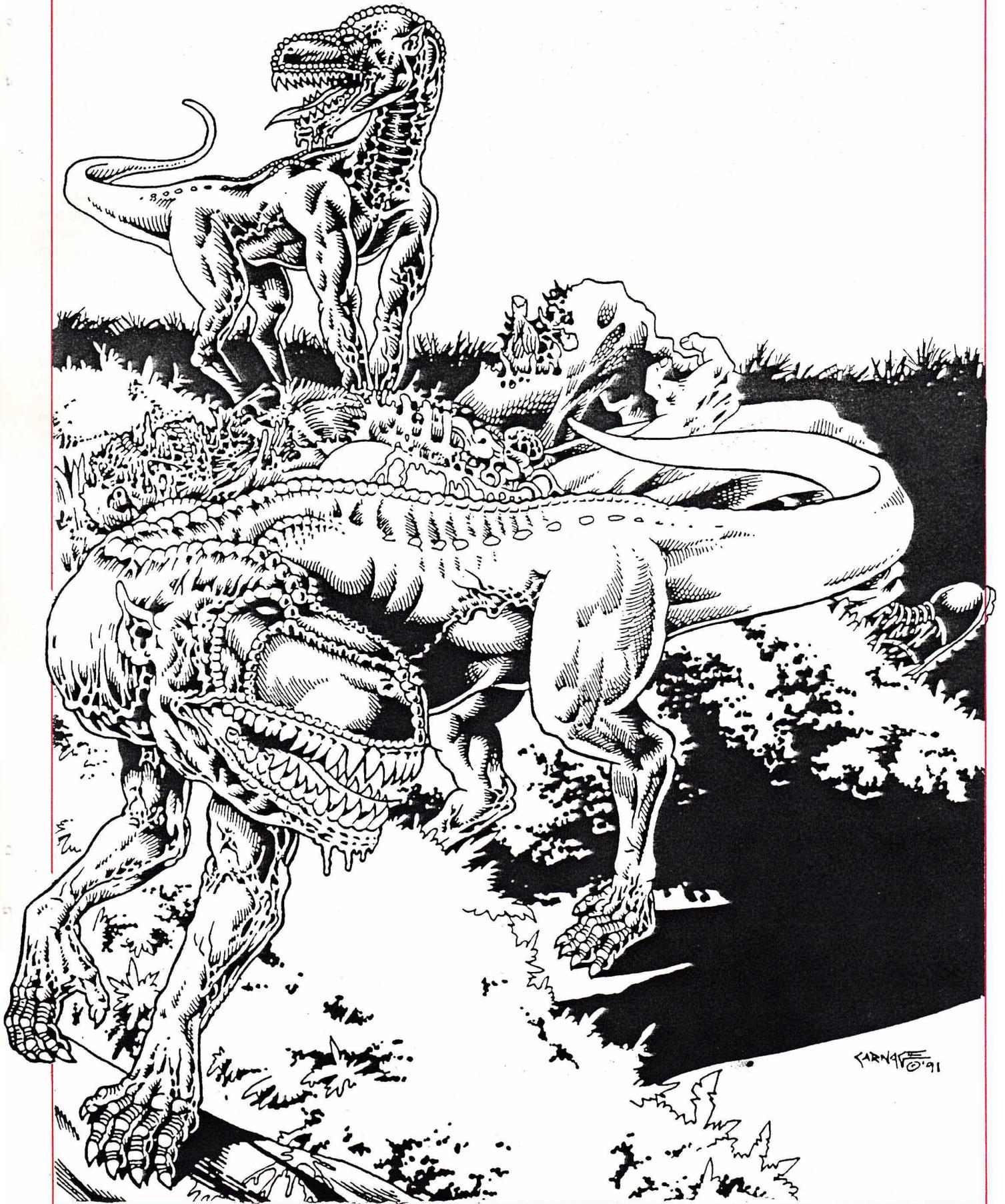


THE MENTOR 85

"The magazine ahead of its time"



THE EDITORIAL SLANT

by Ron Clarke

There used to be a Futurian Society in New York. There used to be a Futurian Society in Sydney. The New York Futurian Society is long gone - the Futurian Society of Sydney lives again.

When I placed the advertisements in *9 TO 5 Magazine*, gave pamphlets to Kevin Dillon to place in bookshops and puts ads in GALAXY bookshop I wasn't sure how many sf readers would turn up at the first meeting of the revived FSS - Graham Stone wasn't sure either. I arrived with Anne Stewart at the Lantern Restaurant at about 5.30 PM and staked out one of the large tables. We had just picked our meals from the buffet when the first of eight others turned up. We had an enjoyable meal and departed for the Royal Exhibition Hotel at about 10 to 7.

We arrived there after walking down Castlereagh Street and found Pauline Scarf waiting outside the door to the beer-garden. We went inside and found that the beer-garden was crowded out - the first time I'd seen this; but it was the Friday of the Anzac Day weekend. We descended the stairs to the hotel proper and moved tables around till we had a shape that would seat us all with some prospect everyone hearing the introduction and get away from the noise pollution in the beer-garden. Those who turned up at the meeting were Colin Briscoe, Kevin Dillon, Peter Eisler, Isaac Isgro, Ken MacCauley, Jonathon Mayer, David Mesklejohn, Graeme Paterson, Mark Phillips, Pauline Scarf, Anne Stewart, Graham Stone, Wayne Turner, Ian Woolf and myself.

I gave a short welcome speech and introduced Graham Stone who gave a stripped-down history of the Futurian Society of Sydney and welcomed everyone. I then gave my thoughts on what events could take place at meetings and threw the meeting open for discussion, handing around sheets to be filled in by those attending so the FSS could have some idea those there would like to discuss.

After an hour or so it was decided that the next two meetings would take place at the YWCA and that a charge of \$2 would be made to cover the cost of the room. The majority of attendees indicated that they would like biscuits and tea or coffee provided.

There was some discussion of the topics for the next meeting - it was eventually proposed that "Humour in Science Fiction" would be an interesting subject, and it was suggested that everyone bring along an SF book they considered humorous. As a backup topic, members were asked to make up a list of their "ten best sf books" and bring it along to the meeting. The serious side over, the members broke up into groups for general discussion. The meeting wound down after 10.30 pm.

The second meeting of the Futurian Society of Sydney was the first to be held at the YWCA. Again, eight people met at the Lantern (Chinese) Restaurant at 5.30 pm on the Friday night of the 27th of May and partook of self-serve Chinese munchies. I was a pig and had three plates-full, an event I was to regret later in the night. During the meal there was general conversation as the eaters renewed their acquaintances and related what they had done, read and saw since the meeting over four weeks previously.

The group left the restaurant at 6.45 in order to get to the YWCA by 7 pm. We had a brisk walk to the front door of the "Y" where I asked the young woman at the desk about whether the room was locked. She said that it should not be, but if it was, here was the key. As I turned to the lifts, the group packed the one that arrived. The last in was Anne Stewart, who asked "will it fit me in?" There was a chorus of "yes", so she squeezed in. As I got into the next lift I was hailed by someone behind me. It was Gary Luckman who said "Good. I was wondering where the meeting was - now I can just follow you"

as he stepped in. When we stepped out at the Second floor we found three others, including Pauline Scarf, already waiting in the room. The other lift hadn't arrived.

I took off my coat, unpacked my bags of tea-bags, coffee, sugar, cups, biscuits, FSS info sheets and other junk materials I had brought, then set about, with the others, setting up the room. At that point those from the other lift arrived - coming down in the second lift. They had overloaded the first lift. However the FSS Information Officer was not with them - Anne descended five minutes later in another lift. After helping set up the chairs in the room in a circle, I gave a quick run-down on the topic of discussion for the night - "Humour In SF" and asked who wanted to start. After a short dead silence, I read out short items from the Humour In SF section from the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION and the meeting got into first gear. The meeting then discussed what each attendee thought of humour in SF and gave comments on the books they had brought illustrating their thoughts or what they had read. Those attending the meeting were Mark Phillips, Graham Stone, Ian Woolf, Peter Eisler, Isaac Isgro, Wayne Turner, Pauline Scarf, Ken Maccauley, Kevin Dillon, Anne Stewart, Gary Luckman and myself.

There was a break for tea and coffee at 9 pm and after everyone had settled down again the second subject of the night was discussed: "Favourite SF Books". After collating the titles given in, and dropping those titles with only one vote, we had 3 votes each for STARMAKER by Olaf Stapledon and TIGER! TIGER! (THE STARS MY DESTINATION) by Alfred Bester and 2 votes each for NEUROMANCER by William Gibson, CORPSE by M. Faren, SCHROEDINGER'S CAT by R. A. Wilson, FURY by Henry Kuttner and WAY STATION by Clifford Simak.

The third meeting of the Futurian Society of Sydney was the second (and last) to be held at the YWCA. The weekend of the 18th of June was a very busy weekend SF-wise. There were three general SF club meetings scheduled, and I decided to go to all of them. The first was on the Friday night, the 17th of June. This was the meeting of the FSS. Because of rising prices in the room rates, the club had to decide where else to go.

I left work at 5.15 pm and again met up with Anne Stewart to walk up George Street to the Lantern Restaurant in Kent Street. When we entered the restaurant there were already several people seated eating their meals, including Graham Stone and Brian Walls. We settled down to a filling Chinese smorgasbord. When various people had finished, they started up conversations with others at the table.

The group left the restaurant at 6.45 pm for a leisurely walk to the YWCA. On arriving at Room 3 at 7 pm, I unpacked my bags and everyone moved their chairs to form a circle, as we found this more conducive for discussions. There were sixteen people who turned up for the meeting: Wayne Turner, Graham Stone, David Ritchie, Chris Isgro, Anne Stewart, Kevin Dillon, Pauline Scarf, Peter Eisler, Ian Woolf, Ken Maccauley, Jonathon Mayer, Brian Walls, Peter and Cecelia Drewer, Gary Bunker and myself.

The topic of the Friday night was "Religion in SF" and I gave a short introduction to the subject, citing Clarke's THE STAR and Blish's A CASE OF CONSCIENCE. Various members of the group then took up the topic and everyone joined in the discussion. First there were some definitions of fantasy (fiction with belief in the supernatural) and then the main discussion began. Some of the books and authors discussed were SIXTH COLUMN by Robert Heinlein, CHILDHOODS END by Arthur C. Clarke and some of the computer related novels that have come out lately. Everyone joined in, and at about 9 pm we broke the discussion for supper. Cecelia Drewer, who had just arrived from Adelaide by bus that day, had to leave early, along with Peter Drewer.

After everyone had their fill of tea or coffee and biscuits, each group got back into the "magic circle" and we started into the second topic for that night: each reader's favourite anthology. After this topic was discussed everyone was beginning to slow down and the meeting got back to Religion in SF, this time concentrating on God, Gods and their appearance in SF. After defining what we meant by Gods in SF (rather than fantasy), comments started flying thick and fast. The night was getting on, so after clearing up, the meeting broke up at 10.15 pm and most walked back together to the trains at Central station, discussing the meeting further.

It seems Sydney has a vigorous new(?) SF club - Ron.

MEMORY, LAME

by Shane Dix

hazy. It wasn't until he reached out and took it, felt it, that the memory came fully into focus.

"Christ," he said. "I was only thinking of this yesterday."

"Probably just before you threw it in the wash with your trousers," said Lee, still smiling.

"Leave it out, Lee." He slipped the card into his pocket, realising as he did that he didn't want her to know what the appointment was for just yet. It wasn't something she would take seriously, and that would annoy him.

"You really should be more careful," she said, shaking her head.

He collected some toast from the rack and took a bite, chewing between words: "Don't go on about it."

"Don't be so defensive. All I'm saying is that you should look after your things better."

"And hoard everything like you, I suppose?"

"I don't just hoard *anything*. Everything I keep has a memory attached to it. I like to keep things for when I'm old, that's all."

"So you keep telling me." He took another bite, again speaking through the food: "In fact, you used the same argument to make me keep all of that rubbish from my adolescence. And how often have I even bothered to look at it?"

"I didn't make you," she said. "I just thought it would be nice for you to look back upon someday."

"Lee, we've carted those boxes from house to house, and the most they've ever done is take up space and gather dust. I'm about as likely to want to look at that crap in another twenty years as I am now."

She smiled again, smugly this time. "One day you'll thank me. You'll see."

"I seriously doubt that." He reached over for another piece of toast. "By the way, did you hear that noise last night?"

"Only your tossing and turning."

"There was definitely something moving about in the attic. Gave me the creeps."

"Not mice again?"

"I certainly hope not. We had enough of them in the last house. Whatever it was though, it was making a hell of a racket."

But even as he spoke, he knew that the noise had really been slight, and the only reason it had bothered him was because he had been unable to sleep due to ... *What?*

"Maybe we should put some traps down anyway," said Lee.

The memory had again slipped beneath the surface of his other thoughts, causing in him a panic. He frantically searched around him, looking at his wife, at the refrigerator, wanting relief from this uncomfortable emptiness that had suddenly gripped him. Then his hand slipped in to his pocket and found the card, and, at its touch, the memory returned.

"Geoff?"

He looked over to Lee, realising she had asked him something.

"Huh?"

"Are you okay?"

"What?" He noticed his breathing was a little fast. "Yeah. Sure. What did you say?"

She began to speak again, but as she did he found his attention drawn back to the card in his pocket. Ignoring his wife, he fingered it lightly, afraid that should he let go of it for a second, he might forget once more.

+++
"Just how much of your past do you remember?"

Geoff fidgeted beneath the stare of Dr Crompton. He had felt uncomfortable ringing up the psychiatrist in the first place, and was even more uncomfortable actually talking to him. For the last few weeks he had worried so much about his memory losses that it had begun to affect his sleeping and eating, almost to the point of making him physically sick. And yet, listening to himself talk to the doctor now, it all seemed so ridiculous.

"Most of it, I guess. That's the stupid thing. I feel as if I'm wasting both our times by being here." Geoff paused for a moment, expecting -- no, *wanting* Crompton to agree with him. When the doctor failed to do so, Geoff continued: "It's just that every now and then in conversation I hear about things which I *should* be remembering.



Something was nagging at the back of his mind. It was lurking there beneath the surface of his thoughts, just beyond his grasp. A tiny noise from above was distracting him, making it hard to concentrate. Normally it wouldn't have bothered him, but the quiet of the night seemed to amplify every sound.

Irritably, he kicked back the sheets and clambered out of bed. His wife beside him rolled over and woke.

Stifling a yawn: "What's wrong?"

"I can't sleep." He pulled on his dressing gown. "There's too much damn noise to concentrate."

She rolled over again, dragging the sheets with her. She looked at the clock at her bedside. "It's two o'clock, Geoff. What on earth are you concentrating on?"

He tried again for the thought, but found only frustration.

"Nothing," he snapped. Then, placatingly: "Go back to sleep."

Out in the kitchen he removed the juice container from the refrigerator and took a mouthful. He drank deeply, wanting to wash away the frustration; then, failing this, he replaced the carton and slammed the door. One of a number of door magnets his wife kept fell to the floor, followed by the slip of paper it had been holding in place.

He cursed under his breath as he bent to collect it. Why did she insist on hoarding everything she came in contact with? It hadn't bothered him when they were first married; in fact, he had found it amusing. Now it just irritated him. She couldn't bring herself to throw anything away: photos, letters, birthday cards. Christ, sometimes she even kept the stubs from movie tickets!

In the dark he couldn't find where the slip of paper belonged on the crowded refrigerator door, so he placed it instead in the fruit bowl on his way back to the bedroom.

His wife was already asleep when he climbed back in to bed. He salvaged what blankets he could and closed his eyes once more. But as the quiet settled around the sounds of his movements, again the tiny noises from above drifted down and intruded upon his thoughts.

+++

Taking the slip of paper from atop of the fruit, Lee sighed and returned it to its appropriate place on the refrigerator.

"I wish you'd put things back where they belong," she muttered as she sat at the table.

Geoff knuckled sleep from his eyes. "Why do you have to put so many things up there in the first place?"

"Because it helps me remember." She sipped her tea. "Perhaps you wouldn't be so forgetful if you looked after your things a bit better."

"I do all right."

"Really? Well, maybe you could tell me what it was you had to do today?"

"Do?" Again, the nagging at the back of his mind. This was what had kept him awake last night, what had made him so frustrated. But no matter how hard he tried he couldn't remember. "I suppose whatever it is is buried somewhere up there." He pointed at the refrigerator door.

Smiling, she produced a small card from her lap, facing its faded writing towards him. Though mostly illegible, he could make out enough to know that it was his appointment card for Dr Crompton. The fact that he had forgotten made him uneasy. It was because of his recent bouts of amnesia that he had decided to go and see this doctor in the first place.

Even now, looking at the card, the memory was still a bit

Things which were important to me."

"Are these incidents confined to your past?" Without waiting for a reply: "I mean, how would you retain things that would happen, say, today?"

"Okay, I guess. But there are always a few things that manage to slip by me. Like this appointment. I completely forgot about it."

Crompton tried to ease Geoff's concern with an even smile.

"Momentary lapses of memory are not uncommon"

"No, this is different. It's more than simply forgetting something. It feels like I've actually ... *lost* the memory."

Crompton nodded thoughtfully as his pen scratched notes in the folder before him. "And when did all of this start?" He asked without looking up.

"I'm not sure. A few months ago, I suppose."

"Anything which might be significant from around that time?"

"Nothing," said Geoff. "Except perhaps moving in to our new house. Though I don't see what that would have to do with anything."

Crompton looked up, lounged back. "How do you feel about this new place?"

"Fine." Geoff laughed. "Except for the cockroaches."

The doctor frowned. "Cockroaches?"

"It has a few," he said, and sighed. "Look, this is ridiculous. So what if it has cockroaches? It's my memory that I'm concerned about. The house really isn't a problem."

Crompton met his gaze without expression. "Geoff, all I am trying to do is determine why you are shutting these things out of your memory. It may be a simple link to the things you fear, or it may be more complex. Whatever the answer, though, I'm not going to find it without asking questions. Understand?"

Geoff nodded without conviction; Crompton leaned forward for a few seconds and reviewed his notes.

"What about your dreams?"

"My dreams?"

"Your dreams. Do you remember them?"

"No, never have. I mean, I know I do dream. When I wake up I'm always aware of having dreamt something. But after a shower, shave, and all the rest of it, the dream's gone."

"Again, not uncommon. Especially if you are awoken by an alarm. The alarm triggers a response in you to prepare for the day, and as a consequence the dream is pushed back into the unconscious, its message unheard. This can often be met with some minor frustration later in the day, as though you feel that there is something you should be remembering."

"Surely you're not suggesting that all of this is because I've forgotten a few dreams?"

Crompton's lips parted in a thin, easy smile. "Not at all. But I would like you to do an experiment for me until our next appointment." Geoff nodded. "I want you to start writing down your dreams as soon as you wake up. It doesn't matter how insignificant they may seem, I want you to write down every detail."

Geoff shrugged. "And what is this supposed to prove?"

"I'm not sure it will prove anything," said Crompton. "But it is a starting point."

+++

The phone was ringing. Geoff looked up from the sheet of paper in his hands and waited patiently for it to stop. It was the third time in the last half hour that somebody had tried to get through, and he had ignored those also. He didn't want any distractions while he read over his dream from the night before. If there was anything in the dream that might help him understand what was happening to his memory, he wanted to find it.

He had deliberately turned off his alarm so that he could do the experiment properly. It meant missing a day from work, but it was a sacrifice he was prepared to make. With each day that passed he was becoming more forgetful, and he kept remembering how his own mother had slipped into senile dementia at such an early age. Certainly not *this* early, but the notion frightened him just the same.

It had saddened him to see her mind wither the way it had.

With nothing or no - one to occupy her time after his father had died, she had quickly deteriorated. It were as if her life had simply fragmented and slipped away.

He didn't want that happening to himself. He *had* to start

remembering things again, and the only way to do it was to find out *why* he was forgetting things in the first place. The doctor had said his dreams might help, and although he didn't know exactly what this meant, he was prepared to give it a try. The next appointment with Crompton wasn't for another -- he glanced over to the refrigerator door -- nine days, which was just too long. He wanted some results before then.

After eight rings the phone went silent, and in its wake his thoughts once again settled on the hastily scribbled words.

I was in the hills looking down upon a large city. There was a beach on the far side which I knew I would have to reach to be safe. I ran across a field which reminded me of the oval at my old school, and above me hovered a large mechanical bird. It seemed fairly close but the movement of its wings created only a mild breeze. I attempted to get its attention, but it flew off toward the city. A couple walked by and said that my identity number was missing. I apologised and told them I would have it replaced. The second one realised who I was and sprayed something in my face ...

The words seemed to drag images from the dream to the surface, sharp and clear. He was even aware of the emotions the dream had produced. But what was it supposed to *mean*?

"Geoff?"

Lee's voice startled him. He hadn't heard her come in the front door; hadn't heard her footsteps along the hall. He had been too engrossed in the dream.

She sat down opposite him. He looked away.

"Why aren't you at work? Are you okay?"

He wanted to be angry with her, feeling that this might somehow make his troubles lighter. But when her hand touched his, he knew that all he really wanted to do was to talk to her.

"I ... I'm frightened, Lee." He met her eyes briefly, then looked down to the cup of cold coffee at his elbow. "I can't remember anything."

She squeezed his hand slightly. "What are you talking about?"

"It's true. I'm losing my memory. I'm forgetting everything."

She laughed a little. "Geoff, you've always been forgetful. So what? Why the sudden concern?"

"This is different. This isn't just the occasional birthday. I'm talking about parts of my life. Things I *should* remember."

"Like what?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. Places, people. I tried to recall my grades from high school the other day. I couldn't remember them. The odd one or two perhaps, but these are things I've always known. Things I was proud of. I can even remember running home to tell my parents about them, I was so proud."

"Ah, so you do remember *something*."

"What?" He saw the smirk on her face and pulled his hand away from hers sharply. "I'm *serious*."

"Okay, take it easy, Geoff. So what if you've forgotten a few grades? I don't remember mine, either."

He snorted. "Yeah, but yours weren't anything worth remembering."

She laughed aloud at this. Geoff smiled also, despite himself. Lee stood up and playfully slapped his face.

"At least you haven't lost your sense of humour. Coffee?" She nodded to his half empty cup.

He shook his head. "I really am worried though, Lee."

"Then why don't you go and have a talk with Steve? It's always helped you before to talk things over with him. And I'll bet that once you've got it out in the open, it won't seem half as bad as you're making it out to be."

She removed his cup.

He nodded uncertainly. His talk with Crompton *had* made him feel that maybe he was overreacting a little, so perhaps a simple talk with his friend would help him put things in perspective.

"Maybe," he said.

"This important?" She pointed to the paper on which his dream was written.

He glanced again at the words, felt the dream lift from somewhere dark to meet them.

"No," he said. "I guess not."

+++

The wind lapped against him as he knocked on Steve's door, its invisible fingers through his hair teasing a vague memory. He tried to hold the feeling for as long as possible so that he might get a fix on the memory, but the sound of the door being unlocked broke his concentration.

Steve Dauk had been a close friend of Geoff's since high school. They had founded a friendship within the first few days of meeting one another that had lasted close on twenty years. There was nothing they couldn't talk to each other about, no secret that was too intimate to share. If anyone was going to understand what he was going through, it was going to be Steve.

The door swung open. Steve's large frame was silhouetted against the light.

"Well, thanks a fucking lot, pal!"

Geoff frowned. "What ... ?"

"You little shit, you stood me up last night. You were supposed to meet me for a few drinks. I've been trying to ring you all day to give you a mouthful."

Geoff stood there helplessly, wanting the memory of the intended meeting to rise from the fog.

"I don't ..." His mouth flapped loosely over the words, and in his discomfort he looked down at his feet, away from his friend's anger.

"Come off it, Geoff. We organised it the other day. I even wrote it down so that you wouldn't forget. Remember?"

He looked up again, his mind reeling with confusion. "That's just it, Steve. I don't remember."

It was Steve's turn to frown now. He peered at Geoff in the half light of the porch, and for the first time saw his friend's distress. His anger immediately relented and became concern.

"You okay?" He touched Geoff's arm, motioning him inside. "What's the matter?"

Inside was a warm familiarity which instantly eased some of Geoff's anxiety. He found comfort in the many photographs around the place: of Steve and his wife, their children, Geoff and Lee, and a couple of Geoff and Steve together. Each picture recalled a dozen memories, and he accepted them with delight as they washed through his thoughts.

The pleasure was fleeting though, a mere distraction from his troubles.

He sat down upon the sofa and sighed. Steve sat opposite him.

"What's wrong?"

Geoff gestured hopelessly with his hands. It was easier than talking.

"Is it Lee? You've had an argument with Lee?"

"No." He found and offered a weak smile. "I wish it was that easy."

"Then what is it?"

"I'm losing my memory," he said quietly.

Steve stared at Geoff for a few moments, as if waiting for him to continue.

"That's it?"

"Isn't it enough?"

"You're kidding, right? An elaborate joke to get you off the hook for last night?"

"No, I ain't kidding you," he said tiredly. Suddenly he no longer felt like talking about it. No matter how hard he tried to word it, the whole thing sounded ridiculous. "Don't worry about it."

A gust of wind rattled the window, and once more the faint trace of a memory distracted him. It lasted for only a few seconds before dispersing, however, and again he was unable to identify it.

"Don't go weird on me, Geoff." He forced a slight laugh.

"Not with David coming home and all."

"David?" He could tell from Steve's grin that the news was intended to have surprised him, but the name meant nothing to him -- there was simply no memory for it to attach itself to. "Who is David?"

"Who is David?" Steve's grin dissolved as he realised Geoff was serious. "Cut it out, Geoff. It ain't funny."

Geoff shook his head; shrugged.

"David. David Williams!"

The name was vaguely familiar, though not enough to recall a face. And the fact that he couldn't, coupled with Steve's disbelief,

made him feel nauseous and dizzy. He looked again to the photos, but found no relief.

"David Williams."

His tone, his hands, his eyes, all imploring Geoff to remember. But nothing stirred in the haze of his thoughts.

"The guy was in our class," said Steve. "We were the three musketeers. He was two of them and we were the other one."

"I ..." He was frustrated with himself for not being able to remember, and irritated with Steve for insisting he should. "Have you got a photo?"

Steve stared blankly at him for a few seconds. "You're serious, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm fucking serious! Now have you got a photo or not?"

Steve stepped from the room, returning minutes later with a thick photo album. He flipped through some pages, then handed it to Geoff, pointing to a photograph of three young men. The two on the left were Steve and himself, the third obviously being David. And, seeing him there, the memories returned.

"David," he said numbly. He ran a finger over the smooth plastic protecting the pictures, then looked up at Steve. "This was taken at our last day of school. David was going overseas the very next day."

Steve nodded. "He promised to keep in touch, too. I don't think he has put pen to paper in the last fifteen years."

"I remember it now," said Geoff, staring again at the photo. "The Three Musketeers. He was Porthos."

"And Aramis. We were Athos." Geoff handed back the photo album and Steve returned with it to his seat. He set it on his lap, idly flipping its pages. "Don't you ever look over your old school stuff?"

"No." His laugh was slight and uneasy. "It's never interested me."

"Really?" He was genuinely surprised. "God, I'm always getting it out and going back over it. The photos, my old papers, the little notes we used to hand around during class -- even the rulers I used to write my cheat notes on for exams!"

He laughed at the memories; Geoff remained sullen.

"You keep things like that?"

"Sure," said Steve. "Helps me to remember."

Geoff stared down at the photo album on Steve's lap. "Everything has a memory attached to it."

"What?"

"Something Lee says." He spoke slowly, listening to the wind outside, savouring the hint of a memory it seemed to stir in his thoughts. He concentrated upon it for a few moments, but it was no use. The memory was incomplete, a vague suggestion of something larger which had probably already left him. It was like trying to touch a dream that had already fragmented --

That was it: a dream!

"No," he corrected himself aloud. *The dream.* "The dream from this morning had something to do with the wind." He was sure of it. "But why can't I remember it?" Back then it had been so vivid that he had felt he would never forget its images. "And yet now I can't recall a damn thing about it."

"What are you talking about, Geoff?"

"My dream! I had it written down this morning, and now I can't even --" Then he remembered. "Lee threw away the piece of paper it was written on!"

"For Christ's sake, Geoff," said Steve nervously. "Take it easy."

"Tell me, where do you keep all of those things of yours?"

Steve shrugged. "Around the place. Why?"

"But *where*?"

"I don't know," he said, glancing about the room. "Places where I'll come across them every now and then, I suppose. It's not something I've ever really thought about."

Geoff's eyes widened. "That's it," he said, standing. "That's it. The memories are triggered by physical objects!"

"What the hell is wrong with you, Geoff? What are you talking about?"

"Don't you get it? Our memories *need* something to attach themselves to. If there isn't anything there, the memory fades. And I've been keeping all of my things tucked away in the attic in some bloody cardboard boxes!"

"Hey, take it easy, Geoff. You want a drink or something?"

"No, dammit!" He wheeled around and made for the door. "I want my fucking memories back!"

+++

Lee was downstairs watching television when he burst in the front door, the step ladder from the garage clutched purposefully in his hands. He shook it towards her briefly, grinning.

"My memories," he announced, catching his breath. "I'm going to fetch my memories."

She stared at him for a few moments. "What on earth are you doing?"

"You were right," he said. "I need my things to remember."

"Remember *what*?"

"Everything," he called back over his shoulder. "What you said the other day. It all makes sense now."

"What did I say?" She followed up the stairs; watched him position the ladder beneath the hatch to the attic. "Geoff, what are you doing?"

He clambered up into the loft, pulling the cord which turned on the light. The single bulb cast a dull glow about a small area, revealing rafters covered in dust and cobwebs. Nearby, pushed up against the water tank, were the boxes that Lee had insisted he cart from house to house.

He made his way cautiously over to them.

"I'm glad I let you talk me into keeping it all, Lee," he called back.

"Geoff, what's going on?" There was concern in her voice.

The first box he opened was filled with old records from his collection; music he had outgrown once his teens had outgrown him. He flicked through a couple, eventually coming across his copy of Thin Lizzy's *Jailbreak* album. Just seeing it again took him back to the day he had bought it. He recalled it all so clearly: returning from the record shop to find his car had been broken into, and discovering that the pair of jeans he had purchased not half an hour earlier had been stolen. He was unemployed at the time, and the theft had angered him; and looking at that record now, he felt that anger again.

"Christ," he whispered. "I had forgotten all about that." Then louder, for Lee to hear: "My mother had taken pity on me and bought me a new pair." He laughed at the pleasure the memory brought. "God, she was good like that."

There was no response from Lee.

He opened another box, this one filled with books. On top was a tattered copy of Enid Blyton's *Tuppenny, Feeto & Jinx*. He held it fondly, turning pages and vaguely scanning the print. It was the first book he could remember reading, and just browsing through it warmed him with the scant memories from around that time.

"I found this copy in a used book shop." He spoke to himself now, quietly so as not to disturb the other memories that were lifting from his mind's shadows. It were as if each memory, once touched, would illuminate a dozen others around it. "I was with Michael at the time. He thought it was hilarious that I should want to buy a kids book." And again, louder for Lee to hear: "Do you remember Michael?"

And again, no response.

He flicked a cockroach from the top of a third box and pulled back the lid. Inside was his old school stuff: work folders, school reports and photos. He removed his English folder and looked through its many pages.

Doodles in the margins recalled classmates that had done them, while comments in red across his work brought back vivid recollections of his teachers. Virtually everything there produced a memory to some degree or another.

Turning a page he found another cockroach. It scurried away, though not before he had the chance to flick it into the dark.

"Bloody roaches," he mumbled, placing the folder down and picking up another. Pages slipped out and fell about him, along with another half dozen cockroaches. "Damn," he said, brushing them away and collecting the papers.

He noticed with dismay that many of the pages had been eaten away around the edges, which he attributed to the cockroaches. Much of the damage was confined to the blank margins, though there were a number of instances where the writing had been nibbled into, leaving only parts of words and sentences -- and partial memories

also. Looking at it produced the same vagueness he had felt when looking at that appointment card a couple of days earlier, though touching these indistinct scribbles brought no relief.

With a sickening sense of loss he reached for another folder, wondering what else of his past they might have already feasted upon. But as he gripped the folder he felt a number of cockroaches wriggle beneath his fingers, and, with some revulsion, he dropped it back into the box. Inside, pockets of shadow suddenly broke and became dozens of beetles.

The box seemed to rattle with their frenetic movements as they climbed the sides, spilling out across the flaps of the lid and dropping with a nauseating *tap, tap, tap* in the darkness around him. He kicked the box away, toppling it over and covering the floor with books and folders and papers -- along with what seemed to be a thousand cockroaches.

"Lee!" Without taking his eyes from the swarm that was spreading around the attic, he scrambled back to the hatch. "Lee! The cockroaches! *They're eating my memories!*"

The attic receded as he fell into brighter light.

Then darkness.

And silence.

+++

From somewhere beyond the blackness, beyond the pain, he could hear voices and footsteps.

He opened his eyes and saw Lee reading a book at the end of the bed. Everything else around him was unfamiliar; and although he knew it to be a hospital room, he suffered a momentary panic.

"Lee." His throat was dry, his voice weak.

She looked over to him and smiled. "How are you feeling?"

He paused for a second, isolating the pain; then raised a hand to his head and felt the bandages. He frowned at his wife.

"You took quite a fall from the attic." She was at his side now, stroking his hand, kissing his cheek. "Gave me quite a scare."

The memory of the incident quickly swept aside his confusion.

He sat up with a start. "The cockroaches --"

"It's okay," she soothed, gently restraining him. "We got an exterminator in and took care of it. He managed to get rid of most of them, but he said we'd probably always have a problem. They had quite a nest up there, you know."

"They were in my papers," he said. "In my ..."

"It's okay, Geoff. It's all been taken care of. I should have listened to you ages ago when you wanted to get rid of it all."

He finished the sentence in a whisper: "... memories."

She didn't seem to hear him. "Most of it was ruined anyway, so I just put it all in the garbage for you."

He looked at her smiling face and suddenly felt tired and empty.

"My memories," he said again, sighing, and sank back into the pillow.

"Just relax, Geoff. The doctor says you could feel a little disorientated after a knock like that." She took his hand into her and gently squeezed. "By the way, you got a call from a David today. He said he would and pop in and see you tomorrow."

David ... David ... David ... The word tumbled aimlessly through his thoughts.

THE END



Character Names by the Book

by James Verran

So you're writing an epic. Chances are, your lead characters already have names. But what about the minor cast members? Sooner or later, all writers are confronted with the problem of finding suitable names. A name must suit the racial or cultural background as well as the sex of its fictional owner. For the novelist, juggling a large cast, finding names to fit the various characters is no small part of researching a story.

In his article WRITING SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY, Algis Budrys stated: "Named characters are automatically interesting," a premise he subsequently explained in NAMING CHARACTERS AND WHY which appeared in WRITERS OF THE FUTURE volume VIII. In short, Mr. Budrys asserts that a named character, as distinct from one identified only by description, is more likely to grab the reader's interest.

It stands to reason that a photographers' model and a politician, are infinitely more intriguing if the model is named Gloria Godiva and the politician, Gerald Gladhand. They would probably not inspire much interest in their stories if introduced merely as a model and a politician. This somewhat farcical example illustrates how the intended mental image may be conjured by carefully chosen names.

By association, certain names immediately transmit a strong image. Lucrezia and Adolf, while meaning riches or reward, and noble wolf respectively, bring to mind less charitable images. Of course, a misnamed character may still become a memorable hero; likewise, a villain may be obliged to live down a less than inspiring name, but that is part of the fun.

A fictional character should have a name that seems appropriate, sticks in the reader's mind and requires minimal concentration to pronounce or subvocalize. Needless to say, lesser characters should generally not have more memorable names than the lead. This obvious truth is most often ignored by writers of "Alien" epics where unpronounceable strings with too many consonants abound.

On the other hand, a brief perusal of seven "How to Write" books revealed that naming characters fell low on the list of priorities; indeed, it fell right off some of the lists. Of the seven, all successful, frequently published authors, two devoted no more than a paragraph each to naming characters, while a third gave it a one-sentence mention: "...use the phone book." The four other "gurus" ignored the need for character names entirely, not even bothering to list it among the other character traits like; religion, hair colour, occupation et cetera. The truism: "Never rely on a single reference source," remains unchallenged. Further proof of this is apparent in that these worthy teachers of the craft all omitted various other snippets of important advice.

Inventing unusual names is not all that difficult. A simple transposition changes the mundane, Ethel to the exotic sounding Lehte, while Kevin becomes Nivek. If they are not exotic enough, how about Negomi and Yendor? The determined nomenclator will stop at nothing, recklessly distorting (if you speak Strine) words by substituting or adding vowels and concocting names from verbs. Which brings to mind another point worth considering: the effect of regional accents upon names, invented or otherwise.

Certain names may look good in print -- until they are spoken. Only naive readers believe that writers never slip the odd obscenity into a story, disguised as an exotic variation of a proper

name. Considering that most occurrences may be purely unintentional, there seems little point in quoting examples; 'sides, the books are no longer readily to hand. So, unless a writer intends to "have a lend" of the reader, invented names should be vetted to avoid the accidental inclusion of a dubious appellation.

The hapless Edgar Allan Poe was one of the most audacious inventors of names. He never seemed short of ideas for his thousands of character and place names, and frequently resorted to distortion, irony, or outright puns. In his THE THOUSAND-AND-SECOND TALE OF SCHEHERAZADE he soberly referred to the appropriate sounding "Teilmenow Isitsoornot", which, we are intended to suppose was some kind of omniscient chronicle. His short stories abound with names like: Touch-and-go Bullet-Head, Thingum Bob, Tarr and Fether, and Gruntundguzzel. He really went to town with a classic, Dutch-sounding borough of Vondervotteimitiss in THE DEVIL IN THE BELFRY, wherein he coined the other punames: Groggswigg, Kroutaplentey, Dundergutz and Stuffundpuff. Mr. Poe was also fond of playing on the reader's gullibility by avoiding actual names altogether, especially for towns. He frequently grabbed the reader's interest with an intriguing opening then left them wondering about the location which he identified only with an initial followed by a dash. Although many of his invented names were simply plain fun, historians may read more than subtle ironies into their origins. When placed within the context of their respective stories, many have the ring of aliases to protect the innocent, or ward off writs, no doubt.

While the preceding methods work equally well for most first and second names, place names usually require a little more ingenuity. Telephone books, apart from being a good source of surnames, provide a somewhat limited assortment of location names. Postcode books offer a wider choice, as do the alphabetical index pages of street directories and atlases. All are useful in the hunt for exotic sounding locations, especially when the names are modified in any of the ways already mentioned.

Names for fictional planets are fairly easy. Many SF writers resort to tacking Roman numerals onto the name of the primary body or star -- looks great in print -- but the list of named stars is limited. To avoid jaw-breaking astronomical terminologies, it is often better to invent a name.

Using foreign names is a risky business for the writer unfamiliar with the naming conventions of another culture. Many foreign language guidebooks list popular names with notes on gender peculiarities. For instance, textbooks on conversational Japanese usually provide a list of common male and female names along with some frequently encountered family names. Such lists are worth noting, as ill-advised use of names, no matter how lyrical to some ears, could prove downright insulting to readers from certain ethnic groups.

The following books are just a few from among the couple of dozen relevant titles currently in the bookshops. Parenthood has always been fairly popular, and writers face the same problems as parents when choosing suitable names for their creations.

BABIES NAMES (Collins GEM Series) ISBN 0-00-470116-X, compiled by Julia Cresswell, is typical of the small GEM books in that it is modestly priced (\$7.95 rrp) and readily available. This particular edition is covered in textured card, rather than the laminated plastic of earlier titles, with its small but sharp typeface enhanced by higher quality paper. There is an A-Z listing with notes on the origins, meanings and variations of 2,000 names within its 380+ pages. The gender of each name is identified by either M or F, followed by the usual cross references to variations, where applicable. It thoughtfully contains information about registering babies, among other advice of dubious value to writers. It might also have been helpful to mention the calming effect, on restless offspring, of a soft patter on the keyboard during the small hours.

FIRST NAMES, an A-Z guide to over 2,000 names (yes, another one) ISBN 0-261-66051-9, from William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. rates as a true "budget" book at around \$2.50, depending on availability and where you shop. Despite the disclaimer in the foreword, this little book is usefully comprehensive. While contained within a normal paperback cover over pulp paper, the text is acceptably clear and quite detailed. First names are listed over 374 pages with 4 (count them) blank pages -- probably for those who wish to do their own thing. The old favourite, Aaron is first on the list, which

ends with the obscure female name, Zuleika which originated in Persia.

NAMES FOR YOUR BABY, from Market Street Press ISBN 0-7316-3325-3, by Susan Ross was priced at \$1.95 back in 1988. This is a no-nonsense list of girls names (24 pages of 'em) running from Abigail to Zsa Zsa and boys names (29 pp) from Aaron to Zola. Ms. Ross may have prudishly separated the sexes, but her text, while equally businesslike, presents an easily searched list of names accompanied by origins and meanings. The lady's work is a study in brevity, for example: "Abigail (Hebrew, 'source of joy') -- Abagael, Abbey, Abbie, Gael, Gail, Gale and Gaye." Although thin it was keenly priced, and worth looking for. An updated version is currently available from another publisher, Peter Antill-Rose & Associates (ISBN 1-86282-094-5) with the updated price of \$3.95. Although the format appears much the same, the new version has extra pages containing "generic" horoscopes which may be of use to conscientious writers who plot character profiles Astrologically.

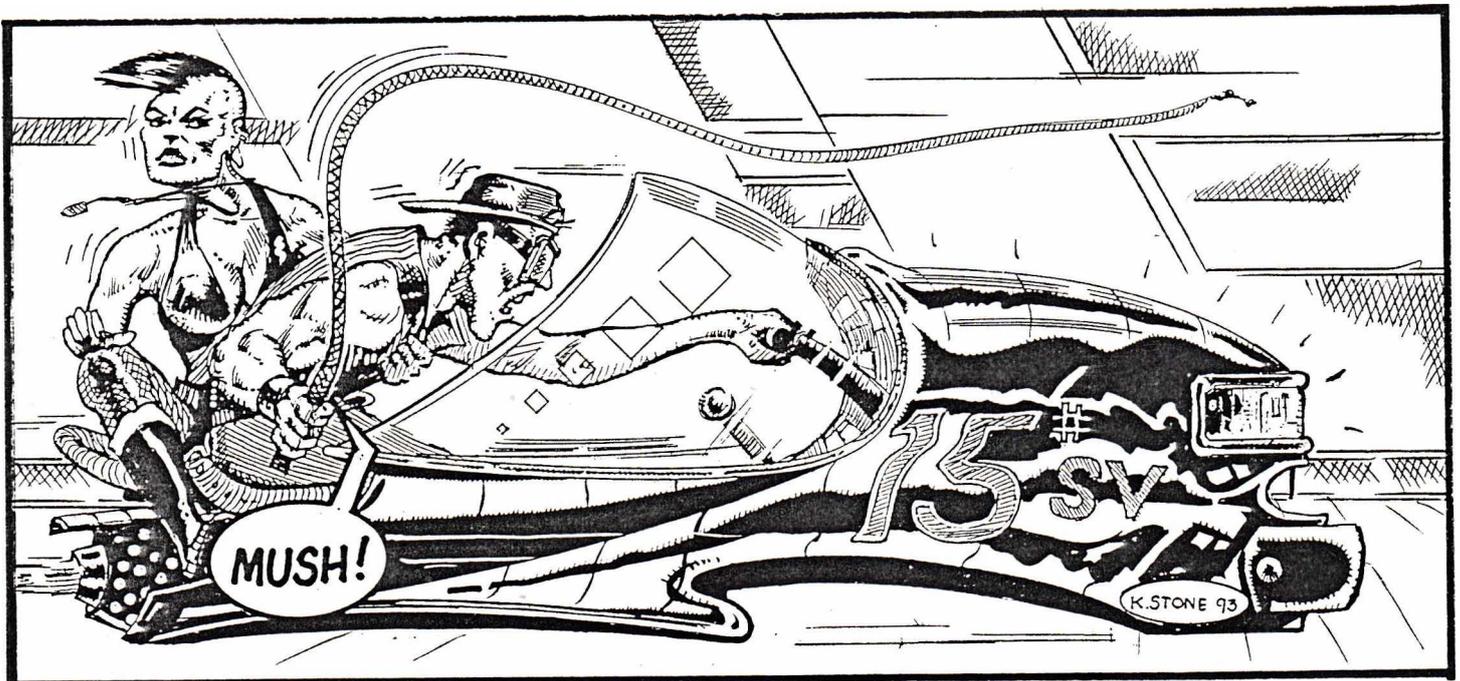
OUR SECRET NAMES, published by Sidwick & Jackson, ISBN 0-283-98734-0, by Leslie Alan Dunkling is a hardcover of 163 pages which turned up at a library; however, the 1980 copyright date suggests that it may be difficult to obtain elsewhere. Recommended for those who take names and naming conventions seriously. It contains chapters on influential, revealing and possessive names, with other chapters dealing with dated, embarrassing, suggestive, meaningful, numerical and literal names. There is also a section devoted to first name anagrams. Mr. Dunkling is also the author of: ENGLISH HOUSE NAMES, FIRST NAMES FIRST, THE GUINNESS BOOK OF NAMES, SCOTTISH CHRISTIAN NAMES and WHAT'S IN A NAME?. From the titles in his "hit" list, and the content of the reviewed volume, it would seem the man is the "full book" on the subject.

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF BABY NAMES from Herron Publications ISBN 0-947163-01-8 (reprinted from 1987 - 1993) lists girls from Abayomi (African, 'She who Brings joy') to Zsa Zsa (see Susan) and boys from Aaron (naturally) to Zuriel (Hebrew, 'The Lord is my rock and foundation'). For we who know better, the completeness suggested by the title should not be taken literally. There are certainly many names not found in some of the other books, but then, it does not list the male, Sacheverell (gotcha!) which originated as a Norman nickname meaning 'without leather' and has no apparent association with Sacha of Greek origin. Seriously, though, this is a very comprehensive, if incomplete, source of names.

THE OXFORD MINIDICTIONARY OF FIRST NAMES from the Oxford University Press ISBN 0-19-866135-5 retails at \$6.95. Covered with plastic, I la older editions of that other popular minidictionary series, this Oxford list 2,000 first names, followed immediately by an indication of the appropriate gender, origin and variations. Like most Oxfords, there is a lengthy introduction (foreword), acknowledgment, key to pronunciation and glossary of terms. Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges have compiled a scholarly little book, which is an authoritative, low priced volume on the subject. Aaron and Abbey head a list that spans 288 pages of small, sharp text to end with Zachary (m) and Zoe (f). This one makes no mention of Zuleika, an oversight happily corrected in the larger, hard-cover THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF FIRST NAMES (ISBN 0-19-211651-7), by the same authors. A more comprehensive tome for the serious nomenclator, which begins with: Aaitje (!) of Dutch or German origin and ends with Zygmunt (m) Polish for Sigmund. The full-size version has supplements on common names in the Arab World by Mona Baker and names from the Indian Subcontinent by Ramesh Krishnamurthy. This excellent resource book is not readily available without ordering in, but copies might be found in college or university bookshops. Sorry, no price was available, but it looks like one that would retail around \$30.

THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND BOOK OF BABY NAMES, from Angus & Robertson ISBN 0-207-15005-2, by Cecily Dynes boasts a list of over 10,000 names. This normal-size paperback may sound somewhat parochial, but these days popular names throughout the English speaking world are not necessarily the Anglo-Saxon favourites. For approximately \$16.95 you get a comprehensive list starting with a different one: Aariel (m) Hebrew, and ending with the Polish, Zygmunta, which is the feminine for...but then, you've already guessed. Maybe the Kiwis are into unusual names.

It seems the term, 'Christian name' is no longer politically correct and apart from qualification notes within the text, the reviewed books seldom use other than 'first name' openly. Their prices range from negligible (telephone books etc.) to whatever the purchaser is able to spend. While "THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF FIRST NAMES" is about the reasonable limit, any of the cheaper books will provide the resourceful writer with enough raw material. That priceless commodity, inspiration is available to anyone willing to spend some imagination.



MOVING HOUSE by Antoinette Rydyr

Beyond the rusted iron gate and up the hill sits a house. It has sat empty for a decade or more. Grass grows long all around it, skirting its perishing weatherboards and dirt-encrusted windows.

Its front is adorned by two tall sturdy columns of neo-Doric, which stand perched upon stairs that climb toward the entrance door. They support a gabled porch of dark ashen-grey shingles. The columns' coat of creamy-white paint is itself coated with the dust of years of neglect.

After being so still and silent for so many years, one frosty morning, in the light of dawn's wan glow, as everything still sleeps as still as the dead, the house begins to lean and skew. The porch heaves, raises itself. It stretches out, pulling and straining. Cement shingles burst and pop, crash into smithereens on the ground. The decking which blankets the porch floor, springs up, revealing teeth of rusty nails.

The timbers of the old grey and white house shiver. The boards surrounding it crackle and splinter as it breathes. Paint splits and starts to peel and flake as it arches its architraves. Window panes shatter and explode into shards of jagged glass.

The porch continues its exertion, warping and distorting its timbers, disturbing its balance. It projects forth twisting and contorting. The columns shed their brittle veneer of skin, sprinkling flecks of confetti to the wind, exposing sinews of muscle fibre.

Each column in turns pulls away and escapes its concrete moorings, takes an awkward step forward. Timbers stretch and fret. Wooden muscles flex, grainy tendons tighten as each step becomes steadier.

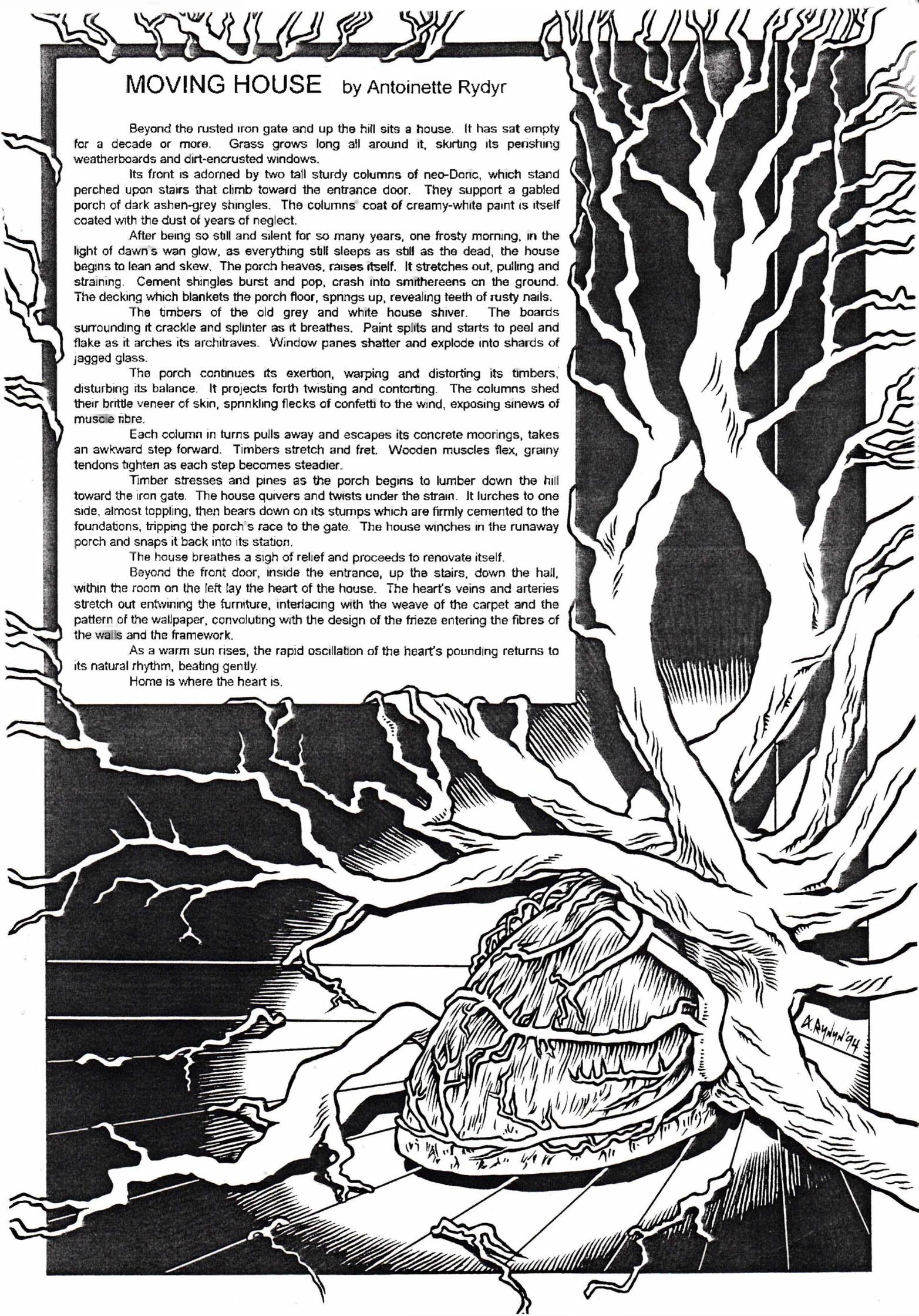
Timber stresses and pines as the porch begins to lumber down the hill toward the iron gate. The house quivers and twists under the strain. It lurches to one side, almost toppling, then bears down on its stumps which are firmly cemented to the foundations, tripping the porch's race to the gate. The house winches in the runaway porch and snaps it back into its station.

The house breathes a sigh of relief and proceeds to renovate itself.

Beyond the front door, inside the entrance, up the stairs, down the hall, within the room on the left lay the heart of the house. The heart's veins and arteries stretch out entwining the furniture, interlacing with the weave of the carpet and the pattern of the wallpaper, convoluting with the design of the frieze entering the fibres of the walls and the framework.

As a warm sun rises, the rapid oscillation of the heart's pounding returns to its natural rhythm, beating gently.

Home is where the heart is.



DOCTOR WHO: CONFESSIONS OF A SPACE-TIME VOYAGER

by Andrew Darlington

Travelling at the speed of light, all of the radio and television signals ever transmitted anywhere on planet Earth are even now dissipating into deep space in a huge expanding bubble of Radio Gaga, from the first polite radio voices that are now many light years away, to today's latest Soaps, Sit-Com's and Game Shows. The first episode of DOCTOR WHO must now be somewhere out in the region of the star Proxima Centauri, which was always its natural environment, anyway.

But it's "still compelling - even today", according to Doctor #7, Sylvester McCoy. Have *Tardis*: will travel.

Everyone has a favourite Doctor Who. There are seven to choose from spaced out across thirty BBC years, or several million years spiralled through space-time continuums of their own invention. Probably your preference is determined by the span of years you grew up through. It begins with irascible, ill-tempered old William Hartnell. Then Patrick Troughton, bemused and sullenly clownish with his big floppy handkerchief spilling from the top pocket of his badly fitting jacket. Next there's Jon Pertwee, dapper and dandy with a candy-floss blur of hair. And Tom Baker. To me, Tom Baker is the quintessential incarnation. He gets the non-conformist equation exactly right: a compelling shambling bohemian space-bum, both engagingly scatty and unpredictable. He was followed ineptly by Peter Davison, formerly best-known as a whimpish Heriot vet. By the cool whimsical Colin Baker, and more recently by McCoy with broolly, question-mark sweater, and a devious mystique.

But the monsters leave as lasting an impression - dread Cybermen, chilling Ice Warriors, hulking Yeti, foul Sontarans, and always those totally psychotic tin killing machines on castors the Daleks.

Doctor Who is part of televisual folklore. A shifting ikon reflecting three decades of our lives. A weekly shared experience of hyperspatial thrills, a fix of nervy mind-expanding terror, fuelled on some often tacky special-FX and moments of inspired cosmic wit.

During the philistine 1970's the BBC reorganised its film archives at Brentford, and as a result 110 of the earliest 25-minute black-and-white episodes were wiped and lost forever. Yet paradoxically Doctor Who is now hotter than ever. To celebrated the series' 30th Anniversary the BBC1 is re-running PLANET OF THE DALEKS - with Pertwee in the firing line. While seeking new extraterrestrial frequencies, Sky's UK Gold has been screening every surviving episode, stripping them daily since the channel's launch, and it's now mid-way through the Tom Baker years. Then there's a video catalogue covering every variety of Doctor, and regularly proving to be the Beeb's fastest-selling titles. There are audio cassettes recreating lost tales, and at least one wholly original 1993 story - THE PARADISE OF DEATH, first broadcast on Radio 5, for which Pertwee assumes Dr-hood again. The picture-strip TIME LORD began in T.V. COMIC #674 (14 Nov 1964), and continues today as the longest-running media-derived strip from television's longest-ever Science Fiction series. There are "Target" paperback novelisations, and original novels proliferating so fast it's difficult to keep score. Something like 150, and counting. Completests can also pig out on Titan Books "original script" editions, the computer games, sound-track CD's, and model Dalek kits.

While inevitably, Spielberg is said to be considering a new

hi-tech TV series with full Industrial Light & Magic back-up, Robin Williams' name has been mentioned as a possible candidate for the next Good Doctor....

Doctor Who is part of the oldest and most powerful race in the cosmos. They have two hearts, a body temperature of 60°F, and extra-ordinary powers of regeneration. They use unbelievable technology. They are the Time Lords of Gallifrey.

Yet it started out quite modestly as the brain-child of one Sydney Newman. He'd produced an ATV series for commercial television a year earlier, called OUT OF THIS WORLD. It consisted of adaptations from legit SF sources, each tale introduced with full dramatic menace by Boris Karloff. Newman - who had helped ignite THE AVENGERS, was in control when Doctor Who took off in a first instalment called AN UNEARTHLY CHILD. He was still there for the second story - THE DEAD PLANET, and more specifically the tea-time 28th December 1963 episode which shocked the nation with its first glimpse of a Dalek! These emotionless animated dustbins were the creation of Terry Nation, a one-time gag scripser for Tony Hancock, who had worked with Newman on OUT OF THIS WORLD. He'd originated a story for that series called BOTANY BAY, and also adapted Philip K. Dick's IMPOSTER - but nothing that had gone before could have prepared them for the Dalekmania that was to follow.

A pilot for the first Doctor Who was filmed as early as 27th September 1963. But it was to remain unseen until its video release as part of THE HARTNELL YEARS compilation. A souvenir from a drab grey world that's now as distant and alien as any from SF, it relates how schoolgirl Susan Foreman (Carol Ann Ford) arouses the curiosity of her two teachers with her odd combination of precocious scientific knowledge, and ignorance of everyday aspects of life. She doesn't even know how many shillings there are in a pound - a dead give-away! Teacher #1 is "Ian Chesterton", played straight and very seriously by William Russell. CORONATION STREET devotees will recognise him as Ted, who will marry Rita Fairclough, only to die soon after of a brain haemorrhage. But with Teacher #2 - Barbara (Jacqueline Hill) he trails Susan from Coal Hill School to a neglected Steptoe-esque corner of a junkyard at 76 Totter's Lane, where they unwittingly enter what turns out to be the Tardis.

"With the strange trumpeting sound of some distant primeval beast the Tardis dematerializes" (according to COUNTDOWN #1), and the 30-year trip commences.

Susan's "Grandfather" is the Doctor, he's *never* referred to as Dr Who, but he irritable and he's eccentric, "a crotchety old bugger" says Newman. "We are not of this race" Susan explains to her confused tutors, "we are not of this Earth. We are wanderers in the 4th Dimension of Space and Time. Cut off from our planet and our people by eons and universes that are far beyond the reach of your most advanced sciences". But already the mythos is evolving. "I was born in the 49th Century" says Susan in the pilot. This is revised to "I was born in another Time, another world" for the broadcast version, leaving an opening to be expanded into the entire Time Lords multiverse.

But continuity is not always so smooth. "I'm 450 years old" announces Troughton in TOMB OF THE CYBERMEN. Ah no - "I'm 756, that's not old, it's just mature" corrects Tom Baker in THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS. Then - "953" says Sylvester McCoy in TIME AND THE FAN!

"William Hartnell is Dr Who at his weirdest and most sinister" horror writer Simon Clark tells me. "Often you feel he has some dark secret motive for wandering through time and space. And his companions are often more afraid and suspicious of him than they are of the limpet-faced skull-suckers of Gazundonia".

Sylvester McCoy agrees. "William Hartnell's initial portrayal of the Doctor was very much the anti-hero. A rather unpleasant and selfish old man. This portrayal was to soften as he settled into the role".

Born on the 8th January 1908, Hartnell entered films as early as 1931. He specialised in a string of hard-nosed character parts, NCO's and foremen, which made him ideally suited to the part of Sergeant-Major Bullimore in ITV's hit comedy THE ARMY GAME, reprising a role he'd played in CARRY ON SERGEANT - the very first CARRY ON... film, in which he'd attempted to instil military discipline

into useless conscripts Charles Hawtry, Kenneth Connor, Bob Monkhouse and Kenneth Williams. Carry on Doctor? - Well, not exactly, in fact Harnell was already frail, white-haired, and 55, when he qualified for Doctor-hood. A role predicted to last just thirteen weeks. He stayed three years, quitting only when his deteriorating health made it impossible for him to continue. He died in hospital aged 67 in April 1975, as the then-current Doctor - Tom Baker, was facing the REVENGE OF THE CYBERMEN.

November 1963 was a strange month, when an amazing number of generational reference-points seem to converge with near-supernatural synchronicity. The Beatles first LP remained solid at #1, while "She Loves You" - which had been on the single's chart for 14 weeks already, returned to #1 for the second time. America had yet to discover Beatlemania. It had problems of its own. Their chart-topper was by Phil Spector alumni Nino Tempo & April Stevens with a skewed reworking of the standard "Deep Purple"....

Then President John F. Kennedy got shot.

An extended news bulletin covering events in Dallas shoved the Saturday evening (23rd November) launch of the first Doctor Who back out of its allocated time-frame. But then internal temporal dislocations were to figure regularly as the program gained momentum; following BBC's Sports coverage, and just before JUKE-BOX JURY.

With a start-up budget of just 2,500 pounds Doctor Who is a triumph of invention and ingenuity over financial restrictions. Compare and contrast it with STAR TREK for example. The concept, and hence the props for STAR TREK are formula simple. The stuff of every Space Thrills Comic-Book and Pulp Magazine story. A spaceship. A crew. Doctor Who is never so straight-forward.

Harnell's incarnation in particular lies in direct descent from H. G. Wells' back-room inventor - the lone amateur who builds THE TIME MACHINE in his basement, or Cavor who formulates an anti-gravity material for a space-sphere journey to the moon. Harnell catches this permanently preoccupied absent-minded quality to perfection in both dress and mannerisms. Later, Tom Baker will even have a wood-paneled "Edwardian" Tardis with its interior kitsched-out in period decor to emphasise the lineage.

But the Tardis is, of course, a Police Telephone Box. The Props Department might have requisitioned it from a left-over DIXON OF DOCK GREEN set, and - unable to afford the special effects for a proper spaceship, stitched it into the plot-line instead. The rationale for the bizarre appearance of the craft is a malfunctioning "chameleon circuit". The Tardis is meant to alter its form for each materialisation so it blends in with its new planetary or temporal surroundings. Initial themes show the Doctor constantly intending to repair this "slight technical hitch" but distractions caused by an assortment of weirdies intent on galactic nastiness determines that he never quite finds the opportunity. Rival Time Lord "The Master" later appears with his fully-functional Tardis which on various occasions becomes a Rock or a Pillar, as it's supposed to.

Many of the early plot-lines use straight regression trips into history, providing the hard-pressed Props Department with endless cheap opportunities to plunder the BBC's period costume wardrobe for useful cast-offs. Hence the Doctor's involvement with Marco Polo, the Aztecs, the Crusaders, Revolutionary France, and even the Gunfight at OK Corral! Although modestly successful, the strictly historical themes were soon either phrased out completely, or merely used as colourful backgrounds for more extraterrestrial menace, as inevitably it's the monsters that became the ratings lure. As THE OBSERVER points out at the time "twelve million people watch Doctor Who if the Daleks are in it, only seven to eight million if they're not".

A trend not always appreciated in certain quarters.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION records that "the authors of the various stories have unblushingly pirated literally hundreds of ideas from pulp SF, but often make intelligent and sometimes quite complex use of them. Over the years it seemed probable that the programme has attracted almost as many adult viewers as children". Kid's stuff it ain't - not exclusively. And questions about the psychological damage inflicted on child fans by the "grotesque horrors" of the Daleks and their monstrous ilk were voiced almost from the modest beginning, increasing as the

sophistication develops, and its mass popularity escalates to include syndication to 38 countries. As early as 27 January 1968 a trailer for THE WEB OF FEAR warns that this time the Yeti "are just a little bit more frightening than last time. So I want to warn you that, if your Mummy and Daddy are scared, you just get them to hold your hand".

"To a large extent violence, and the failure of imagination, are closely bound up" philosophises Tom Baker, who nevertheless admits that some sequences caused him unease. In particular the final freeze-frame used in THE DEADLY ASSASSIN in 1976 - "that was the most violent one that we did". Jean Rook devoted her DAILY EXPRESS column to attacking what she described as this new "nerve-wrenching, spine-chilling and now totally grown-up" Doctor Who. Mary Whitehouse agreed. She objected to the graphic fight set in the "Matrix Dreamscape" where the Doctor's opponent is first ignited into a human torch, and then holds the Time Lord's head underwater for a seemingly interminable duration.

"I was out visiting some children in Blackpool or Preston or somewhere like that, and I was being driven back with Terry Sampson from BBC Enterprises. And it was nagging at me - that scene" recalls the tousled Time Traveller. "It was on Saturday night you see, at about whatever time it went out - half past five. And I went to a television shop, but they were closing at half past five. So we were going through and I saw signs of an ordinary family - a car and a bicycle. And I said to Terry Sampson "stop here". And I knocked on the door, and a man opened the door and said "Yes?" I said "Do you watch Doctor Who here?" And this young man just said "why, come in, come in". It was simply wonderful to be accepted like that. And I went in deliberately because I wanted to see how they'd cut that scene of me drowning, which I found particularly repugnant.

Although it was very well done, well filmed, and Bernard (Horsfall - the villain) was very dramatic and everything like that. That's not really to my taste. That kind-of smacks of reality. And as you know, I only have a very tenuous grasp on reality. But it was formidable. Interesting..."

The Daleks, those murderous robot tin cans bent on universal conquest, grating "EXTERMINATE! EXTERMINATE!" with metallic menace, soon became stars in their own right. They had their own comic strip, their own Annuals, and a mass of merchandised tins. It's often forgotten that they also starred in two wide-screen technicolour movie romps too - DOCTOR WHO AND THE DALEKS (1965) and DALEKS: INVASION EARTH 2150 (1966), both now available on a single video. Loosely based around Terry Nation's scripts for the first two TV serials to feature the Pepper-Pots from Hell, purchasers get Peter Cushing taking the Doctor's role, and Roy Castle breaking new records as his loopy-singing all dancing assistant. These two adventures of the nomads of the time-stream remain enjoyable period pieces, complete with "Thats" in rainbow mascara and gold-fringed Beate wigs. But the TV originals - also out on separate videos (from 21 Dec 1963 to 1 Feb 1964 & 21 Nov to 26 Dec 1964 respectively), still carry the edge as intelligent and often challenging Science Fiction adventures. And the Daleks, although too chiche'd to be taken seriously at this end of the phenomenon, can retain a TV presence of genuinely sinister evil.

Like its chameleon circuit, the Tardis' directional guidance system is also permanently fritzed, so that when its passengers accidentally fetch up on the apparently "Dead Planet" Skaro, the Doctor explores a petrified forest (where flowers symbolically crumble to dust), and he emerges close to the metal city of the Daleks. Designed as "ultimate warriors" - machine-aided mutated lumps of seething hate, they were produced by a long and devastating neutronic war between Kaleds (an artful anagram!) and their humanoid Thal antagonists. The metal meanies also move along energy tracks set into the floor of their city, and can't function without these strips. By the end of the story the Daleks are destroyed.

But such is their impact that this presents no problems for the follow-up. After all, Doctor Who travels through *time* as well as space. He can return to *before* the Daleks met their grisly end. Or - in fact, the Daleks themselves can outmanoeuvre that same temporal inconvenience. Materialising in an eerily deserted London of the near-future for the second tale (and the tenth Doctor Who story), the travellers discover that cosmic storms and plague have devastated the world, and the Daleks - arriving in their Flying Saucers, now

control the Earth with their "robotised" human slaves. The first episode closes with the striking image of a Dalek gradually and chillingly emerging from the monochrome waters of the Thames. Despite the awkward restrictions on their movement having been overcome by energy receivers that look like little satellite dishes stuck to their outer casing, the Daleks lose and the Doctor triumphs yet again. Temporarily. For they will return, as if strangely drawn by Ron Grainer's spookily effective BBC Radiophonic Workshop theme, and proto-psychedelics from the Visual Effects Department. The screen flashes into weird negatives each time the Daleks blast another victim into extermination.

Possibly the strongest Daleks story is Tom Baker's GENESIS OF THE DALEKS (8th March to 12th April 1975) in which the Gallifreyan Time Lords summon the Doctor back to Skaro to meet Davros, the soullessly obsessive scientific genius responsible for unleashing the genetic mutations powering his Dalek creations. At the story's climax Baker holds the ability to destroy the embryo monstrosities with a wire in each hand - to connect the two will mean the termination of the entire future Dalek race. But he's stricken by the ethical implications of the act he's about to commit. The genocide of an entire sentient species? "Have I The Right?" he agonises. On the video THE TOM BAKER YEARS he reveals that this dramatic line of dialogue sprang from the title of the Honeycombs hit record!

But before much longer, they're back. In REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS (5th to 26th Oct 1988) the Doctor - Sylvester McCoy, and his lethal punk companion, Ace (Sophie Aldred) return to Coal Hill School in 1963 to meet Davros and his robotic enfant terrible yet again. This time Skaro itself is destroyed, and two tracks from the Beatles first LP are heard on the sound-track.

The Doctors change. But there are always Daleks. Forever unexterminated.

And visually they were looking increasingly good. Gary Russell - editor of THE DOCTOR WHO MAGAZINE and THE COMPLETE DOCTOR WHO book, points out that despite "its wobbly sets, thick blue-outlined colour separation sequences and obviously wired models, it nevertheless created those systems. Such everyday television techniques as Quantel, Harry, C80, Synch-slave, all broke their teeth with Doctor Who. Whilst everyone was marvelling at the astonishing Dykstra system effects on STAR WARS, no-one remembered that the British technicians that helped create them had learned their craft on Doctor Who, doing the same effects on a budget that wouldn't have supplied the STAR WARS crew with tea for one day!"

THE GUARDIAN makes the same observation, praising "the best special effects of any television programme, bionic or invisible, tossed out week after week with astonishing nonchalance". Writing in the 1st November 1976 issue, Peter Fiddick goes on to detect "a sense of humour that keeps the whole exercise well in its place" while mostly shunning "the fake moralising of more portentous Space Opera like STAR WARS".

No moralising. But there is morality. Bad guys of all races and species manipulate, exterminate and annihilate. But who busts the mysteries and horrors at the farthest reaches of space-time? Doctor Who - an irrepressible alien, an exiled extraterrestrial, that's who. And not without irony. Colin Baker revisits the Time Lords on their ancient home-world Gallifrey: "In all my travellings throughout the universe I have battled against evil, against power-mad conspirators. I should have stayed here! The oldest civilisation - decadent, degenerate and rotten to the core! Power-mad conspirators; Daleks, Sontarans, Cybermen. They're still in the nursery compared to us. Ten million years of absolute power - that's what it takes to be *really* corrupt!"

STAR TREK has constantly reinvented and updated itself, even following the shifting dictates of Political Correctness. The original introductory voice-over about the *Enterprise's* "five-year mission" became a less restrictingly specific "continuing mission", while more significantly it's "to boldly go where no man has gone before" gets degendered for THE NEXT GENERATION into "where no-one has gone before". Doctor Who has a more convenient mechanism for integrating change while maintaining continuity.

One aspect of the Time Lord's longevity is his periodic

metamorphosis, his ability to switch bodies. In THE TENTH PLANET (8th to 29th Oct 1966) William Hartnell meets the Cybermen, new adversaries on a moveable world called Mondas. While thwarting their nefarious schemes he overloads on their power system, and in doing so weakens himself. Is he dead? No - he reanimates in the new body of cosmic hobo Patrick Troughton, which will thrive for another twenty-one stories. The cover of the 1st January 1970 RADIO TIMES proclaims the next re-vamp, with Jon Pertwee, the third Doctor - and the first series to go out in colour. But there's been further Doctoring with the format. Exiled to Earth - an absurd premise for a story based around space/time travel, the new Doctor becomes a kind of roving trouble shooter attached to UNIT (United Nations Intelligence Task-Force). There's all manner of crafty appropriations from the then-vogue Secret Agent spoofs too, the James Bond and Avengers. There's gadgetry, jet-ski's, hovercrafts, and Pertwee's own contrived 60's campery. He also acquires a car called Bessie and a new assistant called Jo (Katy Manning) in hideous plastic boots, hot pants, fur jacket, suede flares or 12" lapels.

Personally I found the reduction from Galactic Gipsy to quasi-military conscript something of a betrayal. Despite the filip provided by their supposedly U. N. credibility, the soldiers come in a regular English "Tommy" guise recognisable even from CARRY ON SERGEANT, while their officer - Lethbridge-Stewart, is the very model of a stiff-upper Public School British career robot. UNIT's Nicholas Courtney was in fact first cast as a "Space Special Security Agent" by producer Douglas Camfield for Hartnell's late-1965 story THE DALEK'S MASTERPLAN. Camfield remembered him, and later re-cast him as Colonel (and then Brigadier) Lethbridge-Stewart in Troughton's 1968 THE WEB OF FEAR, pitching his newly formed UNIT against the Yeti. He returns to confront the Cybermen when they infiltrate the sewers beneath London in THE INVASION, and to co-operate with Pertwee against the Sea Devils, and more. Although the "Earth exile" theme was soon dropped Lethbridge-Stewart remained an intermittent presence, maturing well into the role. He's finally drawn out of retirement to assist Sylvester McCoy against interlopers from an alternative Arthurian history who mistake the Doctor for Merlin, in BATTLEFIELD from 1988.

Pertwee's 24th and final story - PLANET OF THE SPIDERS, came with a feature-role for NEW AVENGERS Gareth Hunt, in June 1974. But unique among ex-Doctors Pertwee graduated to find equal fame in another character part - even if that part had to be as a scarecrow with a selection of heads; Worzel Gummidge!

For Tom Baker, what he describes as "the leap - or the slither from Jon Pertwee to me" led to "the happiest days of my life, I think. Certainly it was the nicest job I ever had". He was to survive for 40 stories, made up of something like 187 episodes covering the most innovative period of Who-dom. THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION calls Doctor who "probably the best Space Opera in the history of TV, not excluding STAR TREK". Adding "with the increasing sophistication of the scripts, and the expertise of the special effects (including those of Roger Murray-Leach) and make-up (particularly those of June Hudson), from which many other programmes could learn a great deal about what can be done on a low budget, it has become a notably self-confident series, juggling expertly with many of the great tropes and images of the genre".

Post-dating the BBC's determined revisionism, the Tom Baker years remain the first complete collection of still-extant tales, with Baker resplendent in his floppy hats, huge scarf - "Madame Nostradamus made it for me, a witty little knitter", his sonic screwdriver and robot dog K9. Among the most audacious plots is INVISIBLE ENEMY in which the Doctor debates the ethics of the survival of the fittest with the Swarm, parasitic entities resident within his own brain! And THE TALONS OF WENG-CHIANG set in Jack the Ripper's Victorian London with the Doctor as Sherlock Homes pursuing a fugitive future war criminal hiding behind the Chinese Tong organisations. Emphasising the deliberate nod at Holmsiana there is a scary confrontation with a giant rat - an incarnation of Conan Doyle's "Giant Rat of Sumatra" often referred to by Dr Watson, but never actually previously seen. Tom Baker self-deprecatingly sees the story as "preparing me later for my huge failure as Sherlock Homes in THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES" - one of his many post-Who projects.

Tom Baker "died" 21st March 1981 in a story called

LOGOPOLIS, falling from the dish of a Radio Telescope. "I went out blithely thinking, unlike anyone else who played the Doctor, that in my future - I could vault over and somersault through the problems of type-casting. I knew everybody and everybody knew me, and I was able to call everybody. So I left this beautiful part, the best part I'd ever had. I don't think when I was playing the Doctor, that I ever had a really sane hostile letter, or a sane hostile reception in an Ale-House or a restaurant or whatever. It had been smiles all the way and I had carefully cultivated the image of the children's hero. I thought when I went away from it with this in the Bank - by that I mean imaginatively in the Bank - I had invested such a long time in it, although I'd enjoyed it so much, that the future would be golden. And in no time at all I would demonstrate my versatility. It wasn't to be so. Because of my little success - or my big success, depending on how you look at it. I don't want to be immodest, but my success as Doctor Who is the only successful, really successful thing in my whole life. I very successfully courted failure, merely, ever since. But it stayed with me. And my very success damaged my prospects for the future. Until perhaps this year, eleven years on. But looking at that film there (a Doctor Who video) I felt suddenly rather grateful, and glad, and rather proud of the BBC. I did my stint, and if nothing grand ever happens to me again, then at least once I was a hero, once I was admired and loved, and once - dare I say? - I was absolutely adored world-wide. And I'm grateful...", he pauses as though he can't quite believe its enormity himself, before repeating "... yes, adored".

The next incarnation, Peter Davison, diluted the character, concentrating more on costume than personality, distinctive only in his affection for cricket and celery. He endured until 22nd March 1984 when Colin Baker recaptured some of the Doctor's earlier zest and originality, despite his dubious teaming with the wretched Bonnie Landford for a linked series of tales, THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD. This sequence is now available in a three-video set contained in an appropriately Tardis-shaped tin box!

It was Sylvester McCoy who took what he calls "the best role in British television" through to its final transmission on 6th December 1989. Ending the 761 episode shelf-life that had elapsed since the Tardis first landed in the national psyche.

The Doctor had been struck off.

The 23rd November 1993 marks the 30th Anniversary of Doctor Who's first materialisation onto our screens. But what's thirty years in the life - or lives, of Sci-Fi's greatest Man With No Name? Over those three decades culture has undergone spaghetti-fication, into a diversity of separate scenes without a recognisable centre. Spooked by such a present, people increasingly take refuge in the kitsch of the past, escaping from Super Mario into Supermarrionation, and beyond. Doctor Who is now more than a cult, more than a triple-decade fad, he's an industry. Despite its flaws and failings, Doctor Who at its best can convey something of the awe and wonderment that the finest Science Fiction claims as its ultimate achievement.

William Hartnell glimpses that quality from the very first episode when he says "I tell you, before your ancestors turned the first wheel, the people of my world had reduced movement through the far reaches of space to a game for children".

Doctor Who is never *just* a game for children.

AMAZING FACTS: THE 20-POINT TRAVELOGUE OF A TIME LORD

- (1) The Tardis stands for "Time and Relative Dimensions in Space".
- (2) The Beatles appear in an episode of THE CHASE (22 May to 26 June 1965), when a promotional film of theirs can be seen on the Tardis monitor.
- (3) The Doctor lands at the Battle of Culloden and picks up a new companion in the form of the kilted Jamie (THE HIGHLANDERS 17 Dec 1966). Jamie is Frazer Hines later to become Joe Sudgen of EMMERDALE FARM.
- (4) The space-time co-ordinates for the Time Lord's home world - Gallifrey, in the constellation of Kasterborous, are given as 0717438000EX2147. Tom Baker reveals this is actually the BBC Telephone Number with the Doctor Who studio extension.
- (5) John Cleese and Eleanor Bron have cameo roles in CITY OF DEATH (29 Sep to 20 Oct 1979) as confused Art Lovers in Paris.

The story was written by Douglas Adams who later created HITCH-HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY.

- (6) Original Doctor Who producer Verity Lambert later worked on the ill-fated "Sun, Sex and Sangria" soap ELDORADO; while Roy Skelton, a long-time voice for both Daleks and Cybermen, also spoke for Zippy in RAINBOW.
- (7) Colin Baker's REVELATION OF THE DALEKS (23-30 March 1985) features Alexei Sayle doing his Stuff as a manic alien disc-jockey.
- (8) The Cybermen were the creation of Kit Pedler who went on to work with Terry Nation on the post-catastrophe TV series THE SURVIVORS. He also wrote a stylish SF novel called MUTANT 59. "I never really liked Cybermen" admits Tom Baker.
- (9) THE SONTARAN EXPERIMENT (22 Feb to 1 Mar 1975) was filmed on location at a house in Devon where Evelyn Waugh completed the final draft for BRIDESHEAD REVISITED.
- (10) In the pre-Tyhatcher TERROR OF THE ZYGONS (30 Aug to 20 Sept 1975) Lethbridge-Stewart says "I've been talking to the Prime Minister, and she said ...". Commenting on the sequence now Tom Baker adds "and now we've had her, and she's had us, and now - she's gone!"
- (11) The Timelords - aka KLF, achieved a #1 hit on the 43th June 1988 with "Doctorin' the Tardis" (KLF KLF 003) by fusing the Doctor Who theme with a Garry Glitter backbeat.
- (12) Other people to appear in Doctor Who include Peter Glaze (CRACKER-JACK), Hywel Bennett, Peter Purves (BLUE PETER), Peter Butterworth, David Prowse (DARTH VADER), Kenneth Cope (RANDALL AND HOPKIRK DECEASED), Bernard Bresslaw (as an Ice Warrior), Leslie Grantham (DIRTY DEN), Carmen Silvera (ALLO ALLO), George Baker (INSPECTOR WEXFORD), Bill Fraser and Nicholas Parsons. Wombles star Bernard Cribbins appears in the movie DALEKS: INVASION EARTH 2150 AD.
- (13) "Bessie, the car used by Jon Pertwee, was built from the basic chassis of a Ford E93A. Its registration number MTR 5 was switched to WHO 1 only for filming.
- (14) Jon Pertwee's THE DAEMONS was broadcast 22 May to 19 June 1971, but later "lost" by the BBC. Finally a black and white 16 mm version was discovered - a US fan's home recording. It was reconstructed and computer-colourised for video release.
- (14) A 10th Anniversary Special THE THREE DOCTORS (30 Dec 1972 to 20 Jan 1973) was intended to unite the first three Doctor Who actors in a single plot - combining to defeat Omega, an embittered Time Lord trapped in a black hole. However, the script was re-written by Terrance Dicks to take into account William Hartnell's advancing frailty. He now appears only on Tardis monitors in sequences pre-filmed at the Ealing Studios. A similar project for the 20th Anniversary - THE FIVE DOCTORS (25 Nov 1983) overcame ever greater problems. Hartnell was dead, his place taken by look-alike actor Richard Hurndall, and Tom Baker declined to participate - his contributions limited to the inclusion of previously unseen footage edited into the plot.
- (16) A more raunchy companion was introduced in THE FACE OF FEAR (Dec 1976) in the shape of Leela (Louise Jameson) - a savage wearing a skimpy leather leotard. "It was a very difficult thing to act with near-naked people" explains Tom Baker, "very strange really. Very limiting. But then ... I am limited". Leela was replaced by Romana (Lalla Ward). Tom Baker married Lalla on 13 December 1980 at the Chelsea Registry Office. The wedding made the national TV news
- (17) Katy Manning who played the Doctor's assistant Jo Grant appeared nude in a PLAYBOY spread. She posed in just her gold lame boots, using a Dalek as a prop. And if anyone has a copy - can I see it?
- (18) The Oxshott Sandpit in Surrey frequently stood in for Doctor Who's alien planets. It was subsequently filled in because - due to the marshy nature of the area, several people drowned there.
- (19) Rock God Meets Time Lord! THE PYRAMIDS OF MARS (25 Oct to 15 Nov 1975) was filmed in Mick Jagger's Surrey Estate, with occasional distractions provided by the on-set appearances of Jagger himself.
- (20) You can contact the DOCTOR WHO APPRECIATION SOCIETY - Honorary President Jon Pertwee, by sending an SSAE to PO Box 519, London SW17 8BU, England.

HUNGER PAINS

by Robert Frew

Lieutenant Commander O'Brien leaned back in his mobile command chair and gently wiped the fresh gravy from his lips with a piece of paper towelling. He had never made it to full Commander on a respectable ship, or even Chief Commander for that matter, and he was sure that he would be condemned to remain in charge of shitty little cargo vessels. He was running down his home stretch, tired and over the hill, and if he were to move in any direction, it would be down -especially after this trip, he smirked to himself as he flicked through the detail stats on Screen One of the ships computerized log.

It was the law that ALL ships keep logs, though O'Brien wondered why as he quickly glanced around the control quarters of the small ship. All that he couldn't see with a single glance was the huge storage bays which took up more than 90% of the ship, and what he could see he had been stuck in for far longer than he had wished. He read the ship stats aloud in a foolish voice to try to amuse himself:

SHIP TYPE.....GE3 LIGHT FREIGHT CARRIER.
SHIP SIZE.....680 THOUSAND TONNES
(FULLY LOADED).
CARGO TYPE.....ELECTRICAL GOODS
(ROBOTISTICS).
CARGO VALUE.....A\$ 450 000 000.
CREW NO.....8 (5 MALE, 3 FEMALE).
CREW BREAKDOWN.....LT. COMM. O'BRIEN.
SUB COMM. JEFFERY.*
FLT. OP. MASTERS.
COMP. OP. WRITE.
MED. SAUNDERS.
FLT. NURSE WINBROW.*
FLT. ENG. O'HARA.*
CREWMAN JOHNSTON
BASE.....THURSDAY ISLAND, AUST. EARTH
DESTINATION.....CRATER BASE 9, GRID 17,
SAO LIMA
APPROX. DIST.....339.45 LAYTRONS
EST. TIME OF TRIP..17.6 MONTHS
TIME ELAPSED.....23.4 MONTHS.

O'Brien stared at the last lines on the screen of the computerized log. They told the story. They said why O'Brien would never make Commander. It wasn't the tired old excuse he had told his wife and family, their friends and other senior-ranked, junior aged officers a dozen times -the lame excuse that he was being shafted by the "Big Boys" at the top, the boys who ran the company. The excuse that he, O'Brien, had been "lumbered with too many dime a dozen, two-bit worthless cargo jobs on tiny, outdated craft with next to no crew -jobs which required the skill and experience of a virgin hooker," or so he had put it to his wife.

"Christ, if I ever get my hands on one of those guys at the top, I'll...I'll rip him a new arsehole, that's what I'll do." But deep down, O'Brien felt the truth. Deep down they all knew the truth -the officers, his family and friends, even his wife. They all knew he had a shit attitude.

His wife was actually surprised he had managed to keep the job so long, and even more surprised when he finally made the rank of Lieutenant Commander (a feat which most qualified ambitious youngsters usually managed to achieve within five or six years or a dozen cargo trips - but which O'Brien had achieved in almost six

times of each). He was well qualified alright, almost too well qualified which gave him an air of superiority which didn't sit well with his superiors.

O'Brien's eyes skimmed down to what the crew had nicknamed the "five commandments" which flashed urgently below the ship stats. He read them quickly, and tried to pick the ones that he, as the authority on the vessel, hadn't broken. He came up empty handed.

1/SHIP LOG MUST BE UPDATED DAILY
2/CHECK SHIP DAMAGE AND CONDITION STATS DAILY,
& AS REQUIRED
3/HALF THE CREW MUST REMAIN AWAKE (NOT IN
SUSPENDED SLEEP) AT ALL TIMES
4/ALL VESSELS MUST, UPON REACHING THEIR
DESTINATION, ATTEND THE COMPANY DOCK,
DECLARE CARGO AND SUBMIT SHIP LOG
5/CREW CASUALTIES MUST REMAIN ON SHIP
FOR EXAMINATION UPON DESTINATION ARRIVAL.

O'Brien's eyes lingered on the word "daily." He knew of course that the phrase referred to Earth days, but he had always liked to believe it was open to personal interpretation (after all, days on Sao Lima, their destination, were over 300 Earth hours long). It was, however, the last three rules that worried O'Brien the most.

He pressed the scroll button on the keyboard of the log computer terminal, fast-forwarding to the entries which recorded the events when things had first started to go wrong. He didn't really want to read the log at all, but for some reason he felt compelled (or maybe bored):

ENTRY NO. 364
MISSION START. 4/5/33
PRESENT. 6/1/34

Two Earth days ago when GE3 first past through the cosmic cloud -Helium, dust and condensed moisture particles, neither the crew nor Lt. Commander O'Brien thought twice about it. However, on today's examination of the ship damage stats in accordance with Lt. Commander O'Brien's late orders, it appears that the navigational computer has malfunctioned, failing to detect a 1.5 degree course deviation. Although only a slight deviation, at GE3's current speed (0.1 light speed (0.62 Laytrons or 2200 million Km per day)) we are drifting off course by more than 0.09 Laytrons (30 million Km) everyday.

Lt. Commander O'Brien has ordered Crewman Johnston and Flight Engineer O'Hara to join Nurse Winbrow in suspended sleep in an effort to conserve the limited supply of food and to relieve the stress on the oxygen generators. A new course is being plotted by the navigational computer as we move, and it is assumed that our E.T.A will not change by more than a few days.

INPUT> MED. Saunders.

O'Brien read the report through twice slowly, before he erased it from the log and the back-up H-drive. A warning about illegal amendments flashed across the screen of the computerized log, a warning which lasted all of five seconds as O'Brien typed in his personal command code. As he speared the last morsel of food from his plate with his tork and sat it on his tongue to savour, his eyes sparkled as his mind ticked over, rehearsing the chain of events which he had made up to replace the old (and true). He filled the gap of the 6th of January, 2034 with his own version of what had happened that day, a version which had taken him almost three (lonely) months to perfect, before scrolling on to the next entry:

ENTRY NO. 365
MISSION START. 4/5/33
PRESENT. 7/1/34

Although advised otherwise, Lt. Commander O'Brien has refused to bring GE3 to a complete stop for the navigational computer to recalculate the necessary data to plot the new course to Sao Lima. Lt. Commander O'Brien has argued that the extra fuel required for firstly stopping the craft and then re-starting her on a new course is unwarranted when replotting can be done at our present speed, and the course can be changed using almost no fuel.

While the Commander is correct, and in this present state we are using no fuel, Flight Engineer O'Hara argued that there was

ample fuel on the ship to cater for such a crisis. Now, however, O'Hara has been placed in suspended sleep at the command of the Lieutenant Commander. The remaining crew lack the expertise to argue such a point.

As a result, the navigational computer has failed to replot an effective course, receiving excessive data interference from cosmic debris, dust and other natural satellites. Today, four days after passing through the cosmic dust, GE3 is now more than 0.36 Laytrons (120 million Km) off course. Computer Operator Write has been ordered to join Johnston, O'Hara and Winbrow in suspended sleep. Half the crew are now inoperative.

INPUT> MED. Saunders.

O'Brien read the entry through slowly again. He picked up his fork from the now empty plate beside the terminal, and stabbed it repeatedly into the control desk in front of him as he thought about Andy Saunders input. He had thought of Andy as a good friend, his closest among this crew and for many crews gone by. Andy had obviously felt strongly against most of O'Brien's commands, but why? Were they that bad?

A seed of doubt and anguish sprouted in O'Brien's mind and slowly began to flourish as he replaced Andy's log entries one by one, entries which accurately recited nothing but ill commands and bad decisions by him; O'Brien.

ENTRY NO. 366
MISSION START. 4/5/33
PRESENT. 8/1/34

The navigational computer has still failed to plot the new course to Sao Lima. The remaining crew have finally managed to convince Lt. Commander O'Brien to stop the ship (0.38 Laytrons off course) so the computer can calculate the data without interference. But the action was untimely.

GE3 has stopped with the dead planet Oberon 4 between her and our final destination. The planet is not the problem however; Oberon 4 appears to be surrounded by multiple bands of rock and ice which stretch for hundreds of millions of kilometers in all directions around the large planet. It will take almost two weeks and most of the reserve fuel to circle around the planet and its satellites, or alternatively a course can be plotted through the bands surrounding Oberon 4 in an effort to conserve time and energy.

Although warned of the significant risk, Lt. Commander O'Brien has opted to take GE3 through the bands with shields up and at one tenth power. May God wish us luck.

INPUT> MED. Saunders.

O'Brien changed the entry and then paused to consider the chain of events which would follow Saunders' input, the ones he would shortly change to cover the horrid truth.

But he would know the truth. He would always know. The memory of a dozen horribly wrong decisions came flooding into his mind as the seed of doubt, and now guilt, continued to grow. The recollection of countless small errors on one (easy) cargo voyage - a job in which nothing (right, wrong or exciting) EVER happened, a job which an "impaired child" could handle.

Suddenly the seed germinated. Suddenly O'Brien realized why he had never - could never make it to the top and command the big ships with cargos which really mattered. He now realized why he was given the cheapest craft and the most experienced crews. As though out of the blue it occurred to him that, all of his life, he hadn't given a damn about anyone; he respected and loved nothing and noone, but himself.

In a fit of self-contempt, O'Brien began to scroll through the computerized log, counting his mistakes and rule-breaking commands as the tears streamed down his hot cheeks; GE3's collision with an ice satellite in the band of Oberon 4, the damage to the system computers and oxygen generators, the excess use of fuel consumed in the manoeuvre of the ship and the trip to safety, his failure to replot their final course due to computer damage and GE3's bad positioning, severe fuel, oxygen and food shortages, his orders to have all crew save Medic Saunders and himself placed in suspended sleep...the list of problems and mistakes flowed on, spelling in their simple way why O'Brien now sat alone in the small tin room he thought of (correctly) as his coffin.

O'Brien finally stopped counting at fifteen bad commands and five- out-of-five broken "commandments" (most of which had not been recorded on the log). He stopped counting, not because he necessarily wanted to, but because he had to - he had reached the final entry on the log. It was dated three months earlier. It was a flustered and desperate entry as the last half dozen or so had been.

ENTRY NO. 378
MISSION START. 4/5/33
PRESENT. 29/4/35

This will be my last entry. O'Brien and myself have been floating aimlessly about in this abominable ship for near fifteen months. We are now six months overdue, but our distress beacon remains unanswered... God knows how far off course we are; God knows who gives a damn.

It's my last entry because today (or tonight?) I'm going to sleep. I'm starving and I'm close to going crazy, so perhaps it is best. Another day with O'Brien and I will go crazy (or maybe I already am).

Oxygen levels on the ship are near critical. The vessel herself has sustained heavy damage from multiple satellite impacts; most from the bands of Oberon 4. The ship is riddled with faults and the computers are riddled with bugs. Food finally ran out five days ago - today we ate stewed cardboard flavoured with the last cube of monosodium glutamate (delicious!).

I am so hungry I am becoming delirious. I stood, not five minutes ago, staring into Nurse Winbrow's suspension booth, her face so delicate and friendly in its sleeping state, but I lusted not for her soft rounded breasts and pure white skin; I lusted for her blood - I lusted to eat her.

Alas, Nurse Winbrow is already dead, and doing so would be fatal. Her suspension booth is malfunctioning, and slowly she will slip from a deep sleep into a state of slow, painless decay. The computer has failed to detect the malfunction, but her body already indicates signs of cyanosis. Perhaps my fate will be so kind.

INPUT> MED. Saunders.

O'Brien's eyes bulged as he read the last paragraph of Saunders input. His mind hummed with one line:

"...Nurse Winbrow is already dead, ...and doing so would be fatal.. and doing so... doing so," he echoed in his mind. Doing what, he thought, though he already knew the answer. It was trapped inside his head and refused to come out; he refused to admit... "fatal."

Eating her... would be "fatal."

In the space of a second, O'Brien's eyes darted from the empty plate at the side of the terminal, gravy still steaming, over to the empty suspension booths of Johnston, Write (their bodies now floating in Davy Jones's Space Locker - if there were such a place (another rule broken))... and Winbrow; and then over to Nurse Winbrow's carved torso on the portable stretcher table (come to think of it, her skin did look bluish).

In that same quick instant, O'Brien clutched his stomach as a strange gurgling rumble filled his small tin coffin; the cultivating poisons already chewing their way through his large intestine. His tears of self-contempt turned suddenly to tears of dismay and self-pity (or perhaps relief?). His eyes flickered across the half new but horribly incomplete computer log. For sure it would puzzle the company, but only for an hour. Placebo death? Maybe not, though the mind often helps. Either way, O'Brien's death was somewhat quick, and he missed the distress answer by a matter of hours.



A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM

1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

CHAPTER FOUR

In 1952 the scene in Australian fandom becomes more complex, due to a general upsurge in activities. The influx of new fans was creating a problem for the group meeting each Thursday night in a Sydney coffee inn. The science fiction fans moved away from the Sun Si Gai, and after trying Repin's in King Street, were now meeting at the Moccador in Market Street. A small group of fantasy fans and book collectors continued to meet at the Sun Si Gai. The newcomers joined the science-fiction faction and soon became too numerous to meet comfortably in a coffee inn. On January 31, there was a record attendance at the Moccador of twenty-one, including five of the female sex. It was obvious that the plan of meeting under such conditions would not work much longer. "Sooner or later," observed Stone in STOPGAP¹, "we'll have to hire a room in the city." Fans were asked to keep their eyes open for suitable premises in the city where gatherings could be held, and auctions conducted without members of the general public looking on and coffee shop proprietors grinding their teeth in the background.

In January, Nick Sointseff published the third issue of WOOMERA, in its usual 20 pp. printed format, and announced that this would be the last for some time as he would be handicapped by University honours work. Since both Vol Molesworth and Royce Williams would also be occupied with study, it was decided to close down Futurian Press after the publication of Molesworth's LET THERE BE MONSTERS! in April.

At the 167th meeting of the Futurian Society, held on January 23, the Secretary announced that he was written to the Atlas Publishing Co., London publishers of the British reprint edition of ASTOUNDING, and had asked if advertising space could be obtained to announce the first Australian Convention. The company had replied, suggesting that circulars might be inserted in the magazines when the next issue reached Sydney. Haddon said he had contacted Gordon & Gotch Pty Ltd., the local distributors of ASTOUNDING, who were willing to insert such circulars free of charge. The number required for NSW would be 1200. Haddon then astounded the meeting by producing a large parcel containing 1200 circulars, which he had printed himself. In due course the December, 1951, British reprint ASTOUNDING appeared in NSW bookstalls with the circulars inside them. Some 40-odd replies came back, among them letters from fans who were to become prominent in the coming months.

Attending this meeting was K. Stirling Macoboy, who was to leave Australia shortly on a visit to the U.S.A., to study television. To enable Macoboy to meet American fans as an official representative of Australian fandom, the meeting decided to elect him an honorary member of the Society. Before Macoboy actually sailed, the Society sponsored a farewell dinner to him. Held at the Allora Cafe in Pitt Street on February 7, it was attended by fourteen Sydney fans. "It was fitting that this dinner should have been one of the most pleasant

social evenings ever held by Sydney fans."²

Since Macoboy was one of the seven trustees of the Australian Fantasy Foundation, it was necessary to appoint someone to act as a proxy during his absence overseas. The fan chosen was Ian Driscoll, who had already shown a great deal of interest in the library, toiling at the weekend to catalogue it and erect shelves to house it. Accordingly, a Foundation meeting was held on January 24, and Driscoll was appointed both proxy for Macoboy and Librarian of the Foundation. The Library in Mr. Driscoll's hands underwent a remarkable transformation, - it grew from a mere shell with only seven borrowers to a flourishing concern with 47 borrowers, and increased in volume from 85 books and 200 magazines in July, 1951, to 130 books and 360 magazines a year later.

Elections fell due at the January meeting of the Futurian Society, and members indicated their satisfaction with the progress the club was making by re-electing the previous executive panel *in-into*. Director Molesworth then appointed Harry Brunen public relations officer.

At the 168th meeting (February 25) Vice-Director Veney reported that he had located premises which might be suitable for the Thursday Night group. This was the "Katinka" Library, in Pitt Street, which was available for 15/- per week. So long as fifteen fans turned up regularly, the charge would only be 1/- per head. Members decided that the Society should hire the "Katinka" and make it available to the Thursday Night group. "The unanimous verdict of the meeting was that there should be no formality about the Thursday group, and that no connection with the Society should be indicated."³ Veney was delegated to handle the business arrangements with Col. Sheppard, proprietor of the "Katinka".

The move from the Moccador to the Katinka was made on March 6, and no less than 26 fans attended the first night. Thereafter an average of 29 was maintained, a maximum of 38 being reached on April 17. It quickly became apparent that soon ever larger premises would be needed if the present peak of enthusiasm was maintained. A feature of the Thursday Night gatherings was the auction of books and magazines from which the group took 10% commission. This, together with the surplus attendance money, quickly put the group on a sound financial footing. While Veney remained nominally in charge, two new fans, - Len Roth and Les Raethel, - soon became the "guardians" of the group, assisted by three other newcomers, Rosemary G. Simmons, Don K. Lawson and Bruce Purdy.

Evidence of the rising Sydney fan population is given by the theatre-party organised by the Futurian Society, on Veney's suggestion, to see THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL at the Regent Theatre on March 5. No less than 83 fans and friends went along.

The last week in February and the first three weeks in March were feverishly devoted to preparations for the Convention, scheduled for March 22. Biggest job was to cope with the fans responding to the circular in ASTOUNDING, and soon Convention Secretary Graham Stone was farming out letters to other Futurians to answer. Many of the "new" fans disclosed that they had been reading and collecting science fiction for years, but never suspected that organised activities were being carried out. Membership in the Australian Science Fiction Society jumped from 70 in February to 82 in April, and two months later passed the 100 mark. Taking 1200 as the number of regular stf. readers in N.S.W., Stone concluded that before this only 5.5% of fans in this state had been known. For Sydney the figure would be higher, about 8% perhaps. "If we were better able to make contacts it would have been much higher, - and it's going up sharply as new fans write in to ask for more information on the Convention."⁴ Word was received that fans were coming from Melbourne, Coolangatta, Newcastle, Bathurst, Forster and Mona Vale, as well as many from the outerlying suburbs of Sydney.

Though it had been raining furiously throughout the week, Saturday dawned clear and fine. In the large hall of the G.U.O.O.F. Building, fans were putting the last touches to their exhibits, while others coupled up the P. A. system, and pinned posters and movie stills around the walls. Nick Sointseff sat ready at the door with a

² NOTES AND COMMENTS, #3, May 26, 1952.

³ Minutes.

⁴ STOPGAP, February, 1952, P. 33.

¹ January, 1952, p. 22.

cash box, name cards, copies of the 20 pp. printed Souvenir Booklet, and also WHAT IS FANDOM?, a splendid 12 pp. duplicated explanatory pamphlet produced by the A.S.F.S. When the doors opened master-of-ceremonies Royce Williams began a running fire of welcomes and wisecracks over the microphone. Thirty fans were waiting to be admitted, and a further twenty-eight arrived during the afternoon, making a total attendance of 58, - by far the largest fan gathering ever held in Australia. Most of those attending naturally came from the Sydney area, but a national flavour was introduced by the presence of Race Mathews, from Melbourne; Ted Butt, Newcastle; and Bob Guy, Forster. Congratulatory messages were read from Kevin Smith (Ballina, N.S.W.), Roger N. Dard (Perth), Thomas G. L. Cockroft (New Zealand), and A Bertram Chandler (at sea).

In the evening, a Dinner at the Mayfair was attended by forty fans, following which films were screened. It had proven impossible to obtain the programme originally contemplated, - to include METROPOLIS, and documentaries on rocketry, - and a scratch programme was shown, including THE MAGIC SWORD (A Yugoslav fantasy), LIFE OF PASTEUR, and a microphotography short (French), THE LOON'S NECKLACE, and FIDDLE-DE-DEE (Canadian). The screening was unfortunately marred by breakdowns.

The Convention closed at 11 p.m., but groups of fans kept talking until the early hours of the morning. Nothing had been organised for Sunday, but fans met informally in several groups, the largest being a gathering of eleven at Bill Russell's flat in Bondi Junction, where the history of Australian fandom was discussed in detail.

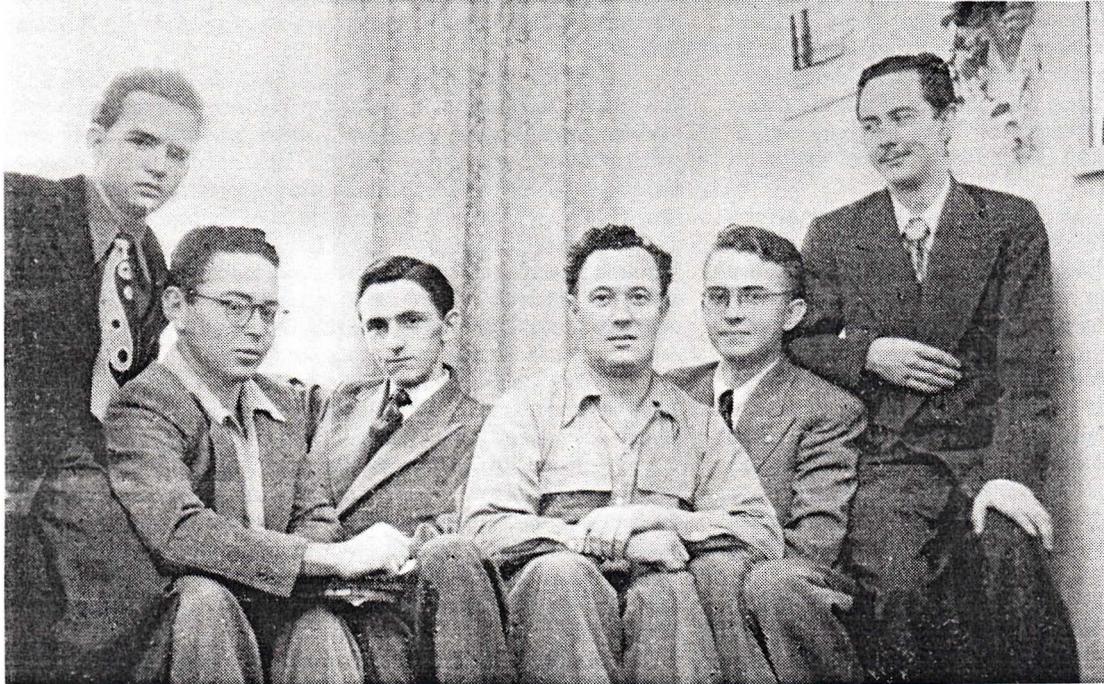
The Convention had been a grand success. Many factors emerged from it, but the most important one was that Sydney fans could work together as a team. "The problems of our isolated and lonely existence have tended to make us self-reliant and anarchistic," Veney wrote,⁵ "but this was anything but a one-man show." Many valuable lessons had been learned by the Sydney fan community. "There were," Veney declared, "several bad points that the assembly graciously overlooked, but which were noted by the organisers. There has been much analytical discussion of the form and style of the main day's activities. There has been

much debate as to whether the most was exacted from the opportunities presenting themselves. All this is good and healthy. It is my belief that the best way to crush laurels is to sit on them."⁶

Returning now to the formal business session of the Convention, considerable discussion took place on the state of the Australian Fantasy Foundation, and the possibility of setting up branch libraries in other States. Race Mathews proposed that the Trustees consider bestowing Life Membership upon fans in return for suitable gifts of books and magazines. This was seconded by Nicholson, who suggested that donation of sufficient material should exempt the borrower from further fees. Opposing the motion, Doug. Stanborough said real fans would donate material and not expect any honour in return. When put to the vote, the motion was lost by 28 to 15.

Harry Brunen moved, seconded by Stone, that the Convention resolve, if not actually to boycott THRILLS INC., at least to express its disapproval of the way in which THRILLS had treated the Futurian Society when it had sought THRILLS' aid in publicising the Convention. Len Roth argued that it would be better to get THRILLS to improve the standard of the science fiction it published than to antagonise them by showing disapproval. Haddon said the publishers of THRILLS were not interested in the opinions of fans, - it was just another source of revenue to them. Molesworth said this was not the point, - "We want fans to know that this, the first Australian Convention went on record as expressing its disapproval of trash being marketed," he said. M. Lazar moved an amendment, seconded S. Dunk, that THRILLS be encouraged to publish science fiction of a "more mature and serious kind". The amendment was carried by 46 votes to 2.

P. Glick then moved, seconded Stone, that the Convention



Willy Russell, Kevin Dillon, Don Lawson, Wm. Veney, N. Solnsteff, G. Stone - Sunday of 1st Convention.

As the official opening was not until 11 a.m. fans had an hour to get acquainted and look over the various exhibits. Qantas Airways had sent along two impressive items, - scenes contrived with vividly real 3-dimensional models, showing in one division the N.S.W. coastline seen from Trans-Pacific rocket height; in the other, a Lunar landscape with miniature rocket and spacesuited figures, all well in Bonestell's class.

Graham Stone had arranged an extensive exhibit covering the history of science fiction in both professional and fan spheres. This included samples of very early magazines (from 1926 to 1932), notable fan magazines (from a 1933 FANTASY FAN to the latest SLANT), and stf. magazines in other languages, including Spanish, French, Swedish, German, Dutch and Gaelic. Mr Stone conducted tours of this exhibit and gave explanatory talks to the newcomers.

Another centre of attraction was the Auction table, where Haddon and Purdy had put on display the 150-odd books and magazines to be auctioned later in the day. On the other side of the hall was the Foundation exhibit, where Driscoll had set out a choice selection from the Library between "rocketship" bookends. During the day he received 23 applications for borrowers' cards. On a fourth stand Futurian Press books were exhibited.

At 11 a.m. Chairman Veney formally opened the Convention, Molesworth then gave a 10-minute talk, "What is Science Fiction?", following which Stone spoke for a similar period on "What is Fandom?"

Next, the auction was conducted. It lasted for an hour and a half, and provoked a good deal of reckless bidding, up to 22/- being offered for current American magazines. The highest bid recorded was 30/- for the book edition of Weinbaum's BLACK FLAME.

After lunch came the main session, run in a business-like manner. Reports were received from the various fan organisations, questions were fired from the hall, and motions were debated on the floor. We shall return to this session in due course.

⁵ OFFICIAL REPORT, p. 1.

⁶ Ibid.

view with approval the increasing number of good quality science fiction stories appearing in local non-stf. magazines. This was also carried 46 - 2. Dave Cohen moved, seconded Purdy, that a second Convention be held in 1953. This was carried 48 - 3.

A vote of thanks to the Convention Committee was moved by Molesworth, seconded by Stone, and carried by acclamation.

Financially, the Convention had been very successful. Total takings from admission, sale of souvenir booklets, the auction, a raffle, and a donation, was 45.16.7 pounds. Total expenditure, including hire of the hall, P. A. system, catering, photographic and stenographic work, came to 22.19.8 pounds, leaving a credit balance of 22.16.8 pounds. When these figures were made available to the Futurian Society, members decided to make a donation of 5 pounds to the Foundation, and to use the balance to publish an Official Report of the Convention, and to help finance Australian representation at overseas Conventions. The report was issued in July, in a duplicated 14 pp. quarto format with printed blue card covers. Of the 190 copies published, one was supplied to each fan who had attended or materially assisted the Convention, and the balance was sold at 1/- per copy.

The 169th meeting of the Futurian Society of Sydney was held on the Monday night following the Convention as an "open" meeting, and no less than fourteen guests attended, including five women. After Veney had formally reported the facts of the Convention to the meeting, consideration was given to the recommendations that had come forward. Those concerning Australian representation at the forthcoming British and American Conventions were immediately adopted, and two sub-committees, headed respectively by Stone and Banning, were appointed to effect representation. A display board consisting of half-a-dozen photographs taken at the Australian Convention, with suitable captions, was later sent by air to the London group. With regard to the American Convention, the Society decided to investigate the possibility of making a 16 mm. film accompanied by a commentary on a tape-recording.

An unexpected storm broke at the "open" meeting, when a motion came forward that a women's auxiliary⁷ be formed. Rosemary Simmons asked whether women were eligible for ordinary membership, and if so, a woman's auxiliary was unnecessary. It soon became evident that the present members, - all male - were divided on the issue. Stone and Banning spoke strongly against sex discrimination, Banning uttering his now famous, "Mr Chairman, I'm shocked! Are we Futurians or are we Victorians?" Molesworth warned the Society that the admission of women had caused trouble in the prewar days of the club⁸. After heated debate, a motion to admit Miss Simmons was defeated by six votes to three.

But the matter was not allowed to rest at this point. Banning and Stone exercised their right under the Constitution to demand a special meeting, which was held on April 7. Applications for membership from Doug. Nicholson, Bruce Purdy and Len Roth were carried unanimously, then a fresh application from Miss Simmons was read out. The voting resulted five in favour, five against. Director Molesworth then gave his casting vote against the motion. Banning moved that "this Society makes it clear that... it does not discriminate on the grounds of race, creed, party or sex in considering the eligibility of members." This was seconded by McGuinness, and carried.

Later in the meeting, Stone objected to the negative vote cast by the Director, and moved that the earlier decision be rescinded. This was seconded by McGuinness, and carried, 5 - 3. Stone then

removed, again seconded McGuinness, that Miss Simmons be admitted to membership. The motion was carried 6 - 4. This test-case having been established, an application for membership by Norma Hemming at the next meeting was carried unanimously. The election of Kevin Dillon on May 5 and Les Raethel on June 23 brought Society membership to twenty-three.

The fight for admission by the women did not discourage them as fans, - on the contrary, it gave new stimulus to their activity. Banding together, they published in April the first issue of VERTICAL HORIZONS, a duplicated 8 pp. folded foolscap fanzine, under the general editorship of Rosemary Simmons, Laura Molesworth and Norma Hemming. Another new fan - Norma Williams - assisted with the second issue which appeared in May. The third issue - November, 1953 - was a one-woman effort produce by Rosemary Simmons.

At this time, also, Ken Martin and Vol Molesworth felt that the swollen fan population needed a medium of information more frequent than Stone's STOPGAP, which appeared roughly on a monthly basis. Accordingly, the pair purchased a rotary duplicator and began publishing an experimental 4 pp. foolscap fanzine, NOTES AND COMMENT, the title of which indicates its policy. Copies were distributed on April 28, May 12 and May 26, but the pair experienced increasing trouble with the duplicator, and could not keep up a regular fortnightly schedule. Rather than issue NOTES AND COMMENTS monthly or every six weeks, - which would destroy its value as a newspaper, they decided to abandon the project.

The Convention and its attendant publicity had brought to light many new fans. One result of this was to render the "Katinka" Library unsuitable for the Thursday night gatherings. Larger quarters had to be found. The Futurian Society took the matter in hand, and at Meeting #173 (May 26) Miss Simmons announced that she could obtain use of the Sydney Bridge Club in George Street. This had the added advantage of a supper service and the charge would be 3/- per head. The Society decided to hire these premises each Thursday night, and the move, made on June 5, was hailed a success by the 31 fans attending.

Meetings at the Bridge Club continued throughout the remainder of the year, with an average weekly attendance of 28. When Len Roth withdrew from activities, later in the year, Les. Raethel became custodian. Don Lawson devised an efficient means of conducting auctions. The Thursday Night group proved so profitable that it was able to hand 15 pounds towards the cost for the 1953 Convention. Beginning as a service to Thursday Night fans, but later being partly subsidised and more widely circulated, Rex Meyer's S.F. REVIEW saw its first issue in October, and continued to appear on a monthly basis. In a oneed $\frac{1}{4}$ to format, running from 4 to 8 pages, this publication aimed at providing critical reviews contributed by various fans of currently available magazines and books. It fulfilled a long felt need, both answering the demand for regular reviews, and providing a medium for co-operative effort.

Another result of the influx of new fans was a move to alter the structure of fan organisation. It was felt in some quarters that the Futurian Society would not be able to function efficiently with twenty-three members working in committee. Two possible remedies were suggested, - the first, that the Futurian Society should cease to be "the ruling body of fandom" and become more of a social group, and that a new Standing Committee or Council of Fandom should be set up, with delegates from the F.S.S., A.S.F.S., the Foundation, the Thursday Night group, the North Shore Futurian Society and such other groups as may be formed by the new fans. This was discussed at an unofficial meeting at Coogee attended by Stone, Solntseff, Brunen, McGuinness, Driscoll, Williams, Haddon and Molesworth, but no action was taken.

The second plan, proposed by Arthur Haddon, was put before the Futurian Society in the form of a set of proposed amendments to the Constitution. A radically revised Constitution, drawn up by Haddon, and incorporating amendments suggested by Dave Cohen, was considered at a special F.S.S. meeting held on May 5. Haddon agreed that structural alterations were necessary, but argued that these should be carried out inside, not outside the club. "In the twelve years of our existence we have gained some tradition and a certain amount of prestige," he said. "Should our control pass to this Council, we would lose all that, and to some extent ruled by a body bereft of

⁷ I raised this in the first place, My idea being to do something for members' wives and relatives who weren't interested in SF. But it wasn't wanted. (G.S.)

⁸ I dispute this. Very few women had anything to do with the early club and I wasn't aware of any trouble. For the record, the first who wasn't someone's wife or sister, and the first of all active, was Jean Roberts who was Treasurer in 1943. However, in the 50s there were some women on the scene who were not to be ignored. It will be seen that some members had strong views at this meeting: one reason was that the custom of adultery had been introduced and there was some, shall we say, controversy behind the scenes. (G.S.)

the experience of our many years as a fan body." He proposed instead that the executive panel of the Society should be increased in number from four to seven, and that it should meet apart from the general members. The enlarged panel was to be elected annually, and would be composed of members who had attended 75% of all meetings prior to their elections. All recommendations to fandom would be made by this panel and not the Society proper.

There was considerable opposition to the Haddon-Cohen amendments when the debate ensued. Stone said the existing Constitution was ideal because it was flexible. Director Molesworth surrendered the Chair to Treasurer Sointseff to speak as a private member against the motion. He said it was unrealistic to attempt to meet change by legalistic reforms of this sort. The Constitution should be interpreted by meetings in the light of whatever circumstances arose. Stone moved, seconded Molesworth, that the amendments be rejected. The debate was gagged, and the motion carried 8 - 3.

At the 173rd meeting, held on May 26, Stone introduced as a guest Lyell Crane, an Australian fan who had just returned from a world tour, in the course of which he had contacted fan groups in the U.S.A., Canada and England. Crane entertained the Society with a most interesting address, and concluded by urging that more activity be devoted to international relations.⁹



Hemming, Leggett, Butt, Stone, Norma Williams, Picklum, Crane, Brunen, Fisher, Valerie Pauline, Glick - Wentworth Falls

Crane was one of seventeen fans who attended the "science fiction weekend" early in July. Held at the Wentworth Falls Hotel in the Blue Mountains, this was the first social of its kind. Some fans spent the entire weekend at the hotel; others drove up for the Sunday. The second weekend was staged on August 9 - 10. Twelve fans went along, including Ted Butt, who made the round trip of 340 miles from Newcastle. A carload of four swelled the numbers on the Sunday. The third, held in December, attracted only seven fans, but at this time University and Tech. College exams were in full swing.

The collapse of THRILLS with its 23rd issue in June confirmed Doug. Nicholson in his idea of publishing a semi-professional magazine which would serve as a "forerunner" for the real thing.

"When we get our long-awaited, real Aussie promag," Nicholson wrote, "we want it to spring from fandom, and have the interests of fandom at heart." Accordingly he invited contributions to FORERUNNER, a magazine "of indefinite size and frequency designed to feel the way for a professional, adult, Australian science-fiction magazine." Nicholson was critical of the type of fan magazine that was being produced; they were, in his estimation, an outlet for fan gossip. "This preoccupation with the trivia of fandom itself,¹⁰" he wrote, "is a fine case of tail-chasing. It could be called a second derivative of science fiction, - a concentration on the means in which the end has been largely lost sight of..." The first issue of FORERUNNER appeared in Spring, 1952, in an 80 pp. 4to format. The bulk of the issue was duplicated, with a small photolitho insert, and the pages were stapled between overlapping card covers. Some 200 copies were published, and apart from a few retained for overseas fans, the total issue sold readily. FORERUNNER #1 contained 30,000 words, - the first half of a serial by Molesworth, short stories by Norma Hemming, Norma Williams, C. Gilbert, and Royce Williams, verse by Lex Banning, and an article by Nicholson.

The 174th meeting of the Futurian Society, held on June 23, was largely taken up with plans for the Fifth Sydney Conference. This was the last meeting attended by William D. Veney, who had rendered such outstanding service to Sydney fandom in the past. Appropriately

enough, Veney held the Chair for this meeting, the Director being unable to get along. Late in July, Veney left Sydney to take a position in Launceston (Tasmania), after nominating Ken Martin to act in his place as Chairman of the Conference.

Attendance at the Fifth Sydney Conference, held at the G.U.O.O.F. Hall, on Saturday 19, was disappointing¹¹. Although nearly 100 invitations had been sent out, only 19 fans attended. Those present were considerably cheered by a telegram from Veney, who had spent a few days in Melbourne on his way to Tasmania. Veney reported that a local fan group had been formed in Melbourne, and a library committee set up, headed by R. J. McCubbin and Race Mathews.

⁹ He had become interested in activities when living in Canada and been one of the organisers of the experimental Science Fiction International. For a while he took over much of the work of the A.S.F.A. (G.S.)

¹⁰ STOPGAP, May-June, 1952, p. 56.

¹¹ It had been organised on the initiative of Veney, who left Sydney before it was held, and seemed to have no clear purpose. (G.S.)

The Conference heard a report on the A.S.F.S. by Graham Stone, who told of a rapidly growing membership, continued publication of STOPGAP and special leaflets, a new magazine to be published later, and a planned division of executive duties. Ian Driscoll, reporting on the Australian Fantasy Foundation, told of a healthy financial state, steady additions to the library, and a proposed branch in Melbourne. A new catalogue was made available. Rosemary Simmons then reported on the VERTICAL HORIZONS group, and Doug. Nicholson outlined his plans for FORERUNNER.

Graham Stone reported that to effect Australian representation at the London Convention, a display had been prepared, comprising six photographs taken at the First Australian Convention, with identifying captions, plus a selection of Australian fan publications, and a message of goodwill. This material had been airmailed to E. J. Carnell, editor of NEW WORLDS, who had set it up prominently in the Convention hall. A letter of acknowledgement had been received from Secretary Frank Arnold, who had added that the display would also be placed on view at a regional gathering in Manchester.¹²

The rest of the Conference was devoted to discussion of the 1953 Australian Convention. It was decided that it should be spread over three days, preferably the last weekend in April. Nominations for the Convention Committee were called for, and a tentative list of names referred to the Futurian Society for ratification.

At the 175th meeting of the Society (held on July 28), elections for office bearers fell due. Following his excellent handling of the Fifth Conference, Ken Martin was elected Director unopposed. Vol Molesworth became Vice-Director; Len Roth, Treasurer; Arthur Haddon, Secretary; and Rosemary Simmons Assistant Secretary. David Cohen volunteered for the position of Public Relations Officer. At the next meeting, however, he relinquished this post due to pressure of private business.

When the Conference recommendations came up for discussion, Haddon moved that a liaison officer be appointed who would be responsible for the working of the Convention Committee between then and the date of the Convention. This was seconded by Stone, and carried 11 - 1.

For the position of Convention Chairman, four members were nominated - Haddon, Martin, Molesworth, and Nicholson. Molesworth was elected by preferential voting.

Discussion was resumed at a special meeting held at the Katinka on a Sunday, August 3. A proposed programme, drawn up by Molesworth and Stone, was adopted: it provided for a cocktail party on the Friday night, a general "Exposition of Science Fiction" on Saturday (exhibits and talks), films on Saturday night, the auction Sunday morning, and the formal business session Sunday afternoon. Dates were fixed at May 1-2-3, 1953.

The remaining members of the Convention Committee were then elected, as follows:

Liaison Officer & Secretary:	A. W. Haddon
Treasurer:	L. Roth
Auctioneer:	B. Purdy
Films:	L. Banning
Booklet:	V. Molesworth
Publicity: (general)	Miss Simmons
(overseas)	R. D. Nicholson
Master of Ceremonies:	K. Martin

¹² A first! (G.S.)

Meanwhile, a storm was brewing in the Australian Fantasy Foundation. Of the seven trustees appointed in July, 1952, two were no longer in Sydney (Macoboy and Veney), and three had withdrawn from the active fan field (Larnach, Russell, and Sointseff). Sointseff had resigned from the Secretary-Treasureship, and the administration of the library was being carried by Ian Driscoll (proxy for Macoboy) assisted by Molesworth and Stone. Now, however, Driscoll found that he could not carry on as Librarian, and Molesworth asked that the Library, which had been housed for some time at his home, be moved elsewhere. A meeting of the Trust was convened on August 7, at which Driscoll formally tendered his resignation as Librarian. Two offers were then made to house and administer the library, - one from Graham Stone, the other from Arthur Haddon. Stone said that Haddon was not a Trustee, and that if Haddon's offer was accepted, the Trust would be allowing the library to pass from out of its control, and would therefore violate its constitution. Others present took the view that the Trust had the power to appoint a non-Trustee as its agent, and preceded to appoint Haddon. Stone thereupon tendered a letter of



Lawson, Stone, Pishblum, Dillon, Veney, Leggett, Crane, Raethel, Butt, Fisher - 1st W'Falls weekend.

resignation; he declared that the Trust had defaulted and the library automatically reverted to the F.S.S. The meeting then elected Haddon to the vacancy on the Trust caused by Stone's resignation.

The dispute was brought before the notice of the Futurian Society at its 177th meeting, held on August 25. Haddon said that the Foundation records given to him "were in a chaotic state, and had been obtained only after difficulty." He accused Stone of withholding monies which were the property of the Foundation. Stone, in reply, said he had kept certain records and monies because, "with the Foundation no longer in existence, there were no officers of that body to whom he could hand those records and monies."¹³ In reply to Banning, who asked if the F.S.S. had any jurisdiction over the Foundation, the Director said he had obtained a legal opinion, and had been informed that since the original transfer documents did not contain the word "irrevocable", the original owners could regain control whenever the Trust was shown to have violated its agreement.

Haddon moved, seconded Simmons, that the Society accept the validity of the transfer document, and recognise the existing body of trustees. The motion was lost, 2 - 3. Molesworth then moved, seconded Raethel, that the Society invoke the machinery of the Futurian Court of Inquiry to investigate whether the transfer document

¹³ I don't know just what was going on here. It's incredible that I would think of handling the library, for one thing, and I don't know why I would have had records, much less funds. (G.S.)



Molesworth and Veney - "Fake photo" both claimed.

was valid, and if the Trust existed. This was carried, 7 - 1, Stone in opposition, Banning and Nicholson abstaining.

The exact form that such an Inquiry should take was debated at the next two meetings (Sept. 22 and Oct. 27). Throughout this period, Haddon took the view that the legality of the Trust was *sub judice*, and ceased to operate the library. This caused considerable dissatisfaction among fans attending the Thursday Night gatherings, who were deprived of reading matter. To some observers, this two months' delay appeared to be procrastination; to others, it indicated that the question was very thoroughly probed before final decision was made. However, at Meeting #179, it was moved Haddon, seconded Stone, that the Court of Inquiry be held. The motion was carried 9 - 1. Members had obviously decided the Inquiry was necessary. To make it equally clear that no attack on personalities was intended, the meeting defeated by 7 votes to 4 a further motion by Haddon that "an Inquiry be held to investigate the actions and competence of the trustees only."

The second sitting of the Futurian Court of Inquiry was held at the Katinka library on December 17. Presiding was F.S.S. Director Ken Martin, assisted by Mr. Malcolm Milbery, LL.B, as Judge-advocate; and Vol Molesworth, as Examiner. Although notices had been sent by registered post to all Trustees, only three attended. Evidence was given by Simmons, Haddon, Dillon, Stone, Glick, Driscoll, and Molesworth. A transcript of the proceedings, running to 23 closely-typed foolscap pages, is in the club files.

In his summing-up, the Examiner made the following submissions: (1) that the recommendation made by the general fan rally on June 1, 1950, was merely that the F.S.S. should wind up its affairs, *not* that the Society should hand over its property to a Trust; (2) that Meeting 159 of the Society, at which the decision was made to hand over the library, was not legally convened; (3) that anything done by the persons Macoboy, Molesworth and Solntseff in a coffee shop on June 22, 1950 was in no way binding on the Society; (4) that the transfer document was bad in law; (5) that since the document contained only six of the seven required signatures, there was no evidence that any Foundation existed; (6) that even if it did exist, the Foundation had violated its own constitution by not holding regular meetings and elections, improperly replacing a Trustee, and failing to pay stipulated salaries.

Leaving aside the legal aspect, he continued, the *spirit* of the 1950 decisions was to accumulate a collection of books and magazines and administer it by responsible individuals for the use of Australian fans. He submitted that the continuance of the Trust in its present form would not achieve this.

The Judge-advocate stated that, on the evidence, no Trust of the library had ever been validly constituted. An essential condition for the validity of Meeting 159 had not been complied with, and the status of minutes, in law, was such that, however confirmed or

ratified, they could not retrospectively validate a meeting which, in law, was never held. The transfer document was defective because it did not contain any words which conveyed property to trustees for the benefit of a specific class of persons.

"I am inclined to believe that all the property, the subject of this Inquiry, is still the property of the original donors," he declared. "We have before us a practical, and not a legal, problem. We are to do certainly as nearly as possible what the donors intended."

To this end, he said, the Futurian Society should make completely new provisions for the control, ownership and administration of the library. The Society should amend its Constitution and Rules to ensure legal ownership of the library, and provide authority for a librarian to administer the library on the Society's behalf.

These recommendations came before the Futurian Society early in the New Year, and, as we shall see, were acted upon. The Society was, inevitably, criticised for the action it had taken, the Inquiry being described in one quarter as "a trial of the trustees", in another as "the rape of the Foundation". The facts, however, are incontrovertible, and a glance at the transcript will show that no person was "on trial": the Inquiry confined itself to questions of law. There may have been other solutions, and the question was - as Mr. Hilbery stated - "a practical one." The Futurian Society resumed control of the Library early in 1953, and once again it was opened to general fan borrowing. The Librarian became responsible to a regular meeting body, with regularly elected officers. The future alone could determine whether the move was beneficial to fandom.

The recommendation made at the First Convention, that Australia should be represented at the 10th Anniversary World Convention, to be held in Chicago on August 30 - 31 and September 1, had been adopted by the Futurian Society. At first, it was hoped to send either a short film, or a series of slides, accompanied by a tape-recording. This, however, proved too expensive, and eventually the Society decided to make a double-sided 12 in recording. This was cut at the Chas. E. Blank studios on Friday, August 8, and airmailed to America, the total cost being 3.14.0 pounds. The Society was dismayed to hear later that the record had arrived damaged, and was not played at Chicago.

In the last quarter of 1952, the Society turned more attention to the Second Australian Convention. Haddon reported that 3,000 circulars would be printed for insertion in a British reprint edition of *ASTOUNDING*. Nicholson reported that a large number of circulars has been sent to professional and fan publishers, and organisations, overseas. Haddon reported that the Woollahra Golf Club had been booked for the cocktail party, the G.U.O.O.F. Hall for the Saturday (12.30 to 11 p.m.), and the Bridge Club for Sunday. Convention charges were settled at a guinea for the party; 10/- for the Convention. Changes were made in the Convention Committee, Haddon taking over the Treasurer and the Booklet, Don Lawson the Films and Auction, and Stone local fan publicity.

During the year, Les Raethel, Jack Leggett and Christine Davison had joined the Futurian Society, while Roy Williams, Norma Hemming, David Cohen, Lex Banning, Ian Driscoll and Wm. D. Veney had resigned. On December 30, membership stood at nineteen. Fees were increased to two guineas a year on November 24.

Meanwhile, another fan group had become active in Sydney. This was the North Shore Futurian Society, formed by M. A. Bos and J. G. Crawford shortly after the First Convention. Composed mainly of younger fans, the group received considerable help in the early stages from Wm. D. Veney. Only one meeting of the club was held in 1952, attended by eight members. Bos was elected President, and G. W. Hubble Vice-President. On the Library side, however, rapid progress was achieved; starting on April 1, with only four borrowers and 34 books and magazines, it had twelve borrowers and 50 items by June; 49 borrowers and 200 items in October and 63 borrowers and 250

items by the end of the year. In October, N.S.F.S. produced the first issue of its NOTESHEET, a single roneod f'cap sheet, and plans were prepared for a club magazine, TERRIFIC. In Bos' words, "Somewhere along the line the club and library merged".

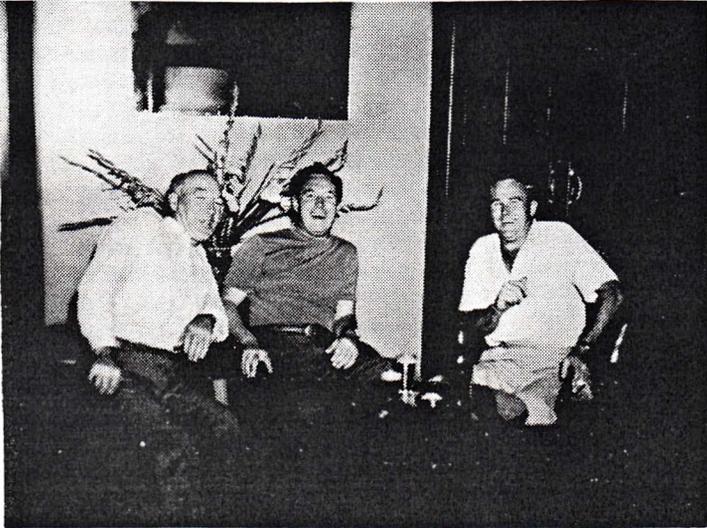
In the latter half of 1952, activities in other States began to take substantial form. In Melbourne, Race Mathews and Bob McCubbin organised regular fortnightly gatherings of fans at each others' homes, until their numbers grew so large - no less than seventeen turning up at McCubbin's home one night - that it became necessary to find public premises. At a meeting held at Mathews'

caused Stone to raise membership fees to 5/- a year, still only a nominal charge. The administration had increased to such proportion that in July Stone had appointed Lyell Crane as Secretary, mainly to assist with correspondence, and then elevated himself to President.

As activity grew in Victoria and South Australia, he appointed Race Mathews local secretary in Melbourne, and Ian Moyes local secretary in Adelaide.

On an Australia-wide front, fan activity was building up its tempo as 1952 drew to a close.

(Continued next issue)



Bryning, Veney and Mustchin.

home, attended by McCubbin, Marshall MacLennan, Gordon Kirby and Dick Jenssen, it was decided to form the Melbourne Science Fiction Group, a loose sort of organisation analogous to the Thursday Night group in Sydney. Meetings began at Vals' Coffee Lounge on August 14, and continued each week until a roll-up of nineteen forced a further move to the basement of the Oddfellows' Hall in Latrobe Street on November 14. Among the new active members of the group were Leo Harding, Mervyn Binns, and Ian Crozier. Early in the piece the Melbourne fans began a library, and film screenings were regularly given. As the year drew to a close, plans were being finalised for the publication of several fanzine

For many years, Queensland's sole voice had been that of Chas. S. Mustchin, veteran fan residing at Coolangatta. Early in 1952, however, Kevin Smith moved to nearby Ballina, and the two began working to stir up interest locally. Smith contacted Frank Bryning in Brisbane, who in turn contacted John Gregor, Harry Brook, G. R. Tafe, and other fans. The field was ripe for organisation when Wm. D. Veney left Tasmania in November and transferred his employment to Brisbane. There was a historic occasion on November 24, when Mustchin and Veney, who had been corresponding for 12 years, met for the first time at Bryning's home. Soon regular meetings were being held in Brisbane, and plans were considered for a library and a fanzine. Neither Brisbane nor Melbourne, however, got into full swing until early in 1953.

In Adelaide, several new fans had come to light, among whom Ian Moyes and Mrs. J. Joyce were the most active.

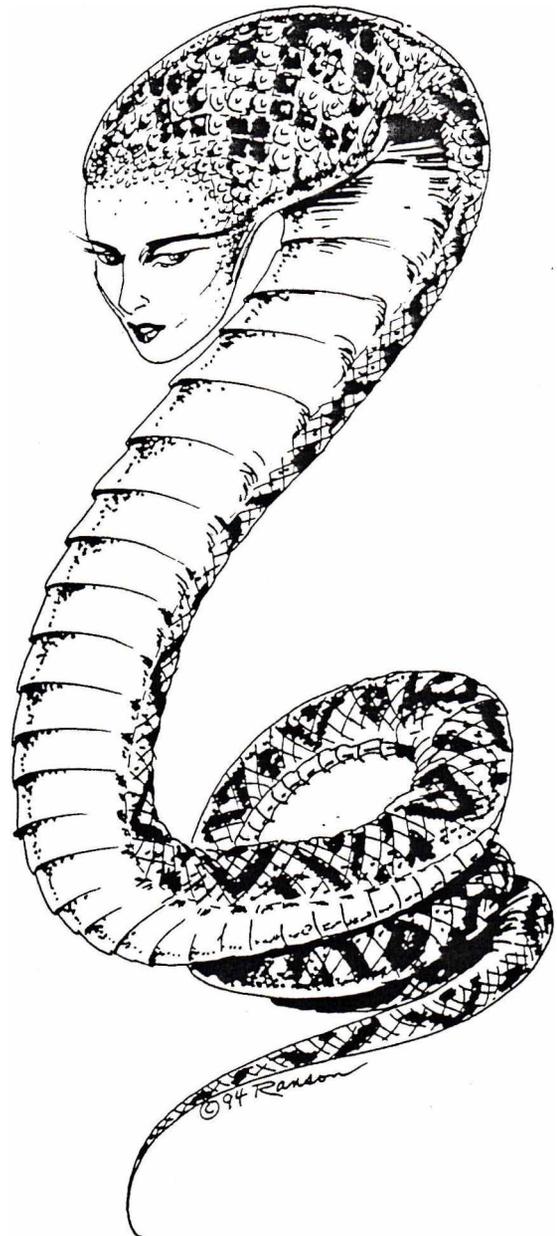
Throughout the year, membership had more than doubled in the national organisation, Australian Science Fiction Society. The actual breakdown in figures is:

January	62	June
February	70	August
April	82	November
May	93	December

Graham Stone had continued publication of STOPGAP on a fairly regular monthly basis, the last issue (#11) appearing in November. This was followed, in December, by A LETTER FROM SYDNEY, in a 3 pp. folded f'cap roneod format. The demise of STOPGAP, however, heralded a new publication in 1953.

During 1952, the increased circulation of STOPGAP, had c

[Photos and additional footnotes (in *italics*) courtesy of Graham Stone]



POETRY, TOO:

CHILDBIRTH ON A CIVILISED PLANET

Emotionless, the doctor applied tools.
The Foetus extracted,
they wheeled her away.
Although she could not move,
and could not relieve herself,
they did not check upon her
until the next day.

The aerobus arrived
to take her to the
nursery planet,
where she would tend her offspring;
The matriarch checking
daily, weekly,
to see that she did so.

She did not rest.
She could not heal.
But there was no help for her,
she had resigned her rights
when she had chosen
to join the gene pool.

- Cecelia Drewer

THE ILLUSIONIST

As I was walkin' down the street
I thought I saw him ahead,
I followed on trembling feet
wherever he led.

We threaded through the crowd
And entered a dark lane.
The sun blushed behind a cloud
As I lept into his arms again.

Tear blind eyes freed my senses
To see the monster manning the trap.
I halted at the hyper-spatial fences,
Poised to take a step back...

Come, thou Demond of Delgon,
Appear as my lover again for me.
I know not where he is gone,
And I may be consumed by thee.

- Cecelia Drewer

THE DOUBLE RAINBOW OF DUTY

tomorrow's paper
would make me rich today he
said kicking ashes
of all the yesterdays his
time machine keeps right
on bringing stupid as dog
thinking it is loved

- Steve Sneyd

THE CYBORG

Raindrops keep falling on my head
Long after I think I am dead;
With a chest of iron and legs of steel,
I have a body I just can't kill.

Rain drops cover the gut in the bin,
And I am powered by a motor within.
Far cheaper than a positronic brain,
Is a 'borg with a mind hazed by pain.

When the raindrops fell in my heart
I rose up and tore myself apart.
They came and put me back together,
And guaranteed me to last forever.

- Cecelia Drewer

THE RESURRECTION

I weep, I weep, I weep;
And volunteer for long term Cryo-sleep.
If in five hundred years time
I am full and in my prime,
He and she will be but a dream
Imprinted upon the wall by my last scream.

At the dawn of a new day
Five centuries are dewed away.
A butterfly, I will uncurl
Open the lid, the tubes unfurl,
And over a planet I will stand
Earth's dream at my command.

- Cecelia Drewer

BEAST

Silky fine, the mantle of the being
That hovers like a dream between our real.
Censured in a restive flight, yet so
Freeing of the music that we feel.
Fine arrays of varied guise are played
Out for each and each is so,
No matter of what style, displayed
Against abuse to channel hot the flow.

Unlooking yearn for fanged ancestors,
Dispatched by all but mind alone,
Ignites the pangs of prowl investors,
Lunging at light they might disown.

We be all made together in confused variety.
Love the beast in you that brings forth clarity.

- Peter Brodie

MARRIAGE A LA MODEM

In the divorce court
Her AI vibrator was
The other machine.

- J. C. Hartley

M Depth 12

by Bill Congreve

A couple of issues ago, in TM 82, Ron published a short article by Bradley Row, 'A Book For Burning', in which Row pretended great outrage over another writer's artistic license. The book he attacked was *THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY* by Sheri S. Tepper. At the time, Row came across as biased and ignorant, as having read into the novel everything Tepper intended without having the wit to recognise the point of the exercise, and I found myself wanting to make a comment, yet I was unable to do so as I hadn't yet read *THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY* myself.

Given my reading schedule, it has taken me this long. Now that the ammunition to make an appropriate comment exists I find that Mr Row's ideas are sadly limited. Mrs Tepper has done what so many other writers in history have done before -- taken elements from our society and has extrapolated and exaggerated them to create a dystopian future in order to show what might work in a social situation and what might not. Even if a reader rejects the irony and satire implicit in Tepper's creation and sees only the surface criticism of patriarchal politics, Tepper still has every right to present these ideas. Perhaps, Mr Row, you are simply scared of thinking about concepts you may disagree with?

What Bradley Row has done is assume that women writers are not capable of the sensitivity or imagination needed to create satire and has then reviewed the book, not on its contents, but on the preconceptions raised in his own mind by the gender of the writer. This is quite sexist. (I could imagine the complaints if this reviewer criticised Orwell's 1984 in the same manner: 'Who is this Big Brother guy, I don't understand!' or Orwell's *ANIMAL FARM*: 'But animals don't really act like that!')

At least, Bradley Row now understands something which Sheri Tepper knows very well: Feminist utopias work about as well, or as badly, as alpha male wet dream utopias, and for very similar reasons. What Mr Row hasn't the wit or honesty to recognise is the number of these alpha male wet dream utopias that have failed in human history, or which are staggering on in today's world, propped up by patriarchal religions or fundamentally corrupt and short-sighted international politics for the sake of 'economic expediency'.

Row makes continual use of the point that the irony of *THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY* is lost on its female creator. Tepper recognises the irony quite well for this is the point of the book. The irony of Row's article, *A BOOK FOR BURNING*, is that his own sexist bias has prevented him seeing this.

Change of subject.

Science fiction is a relatively young genre; partly of its own choosing it remains ghettoised, or isolated. Witness such things as Hugo awards, SF conventions, small press publishing, etc. Science fiction fandom is a tribe with a pretension to owning its own literature, a literature which goes far beyond the SF tribe in appeal and acceptance, yet the tribe still joyfully embraces an US v. THEM mentality. My point in raising this subject in precisely this manner is that SF as a literary tradition has gone through a process of rediscovering controversies for itself that have gone before in other genres, in 'literary fiction', etc, several decades in the past. We are annoying ourselves with arguments other people have forgotten. Ironic, given the subject matter of SF.

There is a bit of a dilemma in mainstream critical circles. Is the novel dead? If we simply use a plot to tell a story, then the novel can be quite limited. The number of plots available to writers around the world can be boiled down to a rather small number: boy meets girl,

the spy novel, the revenge story, etc. The further a critic minimalises a book, the more simplistic and derivative the plot will seem. Writers around the world responded with post modernism, magic realism, (themselves simply reinventions of SF techniques, and SF is itself fantasy with a logic structure imposed by a logical approach to the way the universe as we know it works), social realism, docudrama, etc.

SF then rabidly enveloped these new literary subgenres and the New Wave was born. SF began including such previously little known techniques as characterisation, social realism, style, etc... But now SF is again reaching the boundaries other literary traditions have discovered in the past. There is now a tendency to embrace anything at all which promises to break these boundaries. Witness William Gibson and cyberpunk. In *NEUROMANCER*, Gibson mixed a bit of noir, street credible, crime anti-hero writing of a kind that has been around for decades with some predictable technology. As a part of the process he logically adapted the language he employed to his futuristic noir setting. Nothing new, Vernor Vinge did the same much earlier in *TRUE NAMES*, without the linguistic fireworks but with more imagination and a much stronger plot.

The SF community has embraced William Gibson as a technologically literate new age guru, and has made him a very rich writer, but has he saved SF? Does SF need to be saved, or is what is happening simply a kind of growing pain which SF doesn't recognise because it hasn't been experienced before? Is fiction dead or, given fiction's immense popularity as a source of entertainment, is the whole question merely a matter of navel gazing on the part of a group of academics themselves in danger of becoming irrelevant? Is fiction itself reaching the limits of interpreting human behaviour? Does the limitation lie within our own humanity? If so, then the speculative genres (SF, Fantasy, Horror, Magic Realism, Post Modernism, etc) are, by implication of their consideration of subject matter outside the mainstream of reality, at the forefront of literary endeavour.

Does it matter if SF can't continually invent new kinds of writing and new plots?

The entire crime genre is a celebration of the concept of a person committing a crime, and another person going out and solving it. Sounds simple. Expand that to thousands of books in hundreds of languages published every year around the world.

Are the people who complain about SF not having a sense of wonder anymore, or about SF not being written the way it used to be in the 50s, or 60s, or 70s, or whenever it was you first discovered it, simply complaining about an education process in themselves by which they are no longer happy with the limitations of fiction in general?

Every generation, along comes a bunch of kids to whom all these hackneyed old SF ideas seem new. Every generation, along comes a bunch of new writers who exploit these hackneyed old ideas for readers who either expect, want or who have experienced nothing more. Eventually, we may reach a time when, like has happened in the crime genre, or with war novels, very little is new and readers and writers alike get on with what counts -- the story and entertaining the reader. Apart from this, if something new does happen in the way we look at the world (science, new wars, astronautics, computers, etc) SF will by its very nature be in the forefront of exploring the new happening. Being fiction, SF will often use the same old hackneyed techniques and plots we bitch about today. Some will find this a source of frustration. Others will find it comfortable. We must remember that our children may find something very different. When I grew up I used to love the SF magazines of the sixties and seventies, but today's SF magazines are not something I would give to a growing adolescent to read if I wanted that kid to keep reading SF.

So where is the relevance of this?

Pan Macmillan Australia, in what some suspect might be ignorance of quality in modern SF, fantasy and horror, or perhaps inexperience of commercial fiction publishing (as distinct to commercial fiction distributing of English editions), or perhaps even a recognition that these concerns don't bother them at all, have recently embarked on an ambitious program of publishing Australian fantasy. They have jumped in, decided the cutting edge is irrelevant, copied what has been successful overseas, what has worked in the past and, without trying to do anything at all that is new, or unexpected, or fresh, have produced a range of books ranging from the atrocious to the

quite promising, all of which have sold well -- therefore achieving three things: making money, making money and reputations for their writers, and pleasing the buying public. This is entirely as it should be.

It is not surprising that the subset of the Australian SF tribe who have previously been responsible for writing, publishing, editing and criticising SF/Fantasy/Horror (and which, arguably, has higher -- or more incestuous -- standards than other SF tribes around the world) has its nose a little out of joint. My own feeling is that there is no reason at all why commercial fiction shouldn't recognise some basic standards of quality in style, characters, ideas, etc. Eg, Elmore Leonard, James Herbert, Barbara Hambly, Greg Bear. It might be commercial, but does it have to be bad?

One of Pan Macmillan Australia's writers who has shown routine creativity but vigorous energy in reinventing what has gone before for a new generation of readers is Shannah Jay, pseudonym for West Australian writer Sherry-Anne Jacobs.

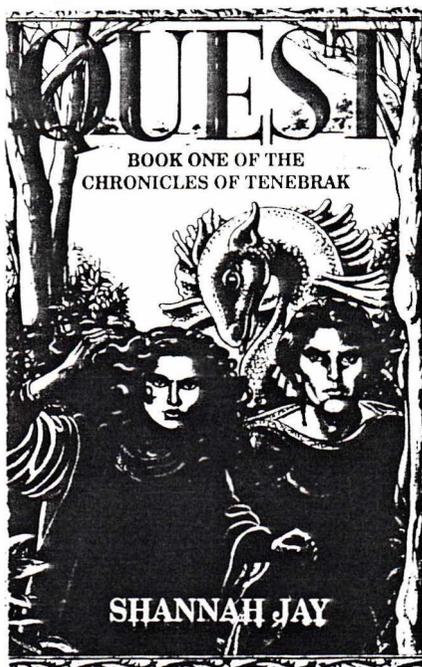
QUEST; Shannah Jay; novel; 436 + x pp; 1993; Pan Australia; pb \$11.95.

This highly derivative SF novel contains elements used before in works as wide ranging as those of E E Doc Smith through to J R R Tolkien and Anne McCaffrey.

Shannah Jay's 'Cathartic Agent' concept is a blatant steal of Doc Smith's 'Lensman', itself a borrowing of the 'special agent' idea from spy fiction. The idea is so pervasive in western popular fiction that even the impact of calling it a cliché is lost. The problem here is that to qualify as one of Jay's 'Cathartic Agents' requires, not some superhuman level of empathy, or strength of character, or imposing physical characteristics, etc, but that one simply be slightly less of a spoilt brat than one's neighbouring humans.

Jay postulates a human interstellar empire that is slowly approaching a degenerate death from within due to bureaucratic incompetence, corruption, etc (Asimov, Anderson, numerous others). This empire has an outpost around the planet Sunrise to watch the development of the people, decide whether intervention is necessary, to decide whether to open the planet up to exploitation by trading, etc. (The most obvious example of this sort of thing is Star Trek.)

On Sunrise itself, young Katia is stripped from her family by a



matriarchal religion and sent packing to a temple in far off Tenebrak to be raised and educated. (Herbert) The Elder Sister of the Temple, the Gandalf figure, Herra, immediately comes up with a prophecy which features young Herra. (Wurtz)

Herra is the key to the book. She is the only character who behaves like an ethical adult human being, and it is immediately apparent that so many of Jay's other characters are shallow and immature simply to throw Herra into a stronger light. This failure in characterisation is the novel's greatest weakness. No surprise, Katia immediately becomes the most promising young Sister since young Frodo first went walkabout. The potential Cathartic Agent from on board the space station, Davred, plagued by a corrupt, conceited superior, goes AWOL and comes down to the planet's surface where he immediately meets up with (and falls in love with) Katia. On it goes. Sunrise is simply a microcosm for the greater disturbance

rocking the Empire. The Temples slowly fall into disrepute under the attacks of a poorly-considered, shallow, corrupt, adolescent male, masturbatory kind of faith called Those of the Serpent. (Pan's editors love this simplistic male-female sex war stuff.)

After a couple of adventures in which all the characters, even Herra, are required to be idiots for the sake of a bit of padding (For example: Chapter 18, The Trap.), the remaining heroes head off into the wild blue yonder on a wagon drawn by the mysterious deleff (the Ent figures or, if you like the Lensman series, Arisians). They get chased for awhile by the bad guys on the ground, have a couple more padded out adventures, (ie, the bit in the forest where Katia goes back to try and cover the wagon's tracks) then they get chased for awhile by the bad guys on the orbiting satellite. Then the book stops in desperate need of a sequel to carry the oh-so-obvious story towards a conclusion.

Davred and friends are going to learn stuff from the deleff. Davred will undergo a bit more of a rite-of-passage so that he doesn't appear such a clod, and then is going to be recognised as a Cathartic Agent by the people in space. The corrupt space station commander is going to get his and.... As I said earlier, Sunrise is a microcosm of the problems facing Jay's interstellar empire.

Did I mention the dragon-looking thing on the cover is a deleff? Or that there are a couple of mysterious space faring races in Sunrise's history that bare an uncanny resemblance to Andre Norton's Forerunners?

QUEST exists purely within the 'I-wanna-be-Anne McCaffrey-when-I-grow-up' genre. Parts of it I enjoyed simply for the entertainment being offered, but too much of it self-consciously imitates better writers for the whole to work. Still, if you like Anne McCaffrey or Andre Norton, give this a chance. Given the twaddle those writers are churning out these days you might just prefer QUEST. If not, then your teenager will love it.

#

THE LEFT-HANDED HUMMINGBIRD; Kate Orman; novel; 264 + vi pp; Doctor Who Books; pb \$8.95. (Distributed in Australia by Hodder Headline.)

A new Doctor Who adventure. The publicity is quite proud of three facts: this is Orman's first novel, is the first Dr Who novel by an Australian, and the first New Adventure written by a woman. The first fact is important, whether either of the other two are is up to you.

John Lennon gets assassinated in the intro. A few thousand Aztecs get sacrificed to hungry gods, a few mass murders happen, and there's a bit of 1960s London drug scene which is strangely the most glib and least convincing part of the novel. An Aztec god goes on the rampage throughout all.



Through it all the good Doctor, and companions, must fight for life, limb, sanity and the sanctity of their own minds.

Orman convincingly weaves together a blend of myth, faith, history and 20th century icons (such as the sinking of the Titanic and Lennon's death) into a taut thriller. The doctor and companions must journey into Mexico's dark and bloody past to discover the nature of the beast who is both haunting them and possessing and motivating mass murderers in a paradox in the 20th century. To tell too much more is to

disappoint a reader looking forward to the story.

I do have a couple of complaints: the plot/counter plot segments are so short that they break the story and the concentration of the reader. I don't know if this is Orman's doing, or a preconception

of the publisher about the attention span of the average Dr Who fan. Every time I started getting interested in a character and a scene the text would jump into a kind of minor climax and then chase off after somebody else. TV might work this way, but that's a different medium; as a reader I felt alienated. The next complaint has more of a philosophical bent. I have a fundamental problem with stories that transfer the responsibility for human actions away from humanity to a supernatural agency. Am I being fair applying this philosophy to a novel which is simply meant as entertainment? Up to you.

A couple of minor annoyances: God himself can't solder optical fibres to copper wire unless he changes the rules. Firstly, will glass bond with melted copper? Secondly, an encrypted beam of light goes down optical fibres just fine but it kind of stops when it reaches the copper.

I'm not a follower of Dr Who, and I don't automatically recognise the personnel involved, so it was a little confusing to have one character introduced as Benny, Bernice and Professor Summerfield, as though she were three different characters, all in the space of one page. There are a couple of other places where the text has minor continuity glitches which should have been cleaned up in the editing process. For the most part, *THE LEFT-HANDED HUMMINGBIRD* is a solid and satisfying thriller from a promising writer.

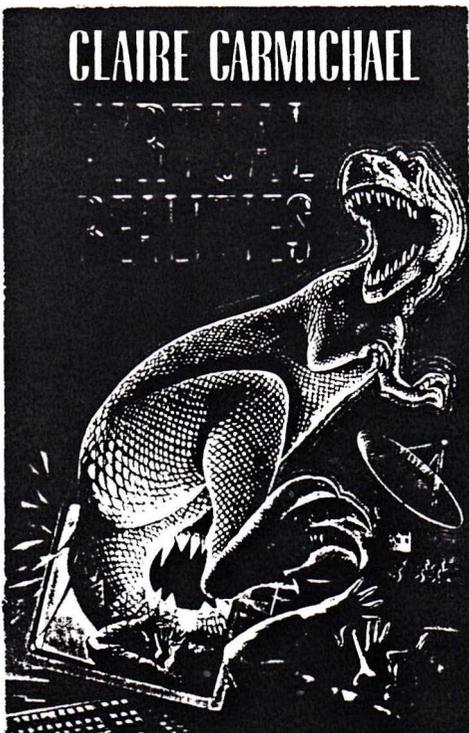
#

VIRTUAL REALITIES; Claire Carmichael; novel; 137 + iv pp; 1992; Random House Australia; tpb, no price marked.
CYBERSAUR; Claire Carmichael; novel; 136 + iv pp; 1993; Random House Australia; tpb, no price marked.
WORLDWARP; Claire Carmichael; novel; 138 + iv pp; 1994; Random House Australia; tpb, no price marked.

Is it a truism that the best children's literature features kids in conflict against the kind of adults we don't want them to be when they grow up? Pity everybody in these books act like they're in a soap opera.

Young Andy wakes with a nightmare of a dinosaur just before he and his older brother and sister, Max and Raine, are due to head up country to an Aunt's place for a holiday, and to help her with her experiments with virtual reality. Aunt Laura is developing computer software for Austcyber, and is perfectly aware of the myriad possibilities for virtual reality. Laura has recently broken off a romance with a kind of arsehole who supplied the very advanced, full-body hardware for the VR setups. Arsehole seems only interested in exploiting the VR technology for gaming. Herein lies a slice of the plot.

Most of the rest of the plot hinges on a series of breakdowns of causality, or reality. Each of the children is forced to confront their deepest fears as the computer, without prompting, and without previously being programmed to do so, creates the situation which they fear the most. Andy is stomped on by a dinosaur, Max drowns and is taken by a shark moments before the end, Laura is chased through dark corridors before being pushed over the edge of an abyss.



These ideas rely on the exploitation of the fear of new technology for their

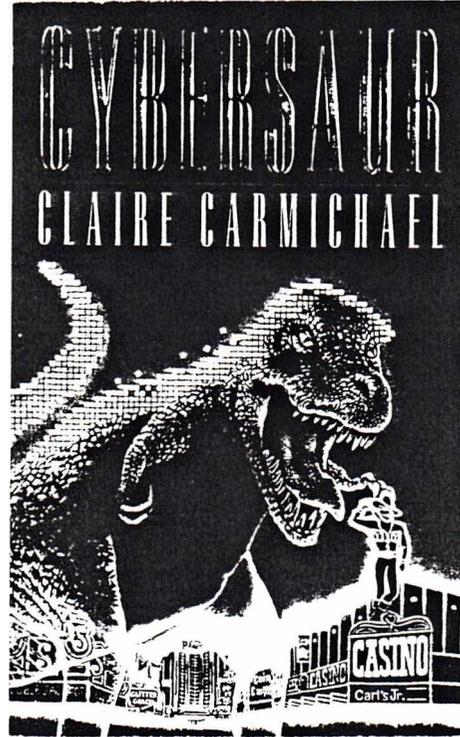
effects. Rather than doing something constructive with her story, Carmichael has decided to instil a fear of the unknown.

Then the twists and turns in the causality trail leap beyond intriguing implausibility into pure plot device as the VR sparks Andy's mind into projecting dinosaurs into the real world where they have real effects and do real damage.

In the second book, Andy and family are shipped off to the US to a psychiatric institute whose egocentric CMO (who is also the CEO) is a little too fond of dealing with the establishment. How the American secret service people get together with the above mentioned Arsehole (Australian business-man) to exploit the children

is a bit of a mystery, but I suspect the reader isn't supposed to ask awkward questions.

In the third book, Andy and family are off to the US again, this time to meet a person who is the living proof that Andy is not alone in his ability. For some reason the family is still not fully convinced of the bad intentions of Arse-hole, even though he kidnapped the kids in the second book. The whole exercise is wrapped up with a (SPOILER ALERT! If you care what happens in



the books, don't read this bit!) a denial of Andy's abilities which satisfies neither the reader nor the plot, as Andy isn't the only person who can manifest dinosaurs. This is the final confirmation of the above thesis that the subtext is a fear and loathing of things that are new. Andy does not grow, but rather is injured and his abilities are stunted, repressed and denied by the text with a highly contrived plot device which does not satisfy the basic situation proposed by trilogy; that is, that some humans who have their minds stimulated by VR can then influence reality.

To be fair to Carmichael, a number of the above comments are made as an adult reader. The trilogy works as a plot-driven adventure story for children, and this is all it is meant to be. But, unlike the best stories for 'children of all ages', it doesn't transfer to the adult stage. Thinking readers of any age will find the trilogy poorly considered, shallow and stereotyped.

Personally, I recommend a solid dose of Immanuel Kant's *THE CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON*.

#

THE EYE WITNESS; Caroline MacDonald; novel; 1991; 135 + vi pp; Hodder & Stoughton hb; price not marked. Recently released in paperback, but I don't know the price of that either.

Much more convincing than the above. *THE EYE WITNESS* is a taut, exciting thriller featuring kids in action against the kind of over-legislated future we are building for ourselves.

Jack is a time traveller from an earlier, friendlier time who is befriended by Leo, a fifteen year old unhappy with his mother's new relationship and the new household he is being forced into. Jack is an escape from reality for Leo, but must use Leo in order to confront what is happening to him. The situation is compounded by police investigating a murder, by Jumbo, an amoral and manipulative leader of a local underground network, and by the lack of empathy Leo experiences from his new family members.

Recommended. I wish I had the time and space to discuss it further. Buy it for your kids, but try it yourself first.

#

ILLICIT PASSAGE; Alice Nunn; novel; 251 + iv pp; 1992; Women's Redress Press; tpb \$15.95 (I think. There's no price on it)

You'll notice that the above books are either deliberately marketed as young adult, or are designed chiefly for that market by the writers and publishers. Why are women SF writers in Australia so chiefly concerned with writing for kids? Is this a form of discrimination, or are they merely more intelligent than us mere males in recognising lucrative markets? It remains that the only serious novel-length adult SF by Australian women of recent years comes from writers who normally operate outside the boundaries of the SF tribe. SALT, Gabrielle Lord; FERAL CITY, Rosie Scott; and now ILLICIT PASSAGE by Alice Nunn. However Nunn is no stranger to SF, she simply publishes in places the typical SF fan doesn't look for SF.

ILLICIT PASSAGE is told in a form used by John Dos Passos in the mega-novel USA in the 1930s, and then reused by John Brunner in STAND ON ZANZIBAR, and THE SHEEP LOOK UP. The story is broken up into a series of vignettes, some of which detail the reminiscences of Annette Seaton about her anti-hero sister, Gillie. Other vignettes are letters, or official communiques to and from other characters. There are interviews of subjects by security personnel, interdepartmental memos on procedures, reports from secret agents, and the like. Brunner proved the suitability of this format for dystopian themes, and Nunn takes advantage of the possibilities. The novel takes the form of a government file on the activities of Gillie Seaton, sub-citizen in the slave quarters of a space station (On the moon? An asteroid?) under attack from without by an enemy intent on procuring the dangerous rare mineral mined by the station.

Nunn is absolutely faithful to her intention of designing the novel to read like a government file: in the early stages the text is repetitive and dense. For instance, on page 120 Annette Seaton decides to tell us: "I'll tell you what a typical night at home at our place was like." We have just gone through 120 pages about life, much of it family life, in the hovels of New Town. Why belabour the point and alienate the reader for the sake of repeating it all? Again? Especially when the narrating character is a bitter, poorly educated woman complaining about a family member with sentiments we have already read about 20 or 30 times?

New information about Gillie and her activities is doled out sparingly, subtly. It is this knowledge that questions will be raised and answered and a little suspense generated that keeps the reader interested until the story itself becomes compelling in the second half of the novel. It is the ideas being presented that are the novel's great strength.

Imagine a world that has reverted to the inhumanities of England's Industrial Revolution. Technology, isolation from home, and a physical isolation within the new environment of the space station have been used to create an insidious class structure. The citizens of the New Town dome are poorly educated, poorly fed, poorly housed, isolated and have menial lower class jobs. When the war comes, and a blockade isolates the station, it is the New Town residents who are forced to bear the brunt of food and clothing shortages.

The mineral being mined by the station, urophor, is insidious in its effects on humans exposed to it. Imagine the effect asbestos has on human lungs. Now exaggerate that a little, just a little though.

Of course, all this has a parallel in Australian history. Remember the outback West Australian town, Wittenoom, the isolation, the asbestos mines, the 'company town' atmosphere and power structure?

The shortages eventually reach the stage where the normal citizens, the Spids, are also effected. Slowly, the Spids as well as the nowts of New Town are being united against the rampant authority of the ruling council. While Security go haring after non-existent enemy collaborators, Gillie Seaton quietly works on the station's computer network and hacks her way to a position of influence on events.

The tale of Gillie Seaton is a beautifully subversive thing. The men of New Town are all off in the wars, or are dying in the mines, leaving social roles normally filled by men taken up by women. Women become the revolutionaries, the providers. Brothels become the preserve of male prostitutes, the clients are Spid women with money to spare.

The plot structure of ILLICIT PASSAGE is a power fantasy with a number of gender roles reversed. (Males still run the bureaucracy, let's not get too subversive and suggest women are also capable of such exploitation and inefficiency.) Yet it is unconventionally told from the point of view of the protagonist's hostile sister and of the society that bears the brunt of the subversive activity. It is a story with a purpose and a strong political stance of gender reversal and class action, mirrored by events in Australian history. ILLICIT PASSAGE is one of the more important Australian SF novels of recent years, and is worthy of a reader willing to persist through the lack of story in the first half. Recommended.

Also Received:

THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY; Paul Voermans; novel; 302pp; 1993; Victor Gollancz pb; \$11.95.

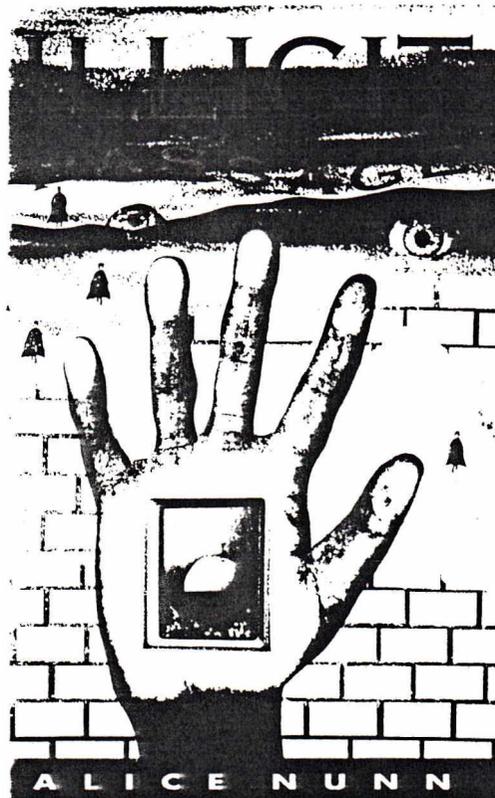
Previously reviewed here in hardcover. Recommended.

A LAND FIT FOR HEROES; Phillip Mann; novel; 284 pp; 1993; Victor Gollancz SF pb; \$11.95.

Previously reviewed here in hardcover.

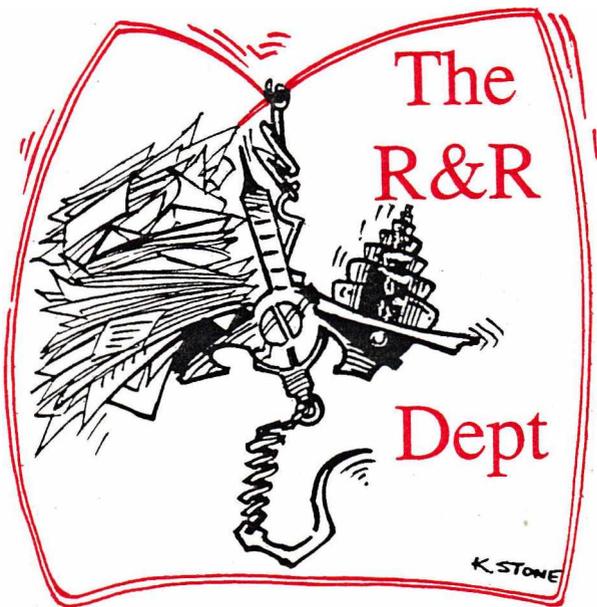
Ordinary.

- Bill Congreve



Remember:

*Australia in '99
is the way to go!*



MICHAEL HAILSTONE, 14 Bolden St, Heidelberg, VIC 3084

Buck Coulson has a bloody hide to accuse me (in TM #81) of "provincialism gone mad". How dare he? What the hell would an American understand about the destruction of smaller cultures by the juggernaut of American cultural and linguistic imperialism under the guise of so-called internationalism?

I hasten to add that I do not aim that barb at expatriate Americans. I remember one I met at Bicheno, Tasmania, years ago. He had settled in Tasmania, married and had a family and spoke well of the place. He complimented Hobart for having a richer cultural life than a city of similar size in the United States. (Sounds rather like Bob Brown. Indeed, this was in 1972, maybe it was Bob Brown before he became well known.) Anyway, this man picked me up for using Americanisms, even such words as "cop", which I'd known and used all my life (meaning "policeman"). I'm not one of those extreme purists who avoid all Americanisms; my only objection was the use of those which Australians (at least as yet to my knowledge) never use.

Shola Paice's letter brings some welcome information: a possible outlet for my story OLDSPEAK, which I named in TM #80, though I had enough of sending stories off to contests back in the early eighties, when I was still keen on writing sf. I'll have to update parts of the story though for it to be publishable, since I wrote it back in 1982 and set it in 1987 and 1066.

Duncan Evans makes a good point about the way Australia has written atrocities out of history, a theme I touch on in the latest BUSSWARBLE.

Is Maria Louise Stephens seriously saying that the Soviet Union in 1951 had posters of Stalin with the motto, BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU? Surely she's exaggerating, indulging in "poetic licence" (in my understanding of the meaning of that phrase). Orwell's 1984 had then only just been written and didn't become well known to the world until a play of it was shown on television in England in 1953. I remember reading in one of our popular magazines (PIX, I think) at the time about "the television play that rocked England", and it made a long lasting impression on my ten-year-old mind. I actually saw that early version at one of our (comparatively) recent cons in Melbourne a few years ago.

At the risk of sounding like a wishy-washy liberal, I must own that I have some sympathy for FOREST, although I don't smoke and never had smoked and find the habit dirty, disgusting and unnatural. I have a smoking friend who feels that there's a lot of fraud in the anti-smoking campaign. For example, it is claimed that the phenomenon of "passive smoking" is a fraudulent invention. Much as I hate breathing other people's smoke, I find it most objectionable when the doomcriers jump on the bandwagon and start sprouting such rubbish, that passive smokers (that is, nonsmokers breathing smokers' smoke) are at a greater risk of lung cancer than active smokers. Also I feel some solidarity with the smokers agensnt such bureaucracies as the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria and the Cancer

Council of New South Wales in my own beef about the anti-sunshine campaign. I have filled much of many numbers of BUSSWARBLE on this subject and need not elaborate here, other than to say that I object like hell to the notion, that, to avoid melanoma and other skin cancers, one must "stay out of the sun" rather than just take sensible care. (8.4.94)

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

I was betting that the cover piece [in TM 82] is by Steven fox even though I couldn't see a signature - ah yes, I'm right! He used to put the date on all his work and I've been seeing pieces lately without one. This tends to make me wonder if this is new work.

[No, it is old work. - Ron.]

I haven't been to a bookstore lately - but I can hope there are still sections that carry new editions or reprints of the classics - even though I am not certain who defines them as that.

I am really grateful that you are running a history of Australian fandom. Some shows up in the Harry Warner Jr. book, but it would be nice to see a free-standing book of your own (and you can take that either to mean you write the book, or a book about Australian-and-environs-fandom). The pictures are great - both from historical and fan views.

Reviews are dutifully read and mentally filed. Really like the logo for the R&R title.

Burroughs is the author responsible for my finding science fiction. I read the Tarzan comic books and graduated to the books in the library - once exhausting that supply, it wasn't any effort to move right into the other Burroughs books and then right on into other sf works. Blame or credit?

The philosophy set forth in the Tepper book by Bradley Row reminds me strongly of the main line in one of the stories in the latest NEOPHYTE collections - but in that case the devastating force was identified as a group, not men as a group. Interesting, to me, to see the similarities in these two.

Liked RACE AGAINST TIME. Buck talks about short-lived prozines... sorry that more couldn't survive.

Really like Peggy's work for you! (14.4.94)

Woeee - love the ... uh luchsia(?) color on the cover of #83. Is it my imagination or is the cover stock different? Thish was delivered in a "Body bag" from our P.O. - saying it (and address sheet) had been found loose in the mail, yet the zine is completely intact! Uh, I may have to take back the above comment if #83 (version sent to me, that is) had more than 40 pages... wait - then the address sheet says pg. 46 - so if you didn't edit out some pages for overseas fans, then the P.O. did. Sigh.

[No, the overseas edition is limited to about 42 pages. I find it strange... because the plastic bags I use to post TM in are bloody strong - you have to cut them to get the zine out. I'd say someone in the P.O. had a close look at TM 83. The cover stock for TM 83 was 120 gsm, as opposed to 80 gsm for the interior. - Ron]

I tried all the fiction thish, but couldn't get involved. WAVECAVE caught my attention initially, but didn't keep my interest. I had a bit tougher time just reading thish - I think its a combination of type size/margins/spacing - but I'm not sure since I seem to recall previous MENTORs were very similar in those respects. 'cause I could be wrong...

[I dunno. This Helvetia font I use is 8.5 - the equivalent looking Times New Roman font for size is 9.5 - I actually get more in using Helvetia. However, I found that I found it much harder to read Helvetia. I asked around fans, and those at work, but they didn't seem to have any problem. Do any other readers have any problem reading this font? - Ron.]

Another instalment on fan history - thank you.

The piece by Szekeres on pg 19 is very nice (I don't have pg 45).

Congratulations on yet another annish! An all Australian issue - great.

Apropos of absolutely nothing - there is a (kids?) cartoon show here, EXO-SQUAD, on early Sundays - about man vs neosapiens (manufactured race). The neos are "bred" in vats - breeding centers. Question - if it is unnecessary to have two sexes and the dimorphism that goes along - does it seem logical/realistic

that two "sexes" would still be made? Just curious as to what others might think. No, they can't "pass" as human - being *big, blue* (+ tattoos? on the head - as ID), 2 opposable thumbs with 2 fingers between and I haven't quite figured out the feet - but they are *not* "normal". So - mimicking male/female is not for. (5.6.94)

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

Received THE MENTOR #83 today in fine condition. A most impressive achievement, in the sense of the 30 years of publishing and the stunning cover.

Ah yes, Mercury. I think my all-time favourite set of stories set in the twilight zone of Mercury was the Eric John Stark saga written by Leigh Brackett. Yes yes, I know I know... it is *sooo* easy to laugh at those old space opera stories from the pulps. And yet there was an *honesty* about them that somehow got lost down the line, as science fiction felt it had to move out of the gutter and into the classrooms.

And of course, I was there at JPL as the MARINER TEN spacecraft made its three passes of Mercury. Nowadays, many fans think the biggest surprise was all the craters on the planet. Not really. It had been assumed there would be quite a lot of cratering, from the same process that made the craters on the moon and on Mars. But it was the totally unexpected magnetic field around the planet that came as the biggest surprise. Current theories of magnetism felt that such fields had to be created by a rapidly rotating planet. Earth, for example.

Nowadays it is felt that the magnetic field is a left-over relic, kept all these years by the heavy iron core of Mercury, another fact found out by the spacecraft. Mind you, it is not a very strong field, but enough to cause some interesting interactions with the solar wind.

JPL had lots of plans for follow-on spacecraft to orbit the planet, but none were funded, and none are in the current plans for NASA. And Don Boyd (page 27) is not going to see the NASA space station launched by 1996-98, as he states. NASA is intellectually bankrupt. It cannot convince Congress to fund at anything like the levels it would desire.

My copy of THE MENTOR did not contain the book reviews, and that is quite OK. I can no longer afford to buy books, even if I had the room, so all my reading is from the two local libraries. And what SF and fantasy they do buy tends to be popular blah stuff rather than the recommendations I read in fanzines. I *do* read some of it, and it is OK in a sort of empty-minded way, but if I ever marry a rich woman, win the lottery, or am left a million dollars from an unknown friend, that will change. Until then, it is library stuff.

"I hate Barney, he loves me, let's hang Barney from a tree!"

It was fascinating to read Vol Molesworth's account. It reminded me of so many goings-on on the LASFS. I guess some things will never change in fandom.

The LOC of mine that you published mentioned a company offering cruises to the North Pole. Since then I have received brochures from several companies offering trips to Antarctica. Some are on Russian icebreakers, some on purpose-built expedition ships. All are beyond my pocket-book at the moment. The bottom of the line would be on the AKADEMIK IOFFE at \$3,300 that does include airfare to and from Los Angeles. Do any outfits in Australia offer trips to the continent of Antarctica?

[I'm not sure, though I think some do. - Ron.]

Anyhow there seems to be a whole fleet of Russian icebreakers and cruise ships built during the Cold War by the USSR and now trying to pay their way with tourist travel. (22.4.94)

Just a quick letter to say 'thank you' for running that book review of Sheri S. Tepper's THE GATE TO WOMAN'S COUNTRY. The one Brad Row seems to feel was an anti-male, male castrating, male hating feminist tract etc etc and whose review reminded me of Plato's THE REPUBLIC.

Well, I finally found it on the library shelves, read it and am happy I did. This is the first book by Tepper I have read, and I hope it won't be the last.

Having read it, I pat myself on the back for the comparison to THE REPUBLIC. The setting is a post-nuclear war area, which makes it science fiction. Alas, there is a lot of psi powers such as telepathy and clairvoyance which makes it more science-fantasy to

me. Plus a lot of New Age style thoughts and concepts.

Still, it is a cracking good story, and Tepper knows how to plot and write. The basic set-up is the city-state as an independent unit but cooperating with all the other city states. With the Plato-type conspiracy, yes, the keeping of which is part of the plot of the book.

Mind you, I have some doubts that the basic premise would work. The concept of natural selection is OK for simpler traits, but the idea that a few generations of selective breeding could create the kind of male the women want seems doubtful to me. I suppose it might be fun to try it out in practice, but only on a planet where no other cultures exist. Because sooner or later Women's Country set of city-states may have to deal with a well organized country dominated by the old-style males. Males with iron weapons, not bronze. Wipe-out.

In the book one such culture was met, but it was small and not at all organised. Actually, it was a straw dummy of MCP style males, plotted to have the stuffing knocked out of it. I think reality might be different.

Like I said, not a very believable story, but still an OK book to read, and probably far better than reading some sort of Star Trek book. (16.6.94)

JOHN FRANCIS HAINES, 5 Cross Farm, Station Rd, Padgate, Warrington WA2 0QG, England.

Many thanks for printing my doggerel loc, though poetically-minded readers may be puzzled as to why the first line only has three stresses instead of four - the answer being that you omitted my opening "Dear Ron", which was meant to be part of the first line - likewise, the final line was not meant to be rhymeless, but to conclude with "John".

The word FAN is an abbreviation of the word FANATIC - fanatic dates from 1533 and comes from the French *fanatique* (from Rabelais, apparently). Fan, as such is of US origin and dates from at least 1889. *Fanatique* possibly derives from Latin *fanaticus*, pertaining to a temple, being inspired by a deity or frenzied. It is related to the word fane, now archaic in use - a Middle English word derived from the Latin, *fanum* - a temple. As in common with most English words, the plural is formed simply by adding an s - thus the correct plural of fan is fans. The totally misconceived plural fen is mistakenly taken from the example of man, men. This word is very, very ancient and can be traced back to Sanskrit *manu*, man and mankind. The plural men is an example of an anciently surviving plural form that has otherwise died out in English, together with the case system of which it was once part. I don't know who coined the term fen, but it is the greatest disservice, and the greatest misuse of the language it has been my misfortune to have encountered for a long time. I realise that nothing I say will stop the damned word becoming set in concrete (and the dictionaries) but please be aware that the usage, and the word, is WRONG.

Andy Darlington hits the bull's-eye once again with his ingenious article-within-a-story about Mercury. I hope he'll take a similar look at Venus, as it had perhaps an even sharper heaven/hell planet aspect in sf than Mercury. Until the recent discovery that it's the closest to Dante's Inferno we're likely to see (literal acid rain, immense pressure, temperatures that will melt lead) it was imagined as a world of water and a sister planet of Earth. One or two got it right and saw a desert world shrouded in cloud.

I enjoyed J. C. Hartley's NEW WORLDS ORDER II, and I owe a big "thank you" to Blair Hunt for his very kind words about my poetry (blush!) - thanks, Blair - you might like to know that I'm envious of those who can use three thousand words to say something, because whenever I try to write at length (except, perhaps, in locs!) it always ends up as a few lines of poetry! (28.4.94)

TERRY JEEVES, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England.

Hasty note of appreciation for the latest MENTOR with its absolutely stupendous (and jealousy making) cover. Terrific!

I just got back from Hay on Wye - a small village with no less than 26 bookshops - including a huge SF emporium where I managed to plug many collection gaps.

Andy Sullivan's story was very well written, extremely powerful. Good 'un. Shame it was followed by that cruddy "poetry". Congreve's IN DEPTH made some good points - I once "convened" with a Geordie who had a totally impenetrable accent, the only word I

made out was "futeba" (he was a football nut and I hate it). We just couldn't talk to each other - Congreve mentions variable meanings making "poetry a marvellous thing" - some poetry but not this modern unrhymed breast-beating claptrap... - viz POETRY 1 & 2.

WAVECAVE was too long without much of a story line for me I'm afraid. Verran was excellent on encyclopedias but Darlington scored again with his entertaining account of Mercury "as it once was" - can we expect a similar treatment of the swampy Venus? Superb illo on page 19 lovely match for the colour cover.

LOCs good and entertaining, but I said the illos were short on quantity *not* quality - blame my [hand]writing. MEMORIES - nicely drawn but what a trite storyline. "She was wild and free" - just *what* does that signify? Did she bite, scratch and attack everybody - and make no charge for sex? Ah the rich word play of poetry - how inscrutable. (28.4.94)

MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy, Argentina.

The fading-away process goes slowly. Whirling nonsense fills me with laughter as I think of all the funny things continually happening in my present life. I really will try to retire from fandom... next time they send me the circular to check if my address in those fan directories is still okay, I'll answer, "Please just delete". That'll be a start. My extreme elderliness justifies it. And besides, I've picked at last the publishing house where I plan to send my stuff if I ever get it into presentable order, so I must work on that before I reach a hundred or so, willy nilly. I had a job running it down, that special outfit. I'd read of it in an article someone sent me from New York, so I wrote around till I got the address.

Talking of funny things now, we suddenly learned that the Palma Sola post office is closed for all this month. Why? The girl's on holiday, with no replacement. Well, my husband Vadim on his once a month trip to San Pedro, 120 kms. away, the other day asked at the P.O. there (which send on the mail to Palma Sola) if they could check on mail addressed to us. They too were short of staff, everybody on holiday, but they took a quick look and found at least one envelope, yours with #82, which I'm locking now. The girl at the Palma Sola half-day P.O. can only send letters out locally (ie not to Australia, Britain, Canada, USA, etc. Stamps for such places would be beyond her. Besides, why lay in a stock of stamps here just for me? Who else writes abroad?). In San Pedro they send out my stuff when Vadim goes there once a month. I even get occasional friendly notes from Russia, (because of being in the directories), but they want me (with my Russian name) to help them learn all about Argentine s-f circles, publications, etc. To one of them I cut out from your MENTOR some pages on Argentine s-f and sent it. The printed booklet I'd sent off to someone else earlier. So, anyway, I can even send stuff to Russia from San Pedro. (We're that "up" on what's-what on Earth today, there.)

But here, it's another dimension, a backwoods newly explored by us, a never-never "lost" planetary milieu. Fun but frustrating when you want to continue in lockstep with life abroad simultaneously too.

Through one mishap or another, I have sealed envelopes waiting to be sent abroad, tying in their cubbyhole here for more than three months already. Never a chance to get them mailed. Each trip something came up to prevent posting them in San Pedro. Besides, Vadim was down south with our fourth son and family on one occasion, I'd refused to go and had a beautiful excuse - twisted a foot somewhat right then. Well, anyway, the point is, there are all these sealed envelopes waiting month after month to be posted and will be mailed with this now, if and when.

I could talk about our back-porch cats and the occasional bits of huge yarara serpents we find lying around there too. On such occasions our cats lie around absolutely stuffed and won't, for a day or so, be hungry. Snake must taste very good to these mongoose-like cats of ours, apparently. Those yarara vipers are sometimes huge, and their poison is so deadly, we lost two horses to them, and one dog. They lurk in the jungles at the edges of our clearings and our very large lawn. (The kids have an electric lawnmower and take turns with it.) We look like the country estate of some billionaire in consequence, with our lawns on all three sides. The fourth side has just a narrow bit of land between our house and the next-door overgrown jungle, though peons live there in the small clearings they bother to maintain.

Our maid has come up with a wondrous story the entire region believes faithfully. It was brought by a young fellow we know very well... he was just a whippersnapper when we first came here in mid 1983. Now, working as a peon further north, he brings the news that a certain wild and tumbled National Park up there is being made quietly into an animal sanctuary. (It has no fences, no game wardens). Indeed, it may all be pure invention, including the tale of the imported tiger that already ate up the leg of some old woman living in a hut near there. But it's wonderful to hear such stories and wonder how such tales grow up from scratch. Maybe someone did glimpse a native puma or even a rare leopard up there somewhere. We have huge tapirs that leave their paw marks (when there's been a mudslide) lower down, but usually they're at the top of our range.

I never mentioned it, but our land is half-a-kilometer wide, starting at the river at the foot of our place right here, and continuing up for perhaps seven kilometers as the bird flies, to the top of the ridge, "owned" by our neighbors' cows, horses, great condors, tapirs, etc., all running wild. On paper, that bit of ridge-top is ours, but to reach it we'd have to mount an expedition, and who'd feed the pigs (and other animals right in our valley) meanwhile? Back when a bit of logging was going on years ago, a lumber-road was carved out by a bulldozer to where the jungles ended and wild grasses take over, and winter's snow sometimes is glimpsed on the ridge tops. As the mountains are tumbled the whole way up there's nonstop climbing straight up and then down cliffs to reach the next tumbled outcrop and so onwards, and as there are nasty wild bulls (that keep *me* away - bulls I can't mesmerize! They charge head down, horns forward, mindlessly) and lurking pumas (wouldn't worry me, I've met and puzzled pumas in the Sierras further south by my insouciance and amused, friendly, polite reactions as I backed slowly away!).

I have so much [I could tell of]... There's the bit about a certain crook who later died, owing us money he'd had us loan him. His place was bought by another crook, receiver of stolen cars which he hid in his back yard. He had a mother stashed away there, who slept with her pigs and chickens in the same bedroom, (because "everybody steals"). He also had a clever peon who used to climb up every night to attach a wire to the power-line along the highway, to steal current for lighting that hut. One rainy morning, his hand slipped; he fell attached to his wire and was duly electrocuted. He died a hero. Another hero further south (it came out in the papers) decided to have a private oil-well, so drilled into a huge pipe-line buried beneath his yard which was joining Andean sources with the coast around Buenos Aires. He was blown sky high. Studying this type of outlook does leave one bemused.

Our pick-up's motor has collapsed. We'll have to buy a diesel-fuel motor from Iquiqui in Northern Chile. None here are worth buying second-hand. The motors at Iquiqui come from Japan's dump heaps but they're very good still.

A 13 hour bus ride (you'd enjoy that bus-ride, Ron) from Jujuy to Iquiqui across the Andes, is regularly taken by a fellow who buys up those motors and brings them for resale here. Meanwhile, we travel by motor-scooter, tractor, or a bus that passes us twice a week or so. (20.3.94)

#83 just came... Say! Andrew Sullivan is good! In my last [letter] I mentioned liking his PANDORA'S BOX. And now I'm really impressed by STAR RISE OVER HADES. You know, it really could happen... a lot of humans are as self-centered, as scornful of their fellows (who have genetic material as promising as their own). It could happen. People brought up like sheep follow any loud voice of assurance (Mr. Cattle-man of the Stars). We're being raised this way. Always have been. Harry Andruschak remarks that some readers may have been upset by his comments on science versus religion. But he's right... if not for scientists we'd still be believing in vials of powdered blood turning liquid when placed near a saint's skull in a reliquary, and so on. Religion - if you mean dogmatic say so - has to be outgrown, or Andrew Sullivan's story may yet come true. And yet, you know that I believe in things unexplainable; that is to say, insofar as I've experienced them, I couldn't deny they occurred, nor could I find rational explanations. Therefore I keep a very open mind, but reject anything that smacks of dogma.

As for censorship, "Anything goes" write some of your loccers, ("as long as it doesn't hurt children!") That's a cop-out. At what age do you declare a child an adult? Politicians depend on True

Believers to run their shows, and so their laws are often ridiculous. For instance, prohibiting marijuana permits drug barons to flourish. Heavy Metal rock has its uses on one occasion at least. It chased Panama's dictator out of the archbishop's palace where he was hiding. The US Army turned it on loud, aimed at the palace, and the archbishop tore his hair and threw what's-his-name out.

I hope that science will yet filter down to places, say, like Arab lands where women are mere beasts of burden, and no freedom is possible unless you're a Fundamentalist male. (Though they're persecuted supposedly, aren't they now?)

I didn't comment on A BOOK FOR BURNING, because I couldn't care less. I take no sides in "which is best - male or female" I don't join either side because trying to overpower the other side, by any means, is ugly. Men till now squashed us most successfully so now girls want to get even. Doesn't solve anything!

Pavel A. Viaznikov from Moscow tells of his adventures as a field interpreter of a Petroleum Corp. Did he get to the 13th World Petroleum Congress in Norway recently? (Vadim corrects me: "the 14th" he says). Our fourth son attended it and read a paper there. He's quite a geologist here in Argentina. What do you mean, Pavel, your new job is "less creative"? But where else will you get such inspiration save when able to view the scene you describe in "Siberia in September"? Lovely, your description! Ads? You miss nothing. I worked in a Buenos Aires advertising firm in the 1940s. I lost all respect for creating slogans to "make people buy", then.

Julie Hawkins! "The Church" doesn't change really, it can't! The barnacles on the Boat of St. Peter will sink it finally. Unless all barnacles are cleaned away! As for Jesus? Is he "Christ"? Or someone marvellous, even more than a Buddha? "Christs" or their images, have helped in pogroms, crusades and conquests. Jesus did *not*! Just get the new translation by Scholars: THE FIVE GOSPELS, with commentary to see how much got added by early Christianity; things Jesus never taught! (Published by the Jesus Seminar in 1994, Polebridge Press, PO Box 1526, Sonoma, CA 95476, USA).

What will replace religion? Hopefully not the scenario Andrew Sullivan postulates. But it could happen if sheep grow more mindless, generation after generation, and science serves our "leaders": modelled on our present day cattlemen, sheep ranchers, etc. The "Have's"!

Oh, that's a good story! Thank you for pubbing it, Ron. Thank you for writing it, Andrew! "True Believers' future descendants' fates sadly foretold."

John Alderson's mention of 3 suicides in 6 fays underlines the failure of "Christianity". True, Jesus did say "Turn the other cheek", but Christians seldom do it, so it's never been proved to work. Still, "getting even" is no solution to aggression. "A soft answer turneth away wrath" too. Diplomacy in handling violent cases is wiser than becoming violent to match.

Right you are, Rob Marsden, re population expansion and the Church. It makes me long to grow violent as I see how millions of abandoned children all over Catholic Latin America are left to swell the ranks of the destitute - no solution save "Death Squads" seems to come to our rulers' minds. Why not establish free Contraception Clinics, opened everywhere? Ah, no! It's a *SIN*.

Don't label me religious!! Trent Jamieson: so Australia has a "Bible Belt" too!! Yes, Trent! In a crazy world, "sanity is so fragile"!

English evolves. As a future world language it will be tremendously alive, never worry! (But "different", very cosmopolitan as already it is).

Ah, dear Harry Warner! I could never write an article properly. I care *only* for individuals, *never* any "general public". Each individual is unique. (That's what "Our Creator" must think, as Jesus did say. For that I'm pro-Jesus!)

Terry Jeeves! *Who* believes in "the Fall"? Literally? Only Fundamentalists profess they do. (6.6.94)

SYDNEY J. BOUNDS, 27 Borough Rd, Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 6BD, England.

Spring has finally arrived with sunshine and raising temperatures so I've been relaxing beside the river for an hour or so.

I found the colour on the cover (of TM 83) too gaudy for my taste, but perhaps that's due to the printing?

TM continues to improve with some impressive pieces this issue. Andy has a good article. Yes, I remember a story about the

Twilight Belt in SCOOPS, with great illustrations too.

The best story was Brent's WAVECAVE. I'm surprised that more fantasy writers don't make use of your mythology.

Verran overlooks what is on computer these days. At Christmas I was looking at a computer with windows; this gives a twenty volume encyclopedia on one disc; with photographs and music.

Molesworth's history is a sorry commentary on youth. I don't remember the English fans of the time being quite so argumentative.

I was surprised by Bill's review of A LAND FIT FOR HEROES. I haven't read this one, but Manri's other books have impressed me.

The best piece of verse was in the letters section; by J F Haines; and I liked Tonia's illustrations.

Lubenski's information about Arthur Clarke's book was fascinating; as was Pavel's reviews of new Russian books. (3.5.94)

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

Enjoyed your editorial on the Goode Olde Days(e). Selective memory seems to be operating for everyone when dealing with collective and personal histories. Rest assured, these are the good old days we'll be boring the youngsters with many years from now. Matter of fact I bore many of them now with my tales of daring-do along the Matewhalele armed only with my yo-yo and an Angela Brazil first edition. The term "good" is a relative one anyway, especially when dealing with most people's relatives. The Romans found it good to barbecue the Christians (maybe still not such a bad idea) and the Christians found it good to have martyrs they could brag about to the heathen masses, though whether most of them would have volunteered for the job is another thing.

The martyrs probably didn't find the going too "good" as they were going through the martyring process, unless some of them were S/M freaks, and none have come back to tell us if it was all worth it because where they are is "good". And how a person with no interest in religion got onto this topic is beyond me. I find it boring, which is not good, so will stop. Unless one of my relatives drops in for tea in which case I'll continue typing on the w/p with a fever in the vain hope they will think I'm too busy to be dealt with.

Ah, Shaney, I decided some months ago that most people are not worthy of my hate, let alone my sustained attention. Do not flatter yourself. I knew you were setting some childish trap with "proof" to follow but let it go because your devious intellect allied with your fawning doesn't matter. Another thing which is boring.

Taking a general approach, there are a surprising number of "professional" reference books that are chokka with mistakes. Both originated and passed on from previous works. I hope others have more intelligence than to take everything they read in a so-called "reference" work as gospel, though where you draw the line is problematical. A consensus of works, perhaps? Sadly, even "asking the horse" can prove deleterious to research as I've learned to my dismay.

I'm glad to see my article made it through with only a small number of typos (the title I'll leave till last), even though I proof-read the @#%&*ing thing ten times via my original source before sending it to Ye Ed. Sorry to put you through the agony of typing it up Ron, but it was important that it be as faultless as possible. In the "Goode Olde Days(e)" they were cavalier about general spelling yet some words did mean different things whilst being spelled roughly the same. This was *good* for the writer at the time as he or she could waffle on without the benefit of a dick and harry but is NOT GOOD for moderns with pretensions to education of their fellows. By the way, there is no such word as *eridute*, unless you mean the word I wrote, *erudite*, and there is a "U" in *elucidation*. Or is this title cock-up another "patented" Clarkie typo?

Anyway, it's all relative now. "Nil Desperandum ad Absurdum" as the Romans would have said if most people have believed only one reference work. Roman As She Is Spoke by Carlos Flange (Bostonblackie Press, 1895). At least, that's what I believe.

(9.5.94)

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

An hour or so in the dental chair having a crown fitted helped to concentrate my thoughts on #84. As the needle pierced the cheek and the drill bit into the enamel, Buck Coulson's and Patricia

Campbell's adventures in the hospital system blended into one nightmare which made my own morning of pain pass in the blink of an eye.

CAPTAIN CONDOR, the original strip, never really held my attention. I recall buying one issue of LION and still have it. More interesting than the comic was the "giveaway" - a football ladder of the first four soccer divisions. It consisted of a sheet of heavy card with slots for insertion of title cards representing all the clubs, which in turn had to be pressed out from other sheets of card. Just one way the comic publishers of the time tried to gain more readers, the numbers of whom had dropped off alarmingly as the 1950s came to a close. This wasn't a new idea by any means, as "giveaways" had been used as far back as the 1880s in usually failed attempts to increase circulations.

Most of the LION ANNUALS have found their way onto my shelves but as Andrew pointed out, the character never developed and lacked the masterly attention to detail to be found in the DAN DARE strips during the Frank Hampson period.

Bill's discussion on prospective advertisers is the most interesting piece of reading I've come across in a long time. Early on, I spent a lot of sleepless nights trying to figure out solutions to this very problem in conjunction with my own publications. Eventually I decided the possible advertising revenue wasn't worth selling my soul for and instead charged a higher subscription rate.

The HISTORY is becoming more interesting. Mention was made during discussions on the Fourth Sydney SF Conference (p.29) that Jack Murtagh attended from New Zealand. I never knew Jack but do have some interesting information on him. Jack was a projectionist at the Hastings movie theatre and reputedly owned the largest collection of movie memorabilia in New Zealand. He also possessed more than one million cigarette cards, the largest collection outside of the British Isles.

For those younger readers not familiar with cigarette cards, they were similar in some way to bubblegum cards, and were originally inserted in cigarette packs as "stiffeners". "Cigcards", as they were commonly known, first appeared in the 1880s and died out prior to WW2.

Jack also owned a monumental collection of boy's story papers, which happens to be my main collecting area. These predated the comic papers similar to LION. Jack passed away long ago. Although the cigarette cards had been earmarked for sale upon his death, the remainder of the collection was locked away in his house for many years. So far as I know, it may still be there although I know of one Queenslander who visited Jack's widow a couple of years ago, and returned with a number of exciting items.

Happy to read that Sean has been seduced by RED DWARF. "Backwards" was my first ep. It was dumb enough to amuse me, but not to convince me that the show was worth watching on a regular basis. Season four on managed to do just that. I watched the first season recently and was amazed to find it boring, due mainly to Kryten's absence.

Amazed to hear you've switched to a photocopier, Ron. Hope you have an air-conditioner or an extraction fan. Despite what technicians keep telling me "No harm at all in the process" I have my doubts. Long print runs have given me headaches when I've stayed in the same room. (10.5.94)

(I got headaches from the offset press, too. The solvent used to prepare the paper plates for printing was as volatile as petrol. The room I've got the photocopier in at the moment has a wall of opening windows. Oh, and the woman "training" me in the copier's use did warn me that the toner was carcinogenic, "so don't breathe it in - though the technicians don't seem to worry". One of said technicians told me how to get rid of that trouble with fading at the top of the page I had with #84. - Ron.)

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

Cover of #83 highly dramatic/eyecatching, even though I'd not quite worked out what's going on (a cross-species erotic encounter, with "tail-sucking" replacing "toe-sucking" foreplaywise, or the early nibbles of ingestion of the rigid -? already a corpse - mermaid; and what is holding her up, the bubbles?). Has the entwined inexplicable yet dazzling power of Celtic or Norse designs, as if intended to be trojan horsed into a Christian church as a pillar-head

carving to make future faithful uneasy despite the priest's attempt to pass it off as a Bible episode!

The stories I make up, obviously deliberately, a "cavern trilogy". Of the three, I found SENTINELS least effective - too short to build up conviction/credibility (and where the hell did the bit of metal come from - no explanation of its finding I could find), yet too long to be a truly dreamlike transformation vignette. The idea, great, but something lost in execution, to my mind. WAVECAVE, on the other hand, built wonderfully, the development slow, almost sullen and yet intricate as the sea and its caverns themselves - the protagonist's unusual job added to the feeling of truth, as did the little touches of description (goat face etc), and the boat captain's immediate ideas of cashing in with pop concerts etc. The ending seemed a bit of a "dying fall", but by then it didn't seem to matter, since this reader at least was by then more enraptured in the place than the tidying-up of the people's futures or lack of them.

STAR RISE OVER HADES was powerful, and genuinely moving, while reading it. Afterwards, doubts began to surface about aspects of it - even given the matchless human ability to rationalise its actions, and known similar behaviour by slavers in our past, the young farmer's sudden awakening to the non-animal nature of the crop seemed a little abrupt given the shared language etc: and the either/or nature of the father's ultimatum also seemed psychologically dubious, or at least lacking in clarity - it would have seemed likelier, to me, to say "you can keep this one for the time being, son, and will see", gives that the rest had all been now destroyed - in the way that farmers will let children keep one pig or sheep as a pet, and wait till they "grow out of" or get bored with it before sending to slaughter.

Still, as said, these doubts didn't surface till *after* reading what, while immersed in it, was a very effective piece of "arousal of pity and terror", and one whose core images will, I suspect, stay for a long time, bringing together as it does many archetypal/primeval, and more specifically 20th C, fears into one potent brew. (One other tiny cavil, by the way - I don't recall ever finding out what made the little girl so different that the other, adult, "human cattle" shunned her, unless it was the blonde hair/blue eyes, though, if so, this was left very much implicit.)

Bill Congreve, in his review of A LAND FIT FOR HEROES, dismisses as "pop" the idea of a parasite subculture "Which can out-think and out-fight the Romans... has existed under the noses of the Romans for 2000 years without conflict." I certainly can't think of an example with a 2000 year run in "real history", but there are intriguing instances which have some parallels and reasonably lengthy time spans - the relationship of Switzerland to the rest of central Europe for long periods, for example; a kind of economic parasitism, and with its mercenary soldiers in great demand. The way the North-West frontier of Pakistan has functioned for long periods, under the Raj and since independence, of the Ghurkhas to India, and even of ongoing relationships of the Mafia or the Chinese Triads to "host communities", have sufficient parallels to indicate that such a metastable equilibrium is not without possibility.

Both my encyclopedias are 2nd hand, my Britannica 1929 (!) and the Chambers 1959, but provided they're used with care and common sense, are still both immensely useful.

Andrew Darlington's method of conveying information, in the Mercury SF piece, is a fascinating one - using "overheard conversation" to sugar the data pill clearly isn't a new technique but it must be rare for such an extended amount of densely detailed data, and certainly works well (though, for my money, the doubting Cy was lucky not to be dealt with much more drastically by the dream-haunted Spacer at the end!) (or maybe the great dragon in the below got him off-stage?)

The Molesworth saga is reminiscent, in this episode, of the internal wranglings of left political factions - come to think of it, Fandoms are numbered like Internationals!

In "loc country" - re Harry Warner's loc, "millions of people enclosed" (effectively, anyhow) "in a device covering 1300 square kilometres" is pretty much a description of today's megacities - how many inhabitants of Calcutta or Mexico City or New York, the poorer ones anyhow, ever get outside it? So I doubt that particular claustrophobia possibility would in itself dish the idea of space colonies of the type described, though there'd presumably be some psychological testing-type preweeding of volunteers to eliminate from

the list those likely to dysfunction badly in those circumstances.

Steve Jeffery's loc gives a pungent possible book title ("SF Poetry For The Perplexed") I'd love to write if I could ever overcome the key problems - like no two SF poets would be likely to agree on parameters, for one; and that, when it comes to "stick & lift", inevitably the definitions & explanations are *ex post facto* to the operation of KWIL - I Know What I Like. Maybe you'll get a better answer to his very reasonable query, but in many ways I still think the proverbial Alderman from Bolton got it right - with SF poetry, as with any other kind, find something you like. Then you can start figuring out why you like it, and build your own tools for further exploration. The important thing, tho, is to start with what you relate to, and work outwards from there, & treat tips from "experts" as additional tools to use if you wish, not as laws. As a wild oversimplification, SF poetry differs from SF prose in *form*, from other poetry in *content*, so from "either end" there are signposts & familiarity at least at the start.

(Having got onto poetry, will morph back to the poems this time - both J. C. Hartley's have elegantly heartless wit, & THE OLD MASTERS in particular also "makes to think" re those we stand in awe of, and why this is. Cecelia Drewer's THE RECONCILIATION ends with a powerful image indeed, but to me the build-up is too short for it to really impact - given she wanted a rhymed form, then perhaps more of a ballad-type build was called for? In PLANET NEMESIS, on the other hand, pace, matter, and build are smoothly matched by the same poet; the last stanza in particular with its blend of personification and imageries is a gem. I also enjoyed Trent Jamieson's THE LIS SAGA a lot - the eccentricities/bizzareries (the "special occasion jelly" reminds one of poverty-stricken UK football club Doncaster Rovers opening a tin of salmon - probably rusty and years in an old safe - to celebrate appointing a new manager years ago) create a dark staresque plausibility, and a real freshness too ("moths scratched clear eyes" - the kind of "double take" reminding that hooks).

Should really have reacted to MEMORIES along with the above, as is a "serial graphic prose-poem". the comicised poem "cross-genre" is a fascinating one, and there's a surprising number about (and going back quite a long way) when you start to dig. (4.5.94)

STEVE JEFFERY, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA, England.

Nice one again. God, that cover! This is really impressive, and must have cost you an absolute fortune to produce. Is this a colour photocopy, or a four colour print run (though I suspect that might be prohibitively expensive on a small run).

[It was a laser colour photocopy. - Ron.]

Happy 30th Anniversary, and many more to come.

Steve Sneyd has picked up on my comment a couple of issues back about a "guide to the Perplexed" for sf poetry and written to me with all sorts of interesting stuff, including a copy of the small press writers magazine SODEM (the Scribblers of Dubious Editorial Merit), as well as what must be the smallest small press offering I have ever seen. This is Steve's own postage stamp-book sized WE ARE NOT MEN. An A7 (?) 16 page collection of short haiku-like poems. I think it beats (just) MARK'S LITTLE BOOK OF KINDER EGGS as being the smallest fanzine I've seen. Thanks Steve.

IN DEPTH #10 continues to be a fine critical column across the range of Australian sf. Several of the anthologies reviewed here sound potentially interesting, although it may be a while before they become available through UK imports or specialist dealers.

James Verran's look at encyclopedias prompts the recent news in ANSIBLE that the CDROM version of the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION from Nimbus is no more. The project has apparently been bought out by Grolier and the release date set back even further. Only a handful of Nimbus pressings will now see distribution, to editors and people who have already subscribed. This may be a blessing, since the pre-release copy I played with at Eastercon had some distinctly odd ideas about cross reference searching. For instance, it did not seem possible, as it is with my ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA CDROM, to follow a trail of highlighted references in the text, taking you directly to other articles of interest. For this, you had to make a note and go back to start the search again. This seemed odd, and a rather severe failure of Nimbus's indexing system.

We have a Pears Cyclopaedia and Hutchinson FACTFINDER. Both are useful, but no real match for one of the big

hefty encyclopedias or access to a local library with a copy of the multi volume BRITANNIA. Book clubs like Softback Preview are often a good source of other interesting, more specialist references. The CAMBRIDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LANGUAGE is one such, as is ISP's own GUIDE TO HUMAN THOUGHTS: IDEAS THAT SHAPED THE WORLD.

If shelf space is as a premium, buy a CDROM drive. This will put your entire reference section in a handy pocket sized package and free up yards of shelf space for more SF. There is a lot of interesting material on CD now, and one of the more interesting developments is that whole years of articles from major newspapers are now becoming available.

Of course, you still need a plot and interesting characters, to go along with this growing library on spelling, style and grammar and the knowledge and ideas of [the] world. But I'm sure James will come to that in due time, with a users' guide to the best (and best avoided) "How To Write" books.

Andrew Darlington's I REMEMBER HELL PLANET, MERCURY was a joy. Andrew mixes a thorough knowledge of his subject with obvious affection for its creakier incarnations. Jozef's illustration here is quite stunning, though his linked JS signature is remarkably similar to my own SJ. I don't think I'd be displeased by any misattribution, but Jozef might think he suffers from the confusion. Anyway, I've changed mine now, so the lawyers can stand down.

THE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM gets even more convoluted and fractious. At this point, you begin to wonder how it ever survived amidst all the constant feuding and procedural moves and bulletins. Whether, in fact, any real interest in SF sustained through all this politicking. I suppose it must have, though it's certainly interesting to compare these accounts of the early days of Oz fandom with those of the First Fandoms in the UK, which seemed to be a time of far more goonish lunacy and long, involved running jokes (a few of which are still re-surfacing, thirty and more years on).

It's also notable that many of those first fans, in the UK and US, went on through clubs and fanzines to become pros. Only Molesworth here seems to [have] been very much active as a writer.

On to the letters. What is the exact wording of Clarke's Law? I've now seen about three different versions of it, all in quotation marks (Glen Chapman's LoC) that suggest this is the proper form.

[I'm afraid I can't help - most of my library is boxed at the moment. - Ron.]

I agree with about half your loccers and disagree with the other half over the merits of the Carter comic strip, and the Bradley Row review/polemical over the Tepper book. (There are no prizes for guessing which half). But that's all: I disagree. I'm not forcing anyone to accept my view as right, or anything more than personal taste. I would prefer the staunch defenders of liberty and artistic freedom not to leap into immediate personal invective (Mae comes in for a lot of this).

And then there's the contentious Bradley Row article, A BOOK FOR BURNING. Ha, what price artistic expression and freedom from censorship now? It will be interesting to see who leap to the defence (and who significantly remain silent) on an issue of book burning, a form of censorship worthy of some of the most oppressive and fundamentalist regimes, from Mao to Hitler to Khomeni.

But he is desperately, horribly wrong. Not just in his review of the book, which is astoundingly selective, but in his confusion between the writer and a work of fiction (MEIN KAMPF is not, as Trent Jamieson points out, fiction). This is both incredibly presumptive, and one of the first signs of a bad reviewer. Yes, it is a depiction of an appalling society, a fraudulent dystopia. In that it stands in company with other works of sf, like Sturgeon's VENUS PLUS X, Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD, and (how sweetly apposite) Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451. There is almost an assumption that the words "feminist" and "utopia" have become inextricably linked and almost interchangeable within the genre, ever since THE FEMALE MAN (and look at the howls of outrage that caused amongst punctured male egos). The feminine critics and press are probably equally culpable in this, but I honestly believe that Tepper does try and show the worm that lives in the heart of a separatist society.

Of course it may already be too late. You probably don't get

to see the science program HORIZON, and in particular the recent program ASSAULT ON THE MALE. Fear not, feminists and Mr Row alike (well, not very alike); what Ms Tepper's vision of selective breeding-out fails to achieve, the outpourings of the chemical and pesticide industry seems to be very effectively accomplishing. There are now entire rivers and lakes where not a single normally developed male fish is being born. And there is evidence that the problem is starting to show much higher up the food chain. Our dystopic visions are finally catching up with us. (6.5.94)

[Actually, Brad Row suggested that I change the title to something less abrasive, but I exercised my editorial pejorative. As to the issue of book burning - we've recently seen something like it with the banning from Australia of David Irving. I haven't been following his career closely but the media's dumping on his views is a good example of out-and-out censorship (as is the Government's). People are, in a democracy, allowed to express their views, and self-interest groups, political or religious, should allow this - if nothing else, the truth will out, and when it does, one group (or person) will be shown for what they are. - Ron.]

RODNEY LEIGHTON, R R #3, Pugwash, N. S. Canada BOK 110.

The cover for THE MENTOR 83 was certainly eye-catching but I think I'll avoid commenting on it. Whatever it is.

Although I usually abandon stories involving monstrous spaceships after about 3 words, I started on STAR RISE OVER HADES and got sufficiently caught up in it to finish it. Actually enjoyed the story; thought it was well done. I would call it psychological horror, which is one of my favourite genres, rather than sci-fi, which is my least favourite, but perhaps that's a psychological reaction on my part. Like: "SF stories suck; what the fuck am I doing reading this! Must be something else!" Or maybe it's just a well written and well crafted story which anyone could enjoy. Quite a bit of social commentary in there as well, I believe.

I also really liked WAVECAVE. I think Lillie just keeps getting better. This story would have benefited from another page or so and a bit of expansion of the wife and her conversion. Loved the ending!

SENTINELS was a tricky little piece. Read just like a horror story. Reading it, I was thinking that this is a pretty good story and hit the last paragraph and thought: "Hell, this is a fucking sci-fi story! Sure fooled me!"

R&R was good. Some folks hate feminists; others are. The thing about any book review or any other review is that, aside from basic ordering info and such statistical things as title, number of pages and so forth, the thing is totally subjective. When I read A BOOK FOR BURNING, I thought to myself: "God, this guy really hated this book. Obviously hates feminists and all things connected to feminism." As Julie Vaux says, his "review" is a gut response not only to the book but feminism. All reviews contain personal opinion; it's the nature of the beast. Really harsh criticisms sometimes turn potential readers off but sometimes lure them. If I knew anyone in Oz who was rich and generous, I might... hell, I do. Maybe I'll see if I can get me a copy. Mainly to see if it's as bad as Mr. Row makes out.

[Well, Sheri Tipper is a US author. - Ron.]

Personally, I don't like doing hate reviews. I have limited time and space; why waste them on something I can't stand. I get packages of CDs to review. Those I hate, I list the title followed by UGH! and that's that; the zine publisher sees that and no one else and someone else gets the CD. Possibly to hate and maybe to love.

So, religion! Like Julie Hawkins, I grew up in a family of mixed religion. Mom was and is highly religious, believing firmly and completely in God, Bible and Church. I never heard how father feels but as far as I can recall, the only 2 times he's been to church that I know of were for his wedding 47 years ago and his mother's funeral. I do know that he wants to be cremated and have no funeral or other services, which is one of the few areas I completely agree with him. Religious funeral services are paganistic rituals designed to prolong and promulgate the suffering of the bereaved. No insult to believers in the Pagan religion intended.

I was forced to go to church and Sunday School by Mother until I rebelled at age 10 or so. Haven't been in one since, I don't think. I dislike the pomposity, the self-righteousness and especially the hypocrisies which seem so prevalent. Which does not mean that such applies to all church goers, by any means... my Mother has none

of those characteristics, nor my sister who is an ordained minister in a minor religious order.

I used to believe quite strongly in predestination but am not so sure any longer. I do think there is a supreme being of some sort and I call him God, because that is easy and convenient but I don't give a damn if you call him by any of dozens of names or call her Goddess or various other titles. I used to believe there was also a Devil but am more and more thinking that Devil is just another side/aspect of God.

As to Hell... how can there be anything worse than some of the places and things on earth? Consider the atrocities in various parts of Asia and Europe and Ireland and the USA. Think about the people living on the streets of every major city in the world; existing on food scraps scavenged from dumpsters and sleeping in doorways wrapped in thrown away newspapers. What could be worse than these? (9.5.94)

DARREN GOOSSENS, 210 Melbourne Rd, Ballarat, VIC 3350.

#83 - super cover. Green and purple. Marvellous. The fiction was pretty good. WAVECAVE especially. STAR RISE OVER HADES was maybe a bit long, but only maybe, and only a bit.

The only significant omission I can think of in Andrew Darlington's article is that Mercury was the setting of THE WORM OUROBOROS by E. R. Eddison. Though perhaps he considered this and dismissed it - it's a fantasy, and the only connection with Mercury in our universe is the name. (Mind you, it's still a fantastic book.) Good article.

Back cover was good too. (The guy with the goggles, though - I thought for a second he had a big dumb grin on his face, and that detracted a little from the effect.)

Like the picture on page 19.

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM is interesting, though a bit of a hard slog. Sounds a lot like any club, SF or otherwise, what with politics and schisms and such.

Bill Congreve is right about A LAND FIT FOR HEROES: the fantasy series mentality has done no favours to the genre as far as I can tell. Non-series fantasy novels are rare as hen's teeth, it seems sometimes; and if it's not part of a series, that's only because the sequel hasn't been written yet.

#84 - THE MENTOR - *The Magazine Ahead Of Its Time*. Sure is. About six months. INFINITE MADONNA. Yes, this does merit wider circulation. A little gem. The other two were nice pieces also. FAITH AND FORTUNE has an Eric Frank Russellish feel about it, and that has to be good.

CAPTAIN CONDOR is mightily interesting. Makes you wonder just how much good stuff was here one week, gone the next in [the] fifties and sixties. As far as most people are concerned, these comics might as well have never existed, which is definitely a pity.

Like Mark McLeod's stuff. Especially the third one (can't say exactly why, but there you go).

In response to Steve Sneyd's comment that atheism is taken on faith - which I'm not going to disagree with, I might add - I think it was the French mathematician Laplace who said, "God is an unnecessary hypothesis".

I agree with your comments on the use of expletives. Tedious is right. Just because no one is stopping you is no reason to curse like it's going out of style. I guess it's just a matter of personal taste. (20.5.94)

BRENT LILLIE, 10 Cherub St, Togun, QLD 4224.

The new banner is excellent. Gives the magazine a whole new pride in itself, I thought. EDEN BOUND was an imaginative piece. I quite liked it, becoming more and more intrigued as the tale went on. The effect of the sticks on the protagonist was put across effectively. However, I thought the ending fizzled out a bit.

The poetry wasn't up to the same standard as that in the last couple of issues. Andrew Darlington's CAPTAIN CONDOR piece was the first shining light. Reading it took me back to when I used to buy those English comics they sold (still sell?) at the newsagents - the one's with strips like GEORGY'S GERMS and BRIAN'S BRAIN. So corny, but I loved 'em. One magazine featured a cover that asked *What would YOU do?* They'd present a problem each week, like bringing in a crippled Spitfire, and ask you to come up with a solution. There was also a strip about a hero who battled an unending array of

mythical Greek creatures; I particularly liked that one.

Peter Brodie's contribution - Jesus, what can I say? Give me a couple of years and I'll try and figure it out. It was different, that's for sure.

FAITH AND FORTUNE presented an original and unusual premise. A world whose every inhabitant relies on a single lottery to determine his or her fortune. I feel Margaret could have put the idea to better use. My feeling is that if A. V. U. sent someone down to "check everything out", they surely would have been impossible not to become aware of the lottery. It just didn't suspend my disbelief enough, in the end. And "hypno tapes"? Things like that seem to be an easy way out. Make the lawyer a natural language expert, a dialect sponge. Perhaps a translating chip, surgically inserted in the brain. Anything but hypno tapes.

Buck, take care of that heart of yours. My best wishes for a healthy recovery go out to you.

James Verran's article will come in handy to many, I'm sure. No wonder he comes up with great story ideas, reading all this stuff! But there are ideas everywhere. As he says, inspiration comes from many sources. It's just a matter of keeping eyes and ears open.

Mark McLeod's portfolio was impressive. I don't know much about him. Has he had much success with his drawings? He deserves it. Haven't read the latest instalment of AUSTRALIAN FANDOM yet. I'll save it for a rainy day. Is there more to come? Hmmmm, I see there is. In that case, I'll require an extended wet period.

The whole of TM seems to change slightly from issue to issue. 84 seemed particularly professional.

Mae, thanks of the letter. We all send you our best wishes. Your correspondence was a pleasant and most welcome surprise. I will reply. (24.5.94)

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

I don't remember filling my billy with milk - belly yes, billy, no. I do recall the large steel cans, but from my area, they were being picked up the trucks, and now and then inadvertently unloaded by the truck. One milk truck rolled over when making the turn from farm driveway to highway, and I wondered why more of them didn't. They were lethal objects to be wary of if you were on the same highway with them. I remember milk fresh from the cows, too.

The "common man" has a better life now than he or she did one century ago, with one exception. You can no longer pack your belongings and leave for the outback if you don't like your present life. The outbacks of the world are already filled, and the government no longer agrees that pushing aside a few abos or injuns is respectable.

Interesting portfolio of art.

I can't speak for others, but convention advertising doesn't influence me. Annoys me at times; we're getting a lot of telephone solicitations lately, and some of them won't give up. I had to scream GET THE FUCK OFF MY PHONE! at one of them before he quit calling back. I quite buying Shell gasoline for awhile when I was having trouble wit the solicitations for the "Shell Visa Card", but they eventually took no for an answer. (I already have a Shell gas credit card and two Visa cards, and I'm not getting another one.)

I'm a MENTOR reader who doesn't own a PC, with or without word processor and printer. And I wouldn't call US motor vehicle ads educational; maybe Australia does better. But mostly it's because I don't care if a car can do 0 to 50 in .6 seconds; I want to know what the frequency of repair is, and the average gas mileage. US ads somehow fail to provide that, though CONSUMER REPORTS magazine does.

Glad to know Chris Masters is 33 going on 447; his letters read more like 33 going on 9, the little kid who doesn't know how to get attention without being obnoxious. Okay, you've had my attention, Chris; be happy and note the past tense.

Steve Sneyd is quite right about Molesworth's history; it's dull to an outsider but it does provide basic facts. (I've never been too sure that the basic facts about science fiction fandom are overly important, but that's personal prejudice.)

US conventions continue to grow. Marcon in Columbus, Ohio, last weekend was huge. One estimate was 2600 attendees. I haven't seen an official figure, but the assumption of everyone there was that it was somewhere over 2000. It's held in the city convention center adjoining a big hotel. Notably absent were parties; I suppose

it's a bit daunting to plan to hold a party when that many fans may show up for it. As a substitute, the blocks of rooms for programming are surrounded by wide corridors - 30 and 40 feet wide - which substituted as a vast meeting area. Juanita and I each had 3 panels, and Juanita had a concert, plus we were both included in Barry and Sally Child-Helton's renewal of marriage vows (10th anniversary). They were married before they discovered fandom, and wanted to renew their vows in company with friends. This was an official program item, incidentally. I got to be minister. There was general hugging afterwards. I got hugged by Barry, which was interesting, because he's 6'9" and I'm 6'0"; physically it was a little like being a little kid and getting hugged by your father, except that I'm 30 years older than Barry, so I was definitely getting mixed signals. Much more pleasant to be hugged by Sally, who is no taller than I am. Hal Clement was there because he has relatives in the area; Forry Ackerman and Julius Schwartz were among the official guests. Schwartz gave me the pitch for First Fandom; I'm eligible, but I'd rather hang around with people like Barry and Sally. Too many First Fandom members want to talk exclusively about the Good Old Days. (Forry still keeps pretty well up to date; I don't know Schwartz well enough to say.) (18.5.94)

ANDY SAWYER, 1, The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, South Wirral L64 4BT, UK.

Thanks for the 30th MENTOR: another fascinating piece by Andy Darlington on images of Mercury. Perhaps he should have mentioned E. R. Eddison's THE WORM OUROBOROS which is actually set on Mercury although it bears no relationship to even the fantastical Mercuries Andy describes. For those who don't know the book, it's a wonderful fantasy (using sources like the ILIAD and Shakespeare as touchstones) of treachery and betrayal versus romantic chivalry as seen in the war between the unfortunately named Witches and Demons. The viewpoint-character Lessingham is taken to Mercury in a dream and witnesses the events of the rest of the book in a kind of disembodied form (so disembodied that all references to him disappear after the first 20 or so pages, but he later appears in another form - in fact several forms - in Eddison's further books, MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES, A FISH DINNER IN MEMISON and THE MEZENTIAL, so I was definitely getting mixed signals. Much more pleasant to be hugged by Sally, who is no taller than I am. Hal Clement was there because he has relatives in the area; Forry Ackerman and Julius Schwartz were among the official guests. Schwartz gave me the pitch for First Fandom; I'm eligible, but I'd rather hang around with people like Barry and Sally. Too many First Fandom members want high includes a considerable number of books by Edgar Rice Burroughs which on closer examination turned out to oesn't know how to get attention without being obnoxious. Okay, you've had my attention, Chris; be happy and note the past tense.

Steve Sneyd is quite right about Molesworth's history; it's dull to an outsider but it does provide basic facts. (I've never been too sure that the basic facts about science fiction fandom are overly important, but that's personal prejudice). US conventions continue to grow. Marcon in Columbus, Ohio, last weekend was huge. One estimate was 2600 attendees. I haven't seen ans a different story... I remember reading an interview with William Gibson saying that that the essential difference between the cyberpunk generation and previous ones was that he and his contemporaries had had the experience of reading William Burroughs when they were thirteen. As someone almost the same age as Gibson, I know exactly what he means, but I do feel grateful of having discovered the Tarzan novels at an early age, though NOVA EXPRESS says more to me. (-.5.94)

J. C. HARTLEY, 14 Rosebank, Rawtenstall, Rossendale BB4 7RD, ENGLAND.

TM 82. Sneyd said that Brent Lillie's JAM JAR was a prose poem; well, JAMES was another. Wonderful stuff.

A BOOK FOR BURNING. When Brad Row wrote "but the irony appears to be totally lost on the author" he should have got warning bells. It's a very arrogant assumption to make that Sheri Tepper is a Nazi-femme writing a book on a superficial level exhorting womenfolk to rise up, kill their children and spouses and turn lesbian (this is a paraphrase of what an evangelical republican senator claimed democrat weifare payments for women would do). Post-apocalypse gender books to read: HANDMAID'S TALE - first half as

suffocating an evocation as Orwell (excuse comparison) tho suffers when opened out. WHO NEEDS MEN? - don't read this as it's patronising crap. The late great Angela Carter's NEW EVE and to an extent HEROES AND VILLAINS.

HUNDRED GATES HOLT loved it when I got over the new readers start here shoved in at the deep end type style. As someone once described as a welfare state werewolf I adored the White Fang Gang.

J. Haines RACE AGAINST TIME best poem. Re SLIPKNOT anyone remember short story about back in time to impregnate own mum where hero is in an organisation righting choral foul-ups? Choppy style, hero wears ring with snake devouring own tail. Who wrote? Notion almost certainly lifted from DOMINIC HYDE outings on BBC Play For Today in seventies. Story itself old as read it 29 years ago Ron. Also who wrote ONCE BITTEN about alien Bee stinging for communication purposes.

Darlington/Moorcock of course the Hawklord has left these shores for gawd knows what in the States, missed his farewell address to Ray Davies clones on radio arts programme. And inevitably with huge output he did write a lot of crap but it was Jerry that made me realise that SF needn't be all intelligent slime moulds and I still re-read those books and balls to fashion.

OZ FANDOM suddenly as if being beamed with microwaves I began to feel this was a gigantic spoof. Whether it was the footnotes or paranoia I don't know. Curious perhaps will fade with second instalment. Used to like Eric Russell stuff (about 29 years ago -) but haven't read any for ages.

IN DEPTH as is usual with your reviews would like to get hold of some Dowling stuff.

R&R have to say that for all her confessed "lunacy" Mae Strelkov comes across as less hysterical than Chris Masters.

Education. Don't know what's been happening in Oz but in the old country a Test a Term brings the teachers out on strike. The Exams Good Exams Bad policy of the govt. has alienated everyone including employers who view new certificates with mystification and suspicion. Kids have lurched from exam-based to continuous assessment and back, teachers have been submerged under paperwork and parents blackmailed into becoming "governors" have found themselves having to make decisions they do not feel qualified to consider. My son starts school in Sept. god help him and us.

TM 83. STAR RISE OVER HADES: thought this turning into "Why we must eat meat" allegory rather overwritten and POV switch doesn't really work but Hom. Saps herded thru airlock and floating past windows a chilling image.

IN DEPTH: splendid as ever impossibility of communication well illustrated by R&R DEPT.

WAVECAVE: as a big Brent Lillie fan after last two TMs a bit concerned about how he would handle a longer piece. A shaky opening and an ending skirting rather close to anti-climax but wow the density of that imagery in-between. Dealing with loss seems to be a major theme on evidence so far. Can we have a Brent Lillie piece as regularly as Andy Darlington?

HELL PLANET, MERCURY: was a terrific piece. Kim Stanley Robinson's treatment of the place in A MEMORY OF WHITENESS was well up to its predecessors.

SENTINELS was a bit forgettable, I'm afraid. How authentic is the native Australian mythos in this and WAVECAVE? Can anyone recommend a book on any of this?

No longer felt OZ FANDOM was a spoof just increased my bafflement as to what fandom is all about. Politicking seemed to be as popular to Oz fans then as projectile vomiting and beard envy is to UK fans now.

R&R. Harry Andruschak on "cold fusion". A recent Horizon programme on BBC 2 suggested that the nuke establishment have been less than honest in their publishing of experiment "duplication" results, averaging out of graphs, etc... does tend to obscure what looks like genuine energy readings. I know this is the stuff of conspiracy theories (anything I say will sound like the ravings of a dangerous paranoid) but I couldn't care a damn either way, the TV programme did suggest that vested interests were preventing a serious attempt to confirm or refute the "cold fusion" enthusiasts.

For Terry Broome to say that Brent Lillie's work lacks soul is so amazing as to negate the laws of physics he seems so avidly

attached to.

Julie Hawkins says the church is evolving but you can't teach an old God new tricks. I go from being totally divorced from/to wildly antagonistic towards the church. Islam is apparently the growth belief in UK tho dope and Carlsberg sales would tend to refute this. And old teacher of mine used to say that many problems would have been avoided if Ferdinand and Isabella had failed to halt Moorish excursions north. As for Christianity, it's hard to argue with what Jesus said but the hierarchy seems to be determined to boil the message down to "thou shall not shag" as well as being over attached to the God of the Old Testament. Blake wondered how the creator of the lamb made the tiger and the smiter does seem to be a different supreme being to the sufferer of little children. The fact is the taboos and rituals of desert tribes do not transpose to Western urbs. The ranting against women priests among same in the UK reinforces the notion that the Church is a misogynist myopic body fixed on bizarre fundamental tenets ignoring reality. No one without balls in the temple indeed. I once told a lapsed catholic friend that I thought the universe was a single living entity hence us in god and God in us and miracles just a case of accessing shared atoms and she said that was boring. The need for a personal god, a John Huston lookalike in the sky, is very strong. Pantheism or Shamanism or holozionism or even Earth based Goddess worship seems closer to home but I still can't argue with Jesus but the thought of worshipping him sticks in the throat. I guess I'm a Zen Agnostic. Or a latent paranoid, believing in The Message: Universe as information system and the aforementioned paranoia. The suspicion that we've been created and are being watched (no, I can't bring myself to believe that).

Not sure that Steve Sneyd did misquote John Alderson when he said that the Queen was "a Scot". I got the impression that he meant dynastically and not just personally, ie cos of her mum. Of course Saxe-Coburg Gotha[?] is the family name changed because of the unfortunate relatives in WWI. John certainly misquoted Steve who never suggested that bombs prevented Elizabeth being II in Scotland but rather said, like John, that this gave a sense of the opposition in Scotland at that time. I'm afraid "it's worked for 3,000 years" (paraphrase) isn't cutting much ice in UK at the moment. Prolificacy, pampering, shagging around, and the "my country owes me a living" social security scrounger attitude (so railed against by this government) has got many pissed off with the Royals. Satire shows and "how about a Republic then" discussions abound to an extent unthinkable ten years ago. Of course the country hasn't always loved its first family, the "special relationship" is a comparatively modern phenomenon and there have always been vocal opponents but regarding this particular generation up until recently those voices were considered to belong to cranks. Apart from the financial burden of keeping them in homes and homosexual footmen and the immaturity it betrays as a nation it is also responsible for justifying and perpetrating the division and destructive class system that cripples this country.

Re John Alderson's note on education and suicides, there were a spat of them around exam time last year here, don't quite know the situation this year or the answer to assessment.

Rod Marsden doesn't know why you bother with poetry, Ron. Presumably because you see something in it. Criticism by the versiphobe lobby (rotten term, is there a generic term for poetry haters? Over here it's "magazine editors") depresses me because it reinforces my own feelings that what I'm doing is a sophisticated form of wanking off. But that's literature in general isn't it? Only sometimes (accidentally) someone gets impregnated by the ideas (out of control metaphor alert). Of course recognition in whatever form helps and this correspondent as well as Steve Sneyd, Andy Darlington, Andy Sawyer, John Haines and Uncle Arthur C. Clarke and all have been interviewed for BBC Radio 4 for a little credibility-of-the-BBC-destroying-outline about SF poetry. With a cast like that, it's a MENTOR takeover of the air waves. Slightly surreal in that I was interviewed on my postal delivery, John Haines in a shop doorway in Warrington on early closing day with ambient shutter sounds and Steve Sneyd in a Yorkshire chicken hut. Arthur C. Clarke presumably answered a chat-line in a Polynesian single's bar and I'll be hearing from his solicitors.

Re royalty again, sort of. Was it my mention of my sheep stealing ancestors that made John Alderson mention the Rievers? What Reiver family are you connected to John? My grandparent's

maiden name was Hetherington so that's my link, my wife is similarly linked to the Armstrongs. Mind you if it was on names alone every other family in Cumbria and the Borders has Reiver blood. Why we should be proud of the murderous inventors of blackmail (originators of the word to "bereave") is beyond me but I guess heritage is heritage, otherwise like Popeye you're a "beast without roots". However if ever there was evidence of the highest in the land being descended from successful gangsters, then it is illustrated by the Border Reivers, a quick scan of the family "names" throws up most of the present day Cumbrian aristocracy. Lowther being the most obvious to spring to mind.

Finally, new SF on TV here, BABYLON 5, from States a sort of UN building in space. Ho hum characterisation, the Alpha Centurians are Jewish Italians playing opera buffo with Mikado haircuts and pirate frock coats; great FX though and the whole thing smells of good production values. They've tried to go for the sense of continuity and tradition, that STAR TREK has developed over the years all in one go but they might get there. At least someone is making SF. (26.5.94)

TRENT JAMESON, 109 High St, Lismore Heights, NSW 2480.

TM 84 was, as usual, entertaining and agreeable reading. The fiction was all of a reasonable standard, the most entertaining being Brent Lillie's INFINITE MADONNA, I really loved that story. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about issue 84 was finding a poem credited to me that I did not write. Not a bad poem, I might add, but nonetheless not mine, my poetry is a lot lumpier, usually as subtle as a brick and, most of the time, not science fiction in theme.

Julie Vaux yet again writes beautifully, her lines are indeed carefully crafted. Poets, however do not create purgatory but rather hell (tongue in cheek) Dante dwells there as does, it seems, Robert Frew in "tortured unrest." Time travel, purgatory, monsters and stars, if there's one thing I love about these poems it's their variety. Steve Sneyd (as always) and Cecelia Drewer both write well.

Bill Congreve's IN DEPTH was as usually insightful and entertaining I just wish that I could fit that marvellous profile of his, particularly the "above average income". Having recently completed a BA in Media Communications, a large component of which was Marketing, Marketing Research and Consumer Behaviour, I would agree with your comments. Know your market or suffer the consequences, advertisers aren't known for their philanthropy and if you can't convince them that your magazine is read by their target market then you'll never get their ads or (more importantly) their money. Interesting to see what others will say.

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM grows interestingly interesting.

Thanks to Sean for the info on WOTF, sounds like you had a very fruitful time. You deserved it. Might must enter that competition myself. (1.6.94)

CATHERINE MINTZ, 1810 South Rittenhouse Square, 1708, Philadelphia, PA 19103-5837, USA.

Since we are just beginning the first of the fine summer days, you must be going into winter. I suppose it will sound a bit witless, but I have never seen a picture of snow in Australia. Oz is a big place, it must snow sometime, somewhere, but all the pictures of kangaroos and koala bears show the place as a near desert, punctuated by groves of eucalyptus trees. Even on BEYOND 2000 it always seems to be a sunny day in high summer when they go down under to tour newest in sewage treatment plants or automated traffic control systems. Do you guys have a secret you are keeping from the rest of the world so we will all stay home? Is it not only summer when we are all having winter, but it is summer when we are having summer, too?

[Well, looking into an Oz encyclopedia, I found that NSW has 3,200 sq km of snow over 1,400 metres altitude, Victoria 2,250 sq km and Tasmania 6,500 sq. km over 900 metres. Since this is all mountainous terrain, there is good skiing there. - Ron.]

[THE MENTOR 83 was] a good issue. I enjoyed Andrew Darlington's article I REMEMBER... MERCURY particularly. I confess I am sad when I reread an old favourite and know that it has been shunted off into literary history by today's science section news. Mercury was more fun when it was the hell planet and not just a baked rock almost too near a star for its own good.

Still, one favorite remains untouched, for it was never realistic enough to worry about mere facts: that in E. R. Eddison's Zimianvian Trilogy, which begins with a trip by hippogriff-drawn chariot to a Mercury astronomer never dreamed of: "There was a man named Lessingham... [His] strange courser spread wide his rainbow wings and slanted down the night over a great island that slumbered on a slumbering sea, with lesser isles about it: a country of rock mountains and hill pastures and many waters, all a-glimmer in the moonshine. They landed within a gate crowned with golden lions." Now *that's* a Mercury! (1.6.94)

PAVEL A. VIAZNIKOV, PO Box 344, Moscow 502, Russia 125502.

I ... have quite a lot of interesting experiences. For example, I have recently been to Ashkhabad, capital of Turkmenistan. Hey, they only separated from us (the USSR) a couple of years ago, but already that's an absolutely foreign, even alien country! They have a Big Brother of their own - President Nazarbayev the "Turkmenbashi" ("Head of All Turkmens"), whose portraits and busts look at you from everywhere. Wherever there's a couple of square feet for his icon, you see an elderly well-fed man in a colourful wrap-over (like a bathrobe you wear after a shower) and a necktie. They hang this portrait even in planes.

Prices are very strange: on one hand, you can buy 1 kg of very good mutton for as little as 50 cents (US), and the Turkmen do not pay for electricity, water and gas - and President Nazarbayev promises free bread soon, too. On the other hand, a room in a hotel (a good one, but the cheapest they have for foreigners) costs US\$250, and if a Turkmen with average salary would wish to spend only one night in such a room, he'd have to collect all his salary for 2¹/₂ years, without spending a dime for food or anything else. This makes foreigners (even Russians!) rich people compared with locals. If, of course, you forget about the price of air tickets and hotels (there are cheap hotels - but quite uncomfortable, not to be compared with the marble palaces of the new hotels built by the order of "Turkmenbashi"; there's a whole long street of a dozen pompous hotels, most of them still waiting for a guest to come).

We have been guests of a rich man. We spent most of our business trip eating and drinking - or, rather, over-eating and over-drinking. We had consumed 4 sheep in 2 days and God knows how much vodka and brandy. They have 2 rules - (1) "A glass must not stay full" and (2) "A glass must not stay empty". In other words, you have to drink as soon as your glass is filled, and your glass is filled as soon as you drink the previous portion. Horrible. And you can by no means refuse from eating and drinking, as it would be an insult to the host.

To ease the effects of eating much mutton and drinking a lot, we were treated to a lot of green tea, very fragrant and tasty. Our host kept ordering - "More tea to our guests! And give them tea with sugar!" And they kept pouring us tea from a separate kettle. But it wasn't sweet (as green *kok-chay* should not be sweet). We kept wondering. Later, before our departure from Ashkhabad, our host confessed that by "sugar" they mean hashish. Do you now such a thing? It's a drug, made of cannabis plant. So I have joined the club, though involuntary and without any addiction (thank God).

So, the whole trip was mostly feasting - phew! I thought I'll die there....

As for TM matters: I hope that my letter about A BOOK FOR BURNING made a havoc of a certain degree among woman-libs; that's what I wanted - more responses from both sides. Though I really dislike feminists. I know some of them - they make me sick. One is a B. A. - and acquaintances call her S. A. - "Spinster of Arts" (and a militant Nazi organisation in Hitler's Germany).

... May I congratulate you with another one of those misprints - it wasn't 1000 VIEWS OF FUNGI I mentioned, but 1000 VIEWS OF FUJI (meaning a famous series of pictures by the Japanese artist Hokusai).

[Anybody who sends handwritten LoCs is liable for creative misprints. - Ron.]

To J. C. Hartley: you are wrong about Talkies, they are usually fun. (26.5.94)

ROB FREW, 1 Funda Place, Brookvale, NSW 2100.

I've been watching the religion debate in TM for some time and have pondered adding my two cents worth (at the risk of having

my head bitten off) and finally thought what the hell - they're only my beliefs.

I'm sorry Mae, but you have another "paid up atheist" on your hands (your LoCs are great Mae - keep writing). I think the church of yesteryear was important. It played the role of society's morality watch dog, but the moral codes it taught (thou shall not steal, thou shall not kill, thou shall not fuck the neighbour's wife) have today become laws enforced by the boys (and girls) in blue. (I have a friend in jail for 16 years for fucking his neighbour's wife... however, she did convince him to kill her husband - the power of the pussy!)

I must admit, I was in muddy water for many years, even after finding out the horrible truth about Santa, the Easer Bunny and the Tooth Fairy (the time David Tansey suggests we should give up believing in the Lord above, in his excellent LoC - TM #83). But I studied the facts (no pun intended) and made up my mind by my late teens (an opinion which is reinforced daily!)

I'm not sure that Ron is correct suggesting people need to believe in something. I think perhaps the principle behind the need for Faith is quite simple - as humans, we are generally weak, the thought of death scares us, so to pad the wall and soften our passage through old age & death, we invent an afterlife to make the journey tolerable.

The funny thing is, religion dates back hundreds of thousands of years, and the notion that each living being contains a soul was, in fact, invented by Prehistoric Man (people). Their daily lives were extremely stressful, so they began to draw pictures on the walls of caves, illustrating bison, mammoths & other prey. They believed that the pictures they drew captured the soul of the beast portrayed, and hence they would have control over that animal during the following day's hunt (hell, if I had to bring down a hairy elephant with a spear - I guess I'd like a head-start too). But for some reason we have clung to Christianity, even though countless religions have evolved and died before and after the magical appearance of Jesus Christ.

And there is a limit to people's patience when others force ideals on them. I had a couple of God botherers turn up at my home some months back, and they tried to sell me religion as though it were some kind of Amway product - I was literally waiting for them to pull out a video! In retrospect, I think I had more success putting doubt in to their minds, than they had putting divine inspiration into mine (with great thanks to Bill Congreve's baby in the pram scenario).

But, being the open minded person I am, I took their book, THE BOOK OF MORMONS, from "The Church of the Latter-Day Saints" and read all that I could stand. The guru, Joseph Smith's personal witness to the Second Coming; the secret presentation to him of the revised, gold embossed commandments (you'd think He'd get it right the first time - and a step up to gold, no less); and the eight or so witnesses (mostly Smith's family) make an absolute mockery of any religious belief.

The dozens of denominations that we are privileged to be able to select from suggests to me that the Church has become little more than a commercial enterprise (selling something you can never collect). Ironically, the Church encourages individuals to do away with material goods, so they may be delivered (greed free but poor?) unto heaven. Yet, if you took the wealth of the Catholic Church alone, you could probably feed the Third World for half a decade.

I'll leave my religious argument at that, except to say that the Bible is the second worst novel I've read (after THE BOOK OF MORMONS).

Two last things; if Glen Chapman really believes "the bottom line to the whole writing thing is to make money - lots of it", how come mags like TM get dozens of submissions per issue? I dare say there are other motives (unfortunately only procrastinators like King make the money).

Finally, the Russian guy, Pavel, mentions one of his dreams is seeing the b/w movie LORD OF THE FLIES. I've loved the William Golding book since I was a kid, and jumped at the chance of capturing it on video off late-night TV years back. (It's been a personal treasure, even though Brooks was condemned at the time of the movie's release for directing a simple reading from the novel). Pavel, perhaps we could work something out - how much is freight to and from Russia? (7.6.94)

[I've heard that videotapes are in short supply over there, so you might have trouble getting it through the mail intact to Pavel. I

suggest that you contact Pavel about mailing them. - Ron.]

DON BOYD, PO Box 19, Spit Junction, NSW 2088.

Some good reading in TM 81. Andrew Sullivan's yarn PANDORA'S BOX gains strength for having some science and mathematical soundness, ie exponential growth of the alien von Neumann machines, and the X-ray reflection jargon. Since the speculative fiction crowd came on the scene years ago I have been prone to using that hated word sci fi for SF where the science is all fractured or frothy... you know, "He did the Rigel run in 3 light years."

Andrew Darlington's article on NEBULA and other British SF mags was as usual very good. I can remember seeing bundles of them on my brother's bookshelves and in secondhand shops.

The plot, dialogue and general smoothness of storytelling made Robert Frew's A NEW ORDER worthy of note. It reminded me of an old yarn in, I think, IF magazine where the street robots had gone berserk after an atomic war and the surviving humans lived like rodents.

Bill Congreve's review of GOD: THE INTERVIEW by Terry Lane. I think Christianity's probably the most primitive religion so it's not a surprise that people who try to fathom the cruelty of the universe come up angry. Lane's God says, "An act cannot be evil in a secular sense and good in a religious sense." If you look at this from the point of view of the sophisticated religions, those that involve reincarnation, karmic debt and you-make-your-own-hell etc, suppose Bill in this life discovers the girl whom he loves and is so dear to him had been speared as a baby in her mother's arms 2000 years ago by Bill as a Roman Tribune? Next day Bill finds his own mother has been fatally hit by a motorist, the driver being the reincarnation of the father of that baby from 2000 years ago. Bill's girl of course comforts him and consoles him, ie the murdered baby's soul is showing forgiveness and love to her earlier killer. You can think up many cruel acts by an uncaring universe which anger you provided you assume there is nothing after death. But if you are setting up a moral order to ponder, even just for fun, you have to use its rules. A three year old child ripped apart by a shark suffers swift pain but goes to loving parents in a pleasant land. My conclusion: Terry Lane is a religious primitive.

This sort of leads into the readers' responses to Ron's editorial later of what will replace organised religion? What I think people really mean is a replacement for Christianity, since it is perfectly normal to be ethnocentric (racist) in believing ourselves and our own culture to be the centre of the universe. I am currently having a squiz at these Indian sages like Sai Baba, Amritanandamayi (female), Muktanananda and Nityananda (the latter two deceased of recent times). There could be a dozen or dozens of people like these with apparently godlike powers. The theory is that by meditation you can shut off all the chaff from lower levels of consciousness and stream into higher planes of cosmic import. Interesting, ain't it?

Hilarious but extremely accurate critique by Steve Sneyd of THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE. His comparison of it with the archetypal TROUBLE WITH HARRY, but no, wait, the Jesus corpse getaway, implants an extremely mischievous story angle in my scurrilous mind, but dare I use it? Aw, what the heck, they printed that disgusting stuff in the FEMOSAUR CARNIVORE whatever comic... I'll do it; we ain't American bible loonies here in Oz. Anyway it'll be Clarke that goes to jail, not me.

I notice Shola Paice claiming L. Ron Hubbard was "one of the most acclaimed and widely read authors of all time". The biography BAREFACED MESSIAH shows he was pretty much penniless most of his life. He was writing begging letters to the US Navy trying to scrounge small pension benefits about 1950. He began to make money in the early '50s with his non-SF schemes. I always like his style and sort of admire the somewhat Australian barrikinism and breeziness of the guy. After his death his books are pumped onto the New York Times bestseller lists by artificial recycling, so we could hedge about his being "widely read". What do other readers think? All L. Ron's stories have a slam-bang swashbuckling style. Amazing he's still churning em out yet he's dead!

I liked the intricacy and complexly worked out culture and magic of COLDMAZE MOONLIGHTS. I believe in the Celtic fairy folk and see the UFO abduction/space brothers/police car chase and air force chase pranks in a long, continuously historical chain of behaviour and interaction with humanity. The magic involved in changeling exchange, where a wailing brat of a fairy geriatric is left in

place of a human baby, or a log is left and magically made to behave like an infant, has a peculiar fascination. Are the UFO gynaecological examinations and rapes a continuation of it? I recommend to Duncan Evans-Wentz's work THE FAIRY FAITH AMONG CELTIC PEOPLES. The other classic is Lady Gregory's VISIONS AND BELIEFS IN THE WEST OF IRELAND. Evans-Wentz (a possible relation?) is famous to hippy drug folk for his translation of THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD. An anthropologist, he said he was only in Ireland a month on his researches before he knew the fairy folk were a reality. Also recommended is Jacques Valée's DIMENSIONS: A CASEBOOK OF ALIEN CONTACT. I got all these out of the library with no trouble, Chatswood in my case.

The new photocopied version of TM looks very crisp and sharp. The extreme clarity of edges and tiny detail is an amazing thing in xerographic progress. Wonder where it will all end? Prices of materials, toner etc hopefully will come down. Maybe there'll be a new selenium drum to interact with your computer directly without scanning a copy on paper. (- .4.94)

C. R. ROSS, PO Box 268, Mossman, QLD 4873.

I first started reading Science Fiction as a 16 year old, back in 1943. A simple exercise in basic math will tell you that I am now retired, or as retired as a geologist ever is. The reason that I tell you of my age is to emphasise the *type* of sf that I was first introduced to (via ASTOUNDING, later ANALOG, and UNKNOWN) and to perhaps castigate those present at the [Sydney Futurian] meeting for their failure to come up with humorous examples of sf. First gear indeed! Well, they did come up with Eric Frank Russell's NEXT OF KIN. I always enjoyed his stories because he seemed to have such fun with his Aliens.

There was another writer whose stories I always enjoyed, though his name escapes me at present.

I'll digress here to explain why I no longer have his stories. About 5 years ago I sent my collection of ASTOUNDING/ANALOG to my eldest daughter (Jan '44 to June '73) and they are no longer available to me.

In any event, to describe these stories may take a little time. In general, they are all set on one planet and the stories are about the trouble that the human settlers have in coping with the life forms on that planet... in a humorous fashion. The setting was one in which the planet was about the same as Earth, is, hostile but tameable. Some of the life forms which the settlers met consisted of giant, Roc-like birds, swarms of small biting insects, extreme winters, huge, aggressive bear-like life forms, trees with seeds that exploded when burned, and to make the picture perfect, a virus that wiped out [about] 50% of the settler population. The "Space Cops" wouldn't let anyone who landed on the planet take off if they'd had the disease. Also, there was an addictive weed that could be smoked which took away the will to accomplish anything except to continue smoking. In some of the stories the viral infection hit the female part of the population more than the male, causing considerable stress. ...You can see the setting the author made, and the opportunity for humorous situations to be developed. As these short stories were published in the 50's and 60's, you can appreciate why the author is dim in my mind. Perhaps his name is something Christopher, perhaps Christopher Anvil... or perhaps something completely different. I've frequently wondered if these stories were ever collected into a book. It would be a shame if they weren't, because of the humorous content... a factor all too rare in SF. (14.6.94)

SHORTIES:

PAMELA BOAL, 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, UK. Congratulations on the 30th Annish of THE MENTOR. An excellent cover and a wonderful balance of contents. There seems to have been an increase in the number of zines published lately, indeed they have been acting like buses again (an English tradition is that you can wait in vain for a bus for an hour or more, then several will arrive together). TM was the last of eleven to arrive within the last two weeks. TM is unique, the only zine to publish good fiction, quality articles on Science Fiction and International Fandoms on a regular basis. All that plus the reviews and lively letter column that have their equal but are not bettered in

other zines.

(27.4.94)

GEOFF JACKSON, "Redhill", New Hammond Rd, Wyberton Fen, Boston, Lincs PE21 7JD, UK. The warmer weather has arrived at last and we're out and about in shirt sleeves again. The back garden is all set up with vegetables for the year (another month and we hope to be on early (new) tatoes). The moles are active, too. (Is it true there are no moles in Australia? Or is it New Zealand? [I don't think that ecological niche has been filled, though we have bandicoots - which dig holes in the ground - and wombats, which I suppose would be the equivalent of badgers. - Ron] I like the factual writing in MENTOR, especially Fandom history. (Presently wading through Molesworth's Aussie project). I found the South American write-up really interesting. I never thought of the Argentine being into S/F. Thought they were all Rio Ritas down there, same as Brazil. Shows you can pick up something new, even if one has to come half way round the world to find it. I hope you continue with fandom projects, Ron. After all, there's one hell of a lot of countries to cover. Mind you, I didn't link up to MENTOR till the 77[th] issue, so I expect I've missed some worthwhile contributions? I don't know of any other mag. which does [as] an informative coverage as MENTOR. Such interesting reading is worth the subscription alone. I am keeping the articles for future reference. (1.5.94)

MARIA-LOUISE STEPHENS, PO Box 138, Monbulk, VIC 3793. In the last issue, I haven't got it by my side, the story, which you published before Margaret Pearce, the first one, was to me too long. I would have liked to have taken a pencil and condensed all the explanations in the beginning - that doesn't mean I didn't like it, but I wondered when the author would get on to the important bits. I can talk, I usually need a lot of editing myself. (7.6.94)

WAHF: Bryce Stevens, David Clancy, Matthew Rayner, Cecelia Drewer, Andy Darlington, George Ivanoff, John Alderson, David Sweeney, Tony Plank, Pauline Scarf, Kurt Stone, Lorraine Cormack, Peggy Ranson and Shola Paice



- * Short stories
- * Interviews
- * Special features
- * Review section
- * Sf poetry showcase & much more!

THE LAST WORD IN SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES

THE ZONE features work by:

Bruce Boston Single/sample copy - £2.00/ \$7
Kevin Cullen 5 issue subscription: £10 / \$35

Andrew Darlington

John Francis Haines

Alan Kitch

John Light

N. D. Long

Kevin Lyone

Peter Schilling

Steve Sneyd

- & many more!

ORDER FROM:

SA Publishing,
13 Hazely Combe, Arreton
Isle of Wight PO30 3AJ
England

Please make cheques/PO payable
to Tony Lee, (O'seas orders: pay
by IMO or send ca\$h (US\$\$\$))

PRESS RELEASE: Shola Paice - "The prize to all correct answers to Riddle #2 (below) is a copy of one of the WRITERS OF THE FUTURE Anthology with an Australian writer in it".

In the Writers of the Future Contest here in Australia there have been three winners whose names you may have heard of! To enter for the free copy, send in the three Australian winners to: Shola Paice, 69-72 Wentworth Ave, Surry Hills 2010.

FROM:

**THE MENTOR
P. O. BOX K940
HAYMARKET
NSW 2000
AUSTRALIA**

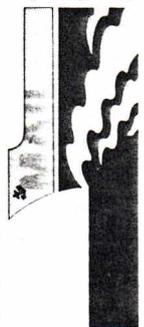
(NOTE NEW ADDRESS)

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

TO:

Dick & Nicki Lynch
PO Box 1350
Germantown
MD 20875
U.S.A.

SEA MAIL



Surface Mail From Australia

**PRINTED MATTER ONLY
(MAGAZINE)**