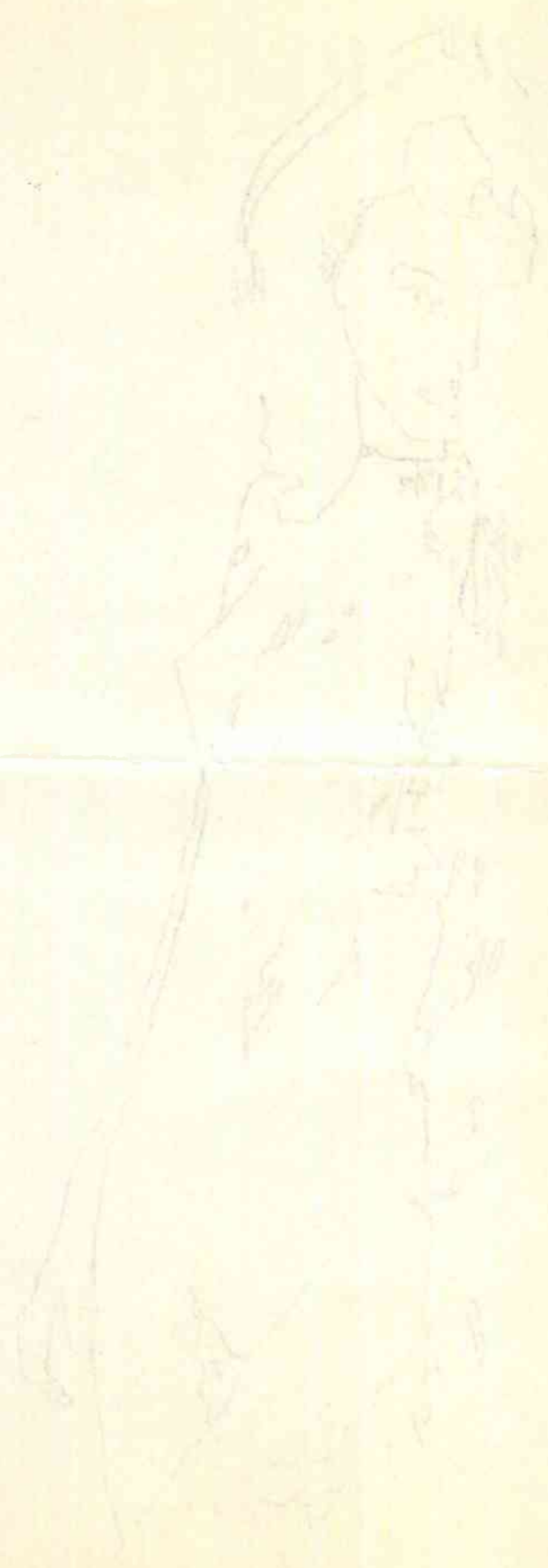


THE MENTOR 32



AUGUST 1981

THE MENTOR



MENTOR

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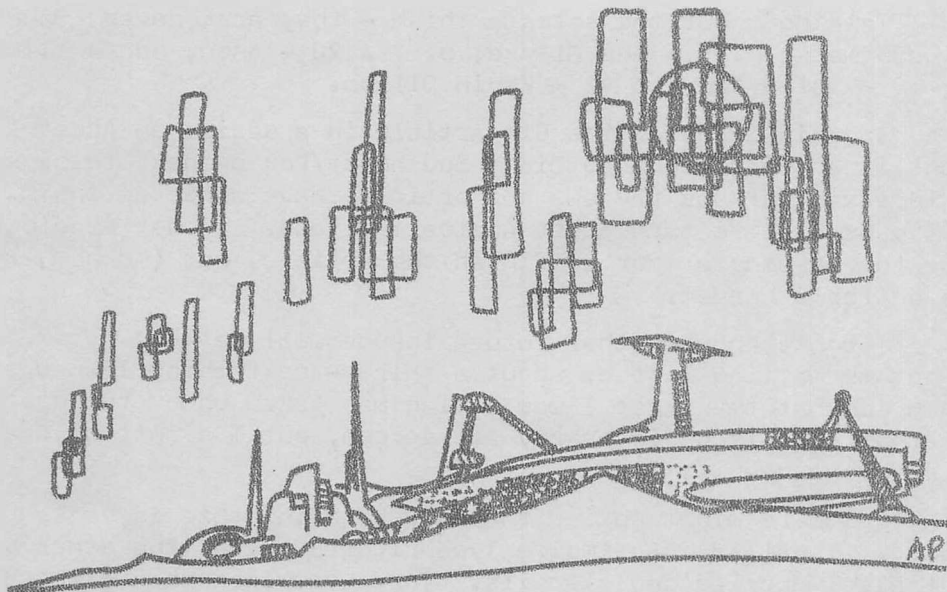
SCIENCE FICTION

August 1981

Number 32

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RON'S ROOST.

Over the weekend of the 6th to the 8th of June (last weekend) Gay Williams and myself attended ADVENTION '81. We arrived back on Wednesday night to find Susan a nervous wreck (well, nearly) from one week alone with the two kids. (Susan and I have an 'understanding' - she goes to the Trekons and I look after the kids, and every-so-often I go to an sf con and she looks after them.). I took a movie film of the trip and the Con - hopefully it'll be back in a couple of weeks from the developers.

Having passed through the full circle of fannish activities and arrived back where I started (sercon/sf reader-fannish(as far as I'll ever get)-sercon/sf reader) I knew that the Con appeared fairly sercon (lots of panels) so I thought I would have a good time. There were the usual hassles with mundanes (hotel, etc) but overall I think most fans at the Con enjoyed themselves. I hope to have several con reports next ish - I've put the hard word on two fans who were there; so if there is no articles emanating from them they will be named!

As many fans will know by now, the Faulconbridge Triumverate has purchased an electrostenciller. It is a valve job add there is no operation manuel. So some of the illos in this issue are not all they could be.... When we get the bugs out of the thing you'll be seeing better cut ones. My thanks to the artists appearing in this issue - and I could do with more artwork!

Talking about the artists thish - they are; cover: John Parkes; p.7 - Shayne McCormack; p.11 - Sue Clarke; p. 1 & 20 - anon; photo p.16 - John Fox; pgs. 32,33 - Julie Vaux; p 42 - Kevin Dillon.

In this issue is the 8th article in a series on Australian S.F. Fans. I thought it appropriate that Diane Southgate/Fox be next to be exposed to the world since many of her reviews and articles have appeared in TM. Hopefully future issues will feature other Australian fans. I must apologise somewhat to Diane for keeping at her to finish the article, but (ho hum) this is the fanzine editor's burden.

I don't know whether future issues will be this large. This issue I also cut my mailing list by about a third - next thing I knew, the issue had grown so that the paper I was saving was taken up by the new bulk. I also realise that this issue is nearly all sercon, but I didn't have any 'light' articles to balance it. *sob*.

Regulars might notice that the printing this issue is clearer than last issue. I called into Empire Typewriter Supplies the other day and bought a box of Riso duplicating stencils. They were less than $\frac{1}{2}$ the price of my regular Roneo stencils so I thought I'd try them.

They also give a better cut. Good-bye Roneo. So far I've left Roneo for paper and stencils. Soon it'll be for corflu and (maybe) ink. Of course come xxxx when the UK is dropped from Preference Rates, a lot of imports from the UK will have higher duty rates.

TRILOGY

BY JOHN K. PLAYFORD

JUVENILE DELINQUENT

Matt the Rat raised the bottle of vodka to his lips once more. Wheee! Was it good. He felt light as a feather. The alley didn't look so bad anymore. It was nice to be flat on his back, stowed, lewd, and rude. Nice for him to lie amongst the garbage, it wasn't true that vodka had no taste, it burned you, nice to see some garbage because

(oh no I don't want to go back)

he was getting used to being clean. Poppa would be after him now. He'd locked Poppa in the pantry and he could still remember the booming voice: "Let me out of here, right now, Matt!" and the fear that had clutched at his groin.

It had been three hours. Something of a record at that.

Pete and Slasher, even John-Boy, had gone. His friends had all forgotten the old days, back when they used to live in this neighbourhood.

(just abandoned, decaying ruins now but at least I got some booze from the auto liquor store)

and terrorize half the population out of their friggin minds! He'd tried a little of the old stuff - window smashing, ripping down signs, even a little graffiti with some paint he'd found. But what was the use? The spirit had gone out of him.

They were going to bulldoze the whole place down.

(Poppa's gonna come and get me)

He remembered how they'd burnt down the Chink take-away after Pete's girl had been kept waiting half-an-hour for service. The nerve they'd had when the police questioned them! They'd all stuck to their story, though, and they'd never been convicted, not even charged.

The vodka choked him for a moment. There were about three swigs

(senselessness)

left. Matt had no more money so he'd have to savour it slowly. Maybe some other drunks were around and he could pinch some stuff

(like when we beat up the old man blood blood blood)

before his time was up.

(!POPPA!)

He stood at the head of the alley, his large form turning towards Matt.

The boy spat out the vodka and got to his feet.

"Leave me alone!" he screamed, throwing the bottle. Poppa sidestepped it neatly.

He began to run, as in some terrible nightmare when everything slows down when you want to escape. He was used to the chase, only not at this end,

(at the concert when we caught the pig and gave him his medicine and even got a laser gun)

not running down a dark alley with someone at his heels

(when I chased that chick and taught her how to make it wow the look on her face when I gave it to her)

like Poppa.

He tripped on a garbage can and slammed into the ground. Hot blood trickled over his chin. He had to get up. Slowly he raised himself. His leather jacket had been torn at the elbow, and he'd grazed his skin.

Poppa was closer now. He hobbled around the corner of the alley into a recess where it was dark, though he knew it was no use. He heard the footsteps approach.

Sweat poured down his brow, an after-reaction to the fear and drink. Then his stomach tightened as he saw the dark outline.

(it isn't fair!)

Poppa turned his infrared eyes towards him. The words that shone phosphorescently on his metal chest burned into his mind as they had for the last three years.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD WELFARE.

"Come to Poppa!" said his robot guardian. "Time to go home."

(YOU STINKING METAL SHITTTT!!!)

He smashed his hand into the armoured metal face.

Being a good parent, Poppa administered a mild tranquiliser, and tenderly carried his errant charge back to civilization.

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THE BABY MACHINE

The pain, Oh, the pain. It travelled in waves up from Marilyn's stomach, from her womb which lay exposed to the world on the hospital table. The contractions were intensifying; it was just about time. She had to conceal the pain.

(I won't show it I won't I won't!)

or they'd put her under a more effective anaesthetic, which would mean unconsciousness. Besides, she couldn't show pain while her geneticist watched.

Her mind drifted back to that time, nine months ago, when she had begun the adventure in the geneticists office.

"I'd like to have a baby."

The geneticist had smiled behind his desk.

(psychological protection for his gonads)

"Yes, certainly. Had you any specific father in mind or would you like to look at our catalogues?"

"No thank you. I'd like to have it naturally."

He had seemed puzzled a moment. Then disgusted.

"Naturally? Like the animals?"

"Yes. I want to have it. Not some baby machine."

The geneticist had mopped his brow.

"Unheard of! Unprecedented. Well, in modern times. You realize what you'll be in for? Pain, lots of it. A chance you'll die. You'll be incapacitated for half a year or more."

Marilin had nodded, unmoved.

"I don't want some thing to bear it. Not some pseudo-living creature of plastic and artificial uterus."

The geneticist had muttered something of "psycho" and "Oedipus complex". Eventually she had persuaded him and had given him samples of her ova and the father's sperm to test for genetic defects. Then he had passed her a yellowing form authorising "natural birth".

"I can write this off as part of a medical experiment. That saves us both trouble. Will you let SouTech University examine the baby afterwards?"

(you prick)

"Yes," she had answered.

A searing bolt of pain lashed her insides. The baby was moving. Her baby.

The doctors whispered to one another. They gave her some more anaesthetic.

"I'm afraid it will have to be caesarian section," said

(oh no they're going to cut me up)

the masked figure above her, as the nurses put a barrier up before her face and her legs gradually floated away until she felt like some paraplegic in the days before they could reconnect severed spinal tissue with electronics.

The geneticist came over to Marilyn. She could tell it was him because he wore the light green of an observer rather than the pure white of the hospital staff.

"It's going to be all right."

(ha ha ha ha ha)

She screamed as she felt

(how could she feel it psychosomatic psychosomatic?!)

something pulled from her, and a great emptiness, while the doctors clustered around her, doing things outside her vision.

The geneticist put his hand over hers for a moment. Hers lay clenched around the handhold, slick with sweat. He loosened it. Relax," he said.

He moved out of her sight. The doctors were looking at the baby, It was normal, but terribly still.

The senior doctor shook her head.

"I'm sorry," he whispered. "You know what to do?"

The doctor hesitated a moment, then agreed. "This could cost us our jobs," she said quietly.

"Thanks," he said to them all. They put the dead baby away and brought out an identical one, one that had been born from a baby machine the day before, from the samples he had been given to test for defects.

Marilyn loved the baby, though she never liked the geneticist. He never thought to tell her the truth.

Such was life.

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STARSHIP CAPTAIN

The captain walked under the huge observation port, tall and proud. The view always seemed different, though he knew it was impossible to notice its slow movement in under a week of ship-time.

The colours of hyperspace lay in cool bands, with no indication of distance (not that such existed here). It was almost as if the ship were caught in some gigantic piece of transparent candy.

They were already perhaps half-way to Alpha Centauri. He headed back to the crew-quarter, moving in a stately manner. On the way he paused at the controls to increase their acceleration. There was only one blight on his perfect happiness, being here, being Captain, doing his job. That was Rikard.

The ship was small, so small that only two were sent along. Rikard and himself. It was a little ridiculous having a "crew" of one, he knew. But if only they'd sent someone else he'd have been happy. Rikard was slovenly in his habits. He drank. Worse than that, he never bothered to tidy his room, but left it to the ship's robots.

Not only that, but Rikard wanted all the glory for himself. The Captain was sure he wanted to kill him.

The Captain paused by the hall-mirror and adjusted his black full-dress uniform. The golden meteor and silver star of the Service shone on his collar. Damn the man. He stood outside the door to Rikard's quarter's, imagining what he might say.

"I run a tight ship, Rikard, so get off your arse this moment!"

That brought a smile to his lips. Yes, Rikard was insubordinate. When the Venusians had attacked, Rikard had refused to go out of hyperspace to meet them in pitched battle. He had refused to eat dinner at the Captain's table, curse him. And what could he do about it? He couldn't very well force him to obey.

He felt the ship begin to accelerate under him. Good. What matter if it increased the risk of overload? This way they would get to Alpha Centauri before Black Tanner and the Asteroid Pirates, and to hell with any risk of death! Any of the Service would be glad to die for it.

Suddenly he fell to the floor. Another dizzy spell? The colours of the ship faded and reappeared and all at once he saw

(everywhere at once looking at the ship through a hundred eyes)

Rikard was at the console, typing in letters of red that appeared in his universe like lightning bolts.

WHY HAVE YOU
INCREASED ACCELERATION?
CEASE DISREGARD OF
ORDERS YOU MOTHER
OF A COMPUTER.

The Captain stood up shakily. He swore and screamed as he shook his fist at the traitorous crewman who held him in his power. He walked to the controls and decelerated. Tears flowed down his face

(but he had no ducts)

as he walked back to the bridge. He wished he was home with his wife

(but computers can't screw)



yet he was proud to be on this grand ship, his ship. Then he wiped his tears, blew his nose, and walked tall, as a Captain should.

- John K Playford.

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T H E P Y R A M I D S O F S A T U R N :

Ganymede nights are silk-winged
like the kiss of blindesss.

we waited for a sunrise
that never came mapping
braille topography with
slender steel fingers.

Sometimes the pin-point stars
seemed crazy with illusion,
like holes in the dome of sky,
a mildewed night that was eternal,
and there was nothing else but
darkness.

That was when you
started hitting switches,
watching lights stab
beaming white constellations
of cold fire across methane ice.
Light like the soft rain of vacuum
absorbed and draining away
into foetal void.
Pointing accusing shadows
like the skeletal
pyramids of Saturn.

.Andrew Darlington.

MAGIC

By John J. Alderson

Is magic debased religion, the forerunner of religion, or something else?

The study of magic is long and involved, and as the materials for the study are drawn from all ages and cultures, the novice can be easily baffled. The fact that magic itself can be debased seldom enters anyone's head.

One of the difficulties in studying overseas material, and by this I refer mainly to European material and in particular Greek and Roman myths, is that we have only fragments of the myth, rewritten many times and frequently only surviving in a literary version. Too often what we are trying to do is to deduce the worship of the household gods from the ballads of Robin Hood, and sometimes, I regret to say, the only material available is the references to Robin Hood in the Ned Kelly mythos. We are fortunate therefore to have available now a corpus of material that covers the entire spectrum; the myth, the song-cycle, the icons, a commentary on each and an explanation of a living cult. What is less available, in-as-much as it hasn't been printed, are the dance steps and the music. Further, the sacred sites still exist. I refer to the Djanggawul cult of Arnhem Land. (When I say "available" - the book, Berndt's The Djanggawul Cult was published in 1952, is long out of print, and the last time I saw it advertised for sale s/h it was priced at £40 stg.).

The cult is a fertility cult and was brought to Arnhem Land from a mythical island of Bralgu. From astronomical mentions I date this landing about the fourteenth or fifteenth century B.C., that is about the same time as the Exodus and when Prometheus probably flourished. The bearers of the new message were known collectively as The Djaggawul and consisted of two sisters called Dildjiwuraroiju, the oldest, and Mirelaidj the youngest; and their brother who is simply called the Djanggawul Brother, and they are accompanied by a second man, Bralbral, whose only purpose seems to act as a counterpoint to the Djanggawul Brother. He continually asks questions, being less knowledgeable than the Djanggawul Brother, but he has virtually nothing to do with the cult objects; indeed he is not part of the cult. The name is that of a tribe of Wessel Is., some miles north of where The Djanngawul landed and as it appears to me to be plural, it is probable that the cult came as part of an expedition. However, that is another matter - Bralbral leaves after landing and is out of the story.

On arrival at Port Bradshaw (a European name, the native name is not given) The Djanggawul begin to explore the country - there are vague references to other inhabitants - and as they do so they "make country", that is they are Dreamtime Creators. Walls are made by pushing a sacred object called a rangga into the ground and by thrusting another type of rangga into the

ground they make trees. These, of course, are 'sacred' or cult places. Thus their wanderings can be traced by the cult places still in use.

At each of these places they leave people, born firstly of the oldest sisters, and later, of the youngest. The incestuous theme is interesting but commonplace enough with cult heroes.

At each place the sisters perform magic ceremonies, they having custody of the 'magic baskets', whilst the men, for now there are many, gather and grind the food for them. However the two women left their 'magic baskets' and went gathering shell-fish and whilst they were doing this The Djanggawul Brother and the other men stole the baskets and began to perform magic of sufficient potency that the women could no longer approach. At first they were angry, in all probability quite justly....

"Why did they take it from us in stealth, like children playing?
..... Why do they act like children playing?
Why didn't they ask us? Why did they do it?
They came sneaking along and stole our basket, quietly, without asking!"
But they accept the inevitable with good grace -
"We leave it for them, for our younger Brother.
We shall grind the cycad nut, preparing the bread for them, for our Brother!
We shall whiten our hands with flour, for it is better that way...
We leave that ritual for them, for they want it that way."

The burden of carrying on the magical ceremonies of the society was something the women seemed happy enough to have given away, and would have if they had been asked, hence their initial annoyance. Whether or not they could have given the 'magic basket' away is a different matter. They themselves lost it by breaking a taboo... they went gathering food which was the man's prerogative. But that song ends with the words, "Yes, indeed, Sister, surely we shall whiten our hands with cycad flour, grasping the transverse fibre of our mat, our sacred shade." The latter part of that sentence is made understandable with the words of another song, "We are still sacred, we still have our uterus." It is woman's confident assertion that she is still master of the situation.

Now the Djanggawul Brother introduces certain innovations. Previously the women had clitorises long enough to drag on the ground, and he himself had a penis of similar dimensions. He shortens the clitorises until they are the length of ordinary modern women and circumcises himself, and later shortens his penis again. Now the interesting questions - first, why? and second, why at this time? :

With the initiation of Aboriginal youngsters, both sexes go through three stages. The first, common to both, is a heaving into the air. It's meaning and purpose is still unknown but the practice survives in English Public Schools, and I suspect in the Army and Navy. With the girls the second stage just happens - she had her first menstruation. Immediately after this she is ceremonially deflowered and thus 'married' to a boy of the right moiety. The boys on the other hand are circumcised and they are then allowed to marry, with, however, a final ceremony of sub-incision at a later date. This, we are informed - that is we the uninitiated - is turning boys into men. Now from other very ancient myths we know that the women used their menstrual blood in their magic ceremonies - and it is still used in modern

black magic. And further, the red ochre deposits used in magic ceremonies are regarded as the clotted menstrual blood of ancestral beings. In the magic ceremonies performed now by the men, the blood for the ceremonies is drawn from the penis, but with sub-incised men the blood is obtained from the scar tissue by jabbing with a pointed stick. This operation entails the glans of the penis being split open from the bottom together with part at least of the urethra so that the glans opens like a pair of wings, or more correctly, like a woman's labia majora. A woman bleeds naturally but a man must be made to bleed by circumcise. A woman must be deflowered before sex

so a man is sub-incised.

To the initiated the ceremonies are not to turn a boy into a man, but into a woman!



The Djanggawul Brother having stolen the magic basket apparently runs up against a difficulty so he turns himself ceremonially into a woman, first by circumcision, and then by a further shortening of the penis, which was apparently kin to sub-incision.

It is therefore not surprising that when Abraham was given the rite of circumcision he was given a new name, as was Sara. Henceforth they were called 'Prince' and 'Princess', but I fancy the real meaning of the names were Priest and Priestess. Despite Abraham marrying his half-sister, he did not get the household gods he apparently wanted. Nor did Isaac,

who took a wife from the same family. Jacob, however, though he had to marry two women, did. Jacob, though, became known as Israel, that is, he lost his name and became simply Rachael's man! It is not without significance then that The Djanggawul Brother has no name, he is just simply the Djanggawul man.

Throughout the song cycle and myth there is little evidence, if any, for superior beings, either gods or demons; about the nearest is the statement that the Morning Star was sent by 'the dancing Spirit People' for them, and as Bralgu is the island of the dead, the Spirit People are probably ancestors, but their only contribution is to send the Morning Star. The two sisters are somehow regarded as Sun Goddesses, add at least one of the Sacred Sites is called 'The Place of the Sun'. They are referred to as Sun Goddesses as the sun is identified with the redness of their vulvas. There are, of course,

other references to a Sun Goddess in Arnhem Land, but all the magic they do comes from the ceremonies and their magic objects. There is no invocation of, or black-mailing of any other superior powers. The magic rangga is thrust into the ground, and behold: there is a well. Another type of rangga is thrust into the ground and there is a tree. This is sympathetic magic. That is, one performs a ritual on a small scale and the real thing happens on the larger scale. In rain-making ceremonies water is thrown out in the hopes of inducing rain to fall. It's the magical way of using a sprat to catch a mackerel.

It is obviously not a debased religion. It is indeed doubtful if the Aborigines have a religion. As ceremonies and the philosophy behind them became more complicated and involved, it is probable that astuter minds began to glimpse something more, and a religion began to develop. With the Aborigines the ceremonies are performed by all -- even the women have their part, even in the most sacred. But with other societies the performers of magic became a caste and then a priesthood. Magic was not getting something for nothing, it was more like planting some seed that more might grow. When little or nothing was offered but ceremonies, and a lot was expected, magic became debased. Modern magic is debased because it is selfish.

Man's search for God has been long and difficult. In the words of one of our greatest hymns, ... "They must ever on and upward/ Who would keep abreast of truth."

POSTSCRIPT. Buck Coulson's letter in TM 30 prompted an article. He happens to be quite wrong about magic, because he is speaking of degraded magic. However, the story of The Djanggawul is a fascinating one, and one I have intended to write for a long time. I find the song cycle very refreshing as poetry, and the fact that this is a living cult and the songs sung regularly is a great thing. It is one of the scandals of our publishing that the book is out of print, and has been for nearly thirty years, and one of the most important anthropological sources at that.

I have not found the stealing of the magic bags so fully told in any other source, though references are abundant in all mythologies. This is a neolithic myth and is when this revolution could have been expected to take place, together with the stealing of the knowledge of making fire from the women who in those days were styled gods.

The Neolithic Myths are terribly important because the results are with us to this day and determine our lives. They need restating.

- John J Alderson.

GRIMESISH GRUMBERLINGS,

A COLUMN BY A. BERTRAM CHANDLER.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE PIGS GONE ?

Quite some time ago the "G" key of my typewriter sort of froze up on me. As, at the time, I was writing yet another installment of the never-ending John Grimes saga this was no small inconvenience, especially since I had no light lubricating oil ready to hand. (Finally I sprayed the works with Mortein - it was before the days of water-based insecticides - and so was able to finish the novel.) Now I shall assume, temporarily, that the "N" key is inoperative, just so that I may do a short Lewis Carroll parody.

The time has come, the Walrus said,
To talk of lots of thigs;
Of ships & shoes and sealig wax
& porcupies & pigs.

As you may have guessed, I recently passed through a pig-conscious phase.

It all started while I was having a telephone conversation with Robin Johnson, during which I made mention of my forthcoming trip to Pig Island. Robin asked, "Where's that?" I replied, "Pig Island, of course." He asked, "Piq Island?" I said, "New Zealand." He asked, "Since when has it been called Pig Island?" Then, "Oh, I suppose it's to do with their Prime Minister, Piggy Muldoon." I said, "It's always been called Pig Island." He said, "I've never heard it called Pig Island." And so on, and so on.

The next day I was taking morning coffee with one of the local managers of the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand. I told him the story, thinking that he, too, would find it quite incredible that I had encountered somebody who had never heard EnZed referred to as Pig Island. But he had never heard the Shaky Isles so named. So it went on, with person after person. I was beginning to think that I had strayed on to another Time Track until, at last, I found somebody in about my own age group who knew what and where Pig Island is - but he admitted that he had not heard New Zealand so referred to for many, many years.

This started a long conversation about the many words and expressions that have been dropped from the Australian language over the past few decades.

"Shooting through like a Bondi tram..." "Doing a Bondi..." We have nothing anything like so expressive at the present day. And who remembers the Bodgies and Widgies? "Bodgie" still crops up now and again but the Widgies seem to be an extinct species.

And the names of our monetary units...

"Quid" is still used now and again, but nobody seems to be sure if it means the old Pound or today's Dollar. But where is the decimal coinage counterpart to the Tray (threepenny piece) or the Zack (sixpenny piece)? The Americans have long had affectionate names for their coins and notes of various denominations - just as we did before we went decimal. Why have we been so long in coining names for our no-longer new decimal coins?

Not only are words dropped from the language, to sink without trace, but the meanings of words suffer change. This was brought to my attention last night. Susan insists on reading each chapter as it comes hot from the typewriter and she had just finished reading the one in which Francis Banner-man's salesman is trying to peddle new-fangled weaponry to Ned Kelly, the Australian War of Independence having gotten well under way. He is talking of steam-operated Gatling cannon and the Andrews airship. Ned thinks that airships are no more than flights of fancy. Then Red Kitty (a radical German countess who is a disciple of Karl Marx and, by this time, married to Ned Kelly) throws in her two bits' worth and tells how, as a small girl with her parents in New York, she watched D. Andrews making his flight over that city in 1865. She talks of the twin, cigar-shaped balloons with the long car slung below them.

Susan: The word "car" is wrong.

Me: It is not.

Susan: The year is 1881. The word "car" had never been heard of.

Me: The word "car" is a very old word. When automobiles first appeared they were called motor cars, to distinguish them from other cars. Over the years the prefix, "motor" has been dropped.

Susan: The word "car" would not have been used, in the context that you are using it, in 1881.

Me: Then look at this! (This was a Xerox of the patent taken out by Dr. Solomon Andrews in 1864.) Go on, read it!

Dr. Andrews, in his specifications, referred throughout to the airship's "car". He should have known. After all, he invented the Aereon (as he called the beast) and made it fly.

But Susan still stubbornly insists that "car" is wrong....

With all the foregoing I seem to have wandered away from the subject of pigs. We were appalled recently to find an example of male chauvinist piggery in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. We had been to see EVITA (which we enjoyed; especially so in my case as I was in Buenos Aires quite a few times during Peron's rise to power and during his first reign). Returning home, we at once pulled the required volume of the Britannica from the shelf to do some checking up. I looked in vain for PERON, EVA. I found PERON, JUAN - who was given little more than one paragraph, included in which was just one sentence about his famous (or notorious) wife.

Talking of Evita reminds me of the Ned Kelly opera that has been commissioned by the Royal Covent Garden Opera Company. I have read about it and watched and listened to the composer being interviewed for TV. I wish that the Royal Covent Garden Opera Company had commissioned the people responsible for Evita, Jesus Christ Superstar and Joseph And His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat to do the Ned Kelly opera... That would be a show worth seeing!

But back to pigs (in one of its modern usages) and still on show business...

I've an idea for a TV series episode to end all TV series episodes.

Fletcher (played by Ronnie Barker of Porridge and Going Straight) is arrested by Inspector Jack Reagan (of The Sweeney) and defended by Rumpole (of Rumpole of the Bailey)....

There are times when even my mind boggles.

- A Bertram Chandler.

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FINDER'S GUIDE TO AUSTRALIAN TERRESTRIALS

Edited by Jan Howard Finder. This is a 28 pp booklet of Australian animals. Illustrated by some of sf fandom's best artists and with introductions to the animals by Bob Tucker, R A Lafferty, Roger Zelazny, Robert Silverberg, Joe Haldeman, Jack Chalker, Gordon R Dickson, James Tiptree, Jr., Joan D Vinge, Anne McCaffrey, George R R Martin, Bob Shaw, Spider Robinson, Harry Harrison, Poul Anderson, Frederick Pohl, Ben Bova, James White and Ian Watson.

As Jan says about it: "The reaction has been overwhelmingly favorable. I have sold over 300 copies and there is a good chance that I'll be able to sell out the numbered set by Westercon. I'm now thinking that I may be able to sell out the other 500 copies of the reg. edition by the end of the year. That would be nice. I've cut my debt by about a third and put aside about \$400 for DUFF."

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AUST. S.F. FANS -



- DIANE (SOUTHGATE) FOX.

(A N U N S U R P R I S I N G
A U T O B I O G R A P H Y)

I remember, though not very clearly, being wheeled in a pram past Wingham Railway Station. It was night, the station was brightly lit up, and beautiful. We didn't live very far from the station, and at night I could hear trains going past. Also cars -- a fairly frequently used road ran right in front of our house. The road wasn't sealed and the resulting dust was a curse -- the front door had to be kept closed, even in the hottest part of summer.

Apparently I was a very independent child -- I could be set down and left, and would happily play alone for hours. This has been both my blessing and my bane; I'm still pretty much the same kind of person, damned anti-social to an unnerving degree. Not that I dislike people or even (now) can't get on with them -- it's just that I have the rather rude habit of wandering off into a corner and reading, or plain not socialising. I'll sit happily at the back of the room reading some thrilling tale while my poor husband wanders around photographing ladies' legs and earning a presumably undeserved reputation as a dirty old man in his early 30's.

I can remember learning to read, and how hateful it was! A detestable book called "Coco the Clown" comes to mind, and my poor father, very fed-up and irritable, trying to get me to read it aloud. Presumably he succeeded, though I've never been able to remember when I first started reading for enjoyment.

Perhaps "Winnie the Pooh" converted me. Apparently my mother read it to me aloud; later I read it. It is still a favourite, I've still got that self-same copy in hardcover with the Shepard illustrations. Other favourites were "Wind in the Willows", "Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot" (the old edition of the last named fell to bits some time ago, and has since been replaced) and "Peter Pan and Wendy". But I detested having to clap my hands and express a belief in . . . fairies in order to save Tinkerbell's life. I was a complete atheist at the age

of seven and remained so for many years thereafter. Possibly this was because Sunday School bored me silly. So you can imagine what my views on fairies and Santa Claus were. I was responsible enough not to hurt the feelings of True Believers though, and dutifully clapped my hands, etc.

My first encounter with science fiction was in the form of a couple of battered old children's annuals with lots of good old-fashioned Space Patrol-type stories in them. There were also drawings of how rockets worked and detailed sketches of space suits. I am not sure which appealed to me most -- fact or fiction. I can remember some of the incidents of the stories. There was one about some spacemen on Venus, who encountered some strange mushroom-like creatures. The mushrooms formed a sort of fairy-ring around the spaceship. Then they reproduced, forming a second and a third ring. I cannot remember why this was so menacing. The spacemen were saved when one broke a jar of smelly haircream over the mushrooms! Another story had a villain who was poisoning people with clippings of his cyanide-soaked fingernails -- he was threatened by the hero, bit his nails to sheer irritation, and inadvertently bit the wrong nail and killed himself. Yet another tale described a murdered dead body floating in the asteroid belt -- it turned up at a most inconvenient moment for the murderer, proving that it is wise to have an understanding of the laws of physics if you want to dispose of a body.

At the age of $2\frac{1}{2}$ I had been bestowed with a sister. Apparently when taken to see this alien life-form I examined her with much care and curiosity and finally announced in somewhat disappointed tones, "Gosh, she's pink!"

We shared the same bedroom, and would often talk and tell stories to each other half the night instead of going to sleep. I don't know how old we were when we started to create our own science fictional universe -- I was probably in later Primary School at the time. Most of the stories were about the exploits of a group of heroic Martian space warriors, Golt Dar Dan, El Vance, and Peama (El Vance's sister). They were cobalt-blue skinned and the men were bald (Peama had brilliant golden hair). El Vance was Crown Prince of Mars -- it was an unabashedly Space Operatic universe. Our heroes had many problems to contend with, one of which was a thriving Nazi colony. In the closing days of World War II some Nazi scientists had escaped in a rocket and had landed on Mars. Their descendants, ruled by a descendant of Hitler (this was before I knew about clones, or a "Boys from Brazil" situation would have been described) had developed a weird culture. Fortunately, the Martians were able to keep them in line. The biggest threat was really the combined forces of the Saturians and the HeHeans, who were the Romulans and Klingons of this particular Reality.

The HeHeans were a depraved race who had polluted their planet so badly it was entirely turned to garbage. They had evolved to live in garbage so it didn't worry them. (This sprinkling of political and ecological details was not due to any political insight on Sylvia's or my part, it just made for a better story.) The centre of HeHea was hollow, and therein dwelt a gigantic mutated grub that was slowly eating away at the very structure of the planet. Eventually it would fall to bits, Hence they wanted to take over Mars, naturally enough.

I didn't encounter nearly enough written science fiction to sate my appetite, though there were some marvellous radio serials. One was "Speed King, King of Space." I used to go around quoting bits out of it. One episode had a crew-member being taken over mentally by some bodiless alien being, who was delighted to have a body, and announced this in a deep, hollow and zombi-like voice. Unfortunately Daleks had not yet been thought of; in fact, we didn't

yet have a TV. So I couldn't go around muttering "You will be ex-ter-min-ated!"

There were also comics, though again, these were in short supply. There was really only one newsagent's place in town. Still, I was able to get hold of Superman, Phantom, DC comics of various types, even Mad. This last named was only known to me in my last two or three years at Wingham High School, but I made up for lost time and acquired a collection. Alas, it has since been sold. We also collected Classic Comics, which we (wrongly) thought would be valuable later on. I've since encountered far better renditions of classic novels and short stories in comic form — for instance, a fine rendition of Lovecraft's "Cool Air" — but remain a little wary of the perils of transposing literature into another art form.

The school library was quite decent, and when I was about 12 the public library was opened. Of course I read the Simon Black books, plenty of adventure stories, and a good deal of Rosemary Sutcliffe. There were also the Moomintroll books, which have the most charmingly bizarre creatures and a quiet subtle wit. Neither library had "Lord of the Rings" (which I was to encounter much later) but there was "The Hobbit". There was also George MacDonald's "The Princess and Curdie", Maurice Maeterlinck's "The Blue Bird" and Walter de la Mare's "Three Royald Monkeys" — all three marvellous quest stories. There was a film made of "The Blue Bird", I saw it on TV a few years ago — in no way did it compare with the original. There was E R Burroughs — not the Mars books, how I would have loved them, but the Tarzan ones. Tarzan wandering through the valley of the Ho-Don and Waz-Don tribes, races of tailed (in the latter case, furred as well) humans. There was also a crazy German who came out of the jungle stark naked with ferns and flowers stuck in his hair, passing himself off as a God to the (somewhat gullible) locals.

There were also animal stories — I preferred the adventurous kind like "Call of the Wild" and "White Fang"; it was a joy to read about animals running around in the wilds. But "schoolgirl and pony"-type stories were a bore, and I detested all school stories heartily as they blatantly shoved conformist values down the reader's throat. Those terms were not yet known to me, but I profoundly understood what they referred to.

It was typical — I'm a classic Ugly Duckling fan. Non-conformist; utterly antisocial even though I've never, as far as I can remember, broken the law in my life; bored to the screaming pitch by what amuses others; slow to make friends, and shy with strangers; always with my nose in a book. And, like the archtypical fan, I was of course unpopular. Not particularly so with teachers, as I was a reasonably good student even though a smart aleck. In fact most adults seemed to like or at least tolerate me. But my classmates did their best to make my life hell. Doubtless part of it was deserved. Actually only a few were truly nasty, but by the time of my last year there things had gotten so bad for me that if someone as much as looked cross-eyed at me I thought they were about to say or do something unpleasant. It is depressing to think that I must have snapped out at times and hurt the feelings of people who were genuinely trying to be friendly. I shan't say anything more on this subject as it is depressing and boring — the past cannot be changed, or else I'd be a different person. I'm not very pleased with what I am, but if I were changed it might well be for the worse.

In the yearly examination in my final year at Wingham I achieved a long-held ambition and came top of the school. I had been pushing myself very hard and had come very near to a nervous breakdown. When Prize Night came I went

out and received several prizes with great satisfaction, knowing that some people who had treated me detestably had been counting on getting those prizes themselves. One of them was a rather loutish lad who was sitting with one of his friends in the row behind me, drunk as skunks the pair. A few minutes before I went out in front of everyone they spewed all down my back. I thought at the time it was sheer fuck-headedness but since then I have grown more insightful and am now pretty sure that it was if not totally deliberate, at least hoped for, a sort of "Carrie" situation. Unfortunately for them I was so buoyed up with vindictive elation that I considered it hilariously funny and was laughing sarcastically about it for days afterwards.

Alas, the satisfaction of vindictiveness was the only pleasure or benefit I got out of wrecking my nerves, though it seemed ample at the time. I wasn't round town long enough later to cop any egoboo or glory and it was certainly no help whatsoever in getting a job.

In fact it was a hindrance. My class had been the first 6th Year at Wingham School and we had been treated like nobility -- i.e., allowed to get away with murder if we felt like it, and constantly fed with a sense of our own importance. In my case this was somewhat undercut by the dislike of many of my class mates, but for many it was somewhat unwholesome. It was a good thing that no drugs were available in country schools at that time, but liquor was, and there were probably quite a few far worse damaged than me by that final two years.

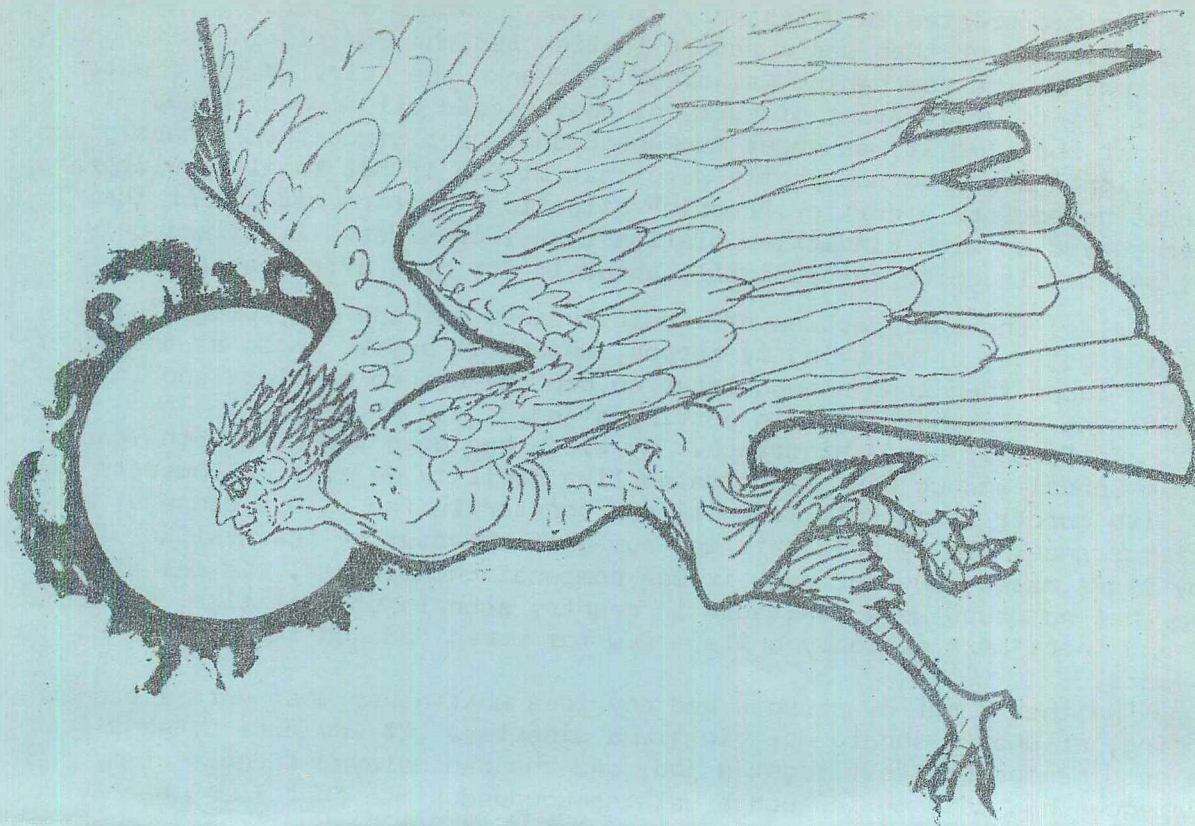
Neither I nor my parents had any idea whatsoever what work I was capable of doing, or what I should do. This is a disaster. It was more by good luck than good management that I got a job, and the bad delayed effects of my school experiences had left me in such a walking-wounded state that I was barely able to hold it. I was down in Sydney for over two years, probably the two worst in my life.

This was due nearly entirely to subjective causes -- from the outside my life would have seemed much freer and pleasanter than before. Certainly I at last had some money to spend on books and other small luxuries. A normal, happy outgoing person would have been content. I wasn't, as, being almost pathologically nervous and shy, I was soon sunk in the pits of loneliness. Outside of my work I literally knew about five or six people, very few of them friends in the sense that we shared common interests.

I was staying with my Grandmother (on my mother's side) and hence was still really with the family and not learning to be independent. I am inclined now to think that this compounded the problem -- if I'd been forced to cope on my own, made to come out of my shell, perhaps I would have matured and gained self-confidence. I got on quite well with my Grandmother and with her friends -- but now realize that it was vital that I should have learned to cope with people in my own age group.

Every adolescent goes through a stage of not wanting what others seem to want for him or her, and at the same time not knowing what he or she wants. When this is made worse with economic or job hassles, or even worse, no work or unsatisfying work, bitterness and self contempt inevitably follow. In my later schooldays I was constantly told that great things were expected of me (the great things were left somewhat vague, of course) and here I was barely holding a very ordinary clerk's position, with vanishingly low prospects of anything more interesting. I must have done something wrong, but what?

Family advice and sheer boredom made me take courses in various things -- a typing course, which would much later be recommenced at Taree Tech., a



course in ballroom dancing (I hardly ever dance but can still do so reasonably well) and even, for a short while, membership in the local church choir. (My voice has gone greatly downhill since.) Gradually I got to know more people, and if I hadn't been in such a mess emotionally my social life would have become full and enjoyable.

It was about this time what I really discovered SF. There was a newsagent up the road who stocked paperbacks. Among these were Ray Bradbury's "Golden Apples of the Sun" and H.P. Lovecraft's "The Lurking Fear". I bought these two books and since then have never looked back.

This was the time when I really discovered SF. I already had about four or five paperbacks, bought with my own money, when I came down to Sydney. One was John Wyndham's "The Chrysalids", another was called "The Red Planet" (I've forgotten the author. Its plot concerns the crew of an Earth spaceship which has landed on Mars, meets in the Martian desert a man who says that they are really in outback Australia. What the astronaut sees as weird alien phenomena the other man sees as utterly normal earthly things --- he thinks the astronaut is crazy. Two different versions of reality --- the odder one being "right", as the Martians have actually kidnapped and hypnotized the other man.)

"Golden Apples of the Sun" was the edition with a black cover with a starburst bunch of tiny red bats, harpies, chickens with human heads, witches, bat-shaped kites, etc.

"The Lurking Fear" had one of the most subtle and eerie covers

I have ever seen. Perhaps I am simply reacting to the emotional impact the sheer uncanniness of the stories had on me at that time, but this cover, depicting a weathered old plank door and rusty bolt, with a tattered dead butterfly caught in a few dusty strands of spiderweb, expressed the essence of the mystery concealed behind the surface of normality. This was the start of my fascination with the visual side of SF, a fascination that has grown slowly deeper with time.

SF and fantasy magazines were another discovery. Fantastic Stories of Imagination was then at one of its heights, so was Amazing. Later I encountered Fantasy & Science Fiction, which alas wasn't illustrated, but which never lacks mind-satisfyingly good stories. Amazing carried "Stardock", the first Fafhrd and Grey Mouser story I ever read, which opened the genre of heroic sword and sorcery. Later I bought a 2nd hand copy of Fantastic that carried "Adept's Gambit".

There was a cinema not too far away, but I don't remember seeing many shows there, or even in town. Films were less popular then than they are now, having been recently supplanted by TV. I was a confirmed TV watcher, but only of old horror, fantasy and SF movies. Deadly Ernest, the Bill Collins of the weird, was then in his glory. Actually I thought him a blithering nuisance rather than an amusing showman -- but seeing the Lon Chaney Jr. "Wolfman", Boris Karloff in "The Mummy" (one of my favourites) and such brilliant oddities as "Carnival of Souls" was an experience I am most glad not to have missed. I had seen only two horror films before coming to Sydney -- "Gorgo" (a delightful tale about a mother tyrannosaurus-like dragon and her baby) and a 1950-ish creepy called "The Creature That Challenged the World".

An odd anecdote -- the latter named film frightened me far more years before I saw it. As a small child I had read an issue of a magazine (either Pix, People or Post) which had a couple of pages full of stills from that film. One showed a victim (bloodsucked by the monster) who had been fished out of the water, contorted-faced, shrivelled, black as a coal, and covered with slime. Ugh! There was also a picture of the monster that done it. A sort of giant grub or centipede. Double ugh! Centipedes are a life form for which I have scant liking, more about which later. This happened in the days before sewerage pipes were installed throughout the town of Wingham, and our toilet was, as usual in those primitive times, well down the back yard. A wooden trellis, thickly encumbered by a lavish honeysuckle vine, had been placed partly around it for concealment. This sounds delightfully rustic, and so it was during the day-time -- but at night it was downright eerie. After seeing that pair of pictures from the film, every time I had occasion to use the dunny at night my blood would run cold at images of the bloody monster perched up on the trellis waiting to pounce on me (like a leopard) or even worse, drip slimy acid as I passed underneath. This unnerving image haunted me for years. Finally I saw the film, which wasn't all that frightening. The shock of recognition -- and henceforth the image of insectoid monsters troubled me no more.

An aside about centipedes -- one of the more traumatic incidents of my early childhood concerned one of these creatures, which by their predatory nature and skulking habits are befitted to dwell in four dungeons. This centipede, however, preferred our house. I was about five years old at the time, Sylvia was about two. We slept in beds with long white mosquito nets, and it must have been a hot muggy summer night, with all sorts of moths and mosquitoes wandering into the house, drawn by the light. The centipede came in after them.

It found the edge of Sylvia's mosquito-net trailing on the floor, and climbed up it. Sylvia was lying there, fast asleep. Mum and Dad heard her crying in her sleep --- the thing must have walked over her and disurbed her. They came in, realized something was wrong, and switched on the light. The centipede managed to get away, and was hiding somewhere in the room, but they knew it was still there. We kids were wide awake by the time we were bundled out of the room, which was turned upside down in a hunt for the venomous creature. No luck. (It was found the next morning, and duly executed for its displeasing deeds.)

(Incidentally, there was a recent article in the Saturday Sydney Morning Herald which lessened my dislike of centipedes. They are indeed venomous, but apparently seldom bite humans. They will, however, hunt and kill funnel-web spiders.)

However, whenever I see a film in which someone is lying down asleep and some spider, snake or scorpion begins creeping its deadly way onto them there is a certain sense of familiarity. (This is one of the great cliches of the cinema, nearly as common as the appearance of a hungry octopus when a character is underwater. I am surprised that it was not used in Star Wars or its sequel.)

The aside is ended, and I return to my experiences in Sydney in the mid 60's. After telling such a tale of horrors I should discuss my interest in horror literature. As a child the thought of ghosts seemed most unlikely and ghost stories bored rather than pleased or frightened me. However, in my early teens I read Edgar Allan Poe, M.R. James' "Ghost Stories of an Antiquary" and a large anthology which contained "Carmilla" and Bram Stoker's "The Squaw". I was at first more interested in the cinematic treatments, as described earlier. I hadn't realized that "Dracula" and "Frankenstein" were books before they were films --- but before too long I noticed copies of both available in paperback. (When I got my copy of "Dracula" I bought a copy of Robert Aickman's "Dark Entries".)

I read "Frankenstein" in the local library before buying a copy. It didn't have much SF but wasn't too bad a library, having among other things a selection of H. Rider Haggard. (My grandmother recommended She, which I looked up and read with much enjoyment.)

Gradually becoming more and more dissatisfied with office work, I applied for a teacher traineeship --- and got it. Unfortunately as my parents were still at that time living in Wingham, the only traineeship available was at Newcastle. I would be away from home and would have to depend completely on myself.

There was accommodation in a hostel not very far from the College, so one problem was solved. However, others appeared soon enough. One was my room mate. She was something of a wild character. We got on well enough, mainly because I was, after leading such a dull and even (to a degree) sheltered life, somewhat awestruck by her tales of being a member of a street gang and meeting underworld characters and drug addicts. She encouraged me to go on pub crawls which to tell the truth bored me silly. We also encountered typical Newcastle youths (are many of my readers familiar with the "Newcastle Song"?). I well remember a couple of fellows who we met at one club --- a reasonably pleasant character and a drip. My room-mate got the pleasant one, and the drip decided that it was his duty to pester me. Soon enough he started making his company even less welcome than it had been before. Beer and boredom combined had already put me in a foul temper, and my would-be pickup's advances were so irritating that, bad mannered though it was, I walked out. Not all evenings ended in such a depressing way, but I soon realized that evenings out dancing and "trying to pick up blokes" were definitely not my cup of tea. As these were my room-mates!

favourite amusements (and I strongly suspect she would have liked to sneak the occasional admirer into her room for the night) I inevitably put a damper on the joys of her life, though totally lacking in any interest in converting her to my (to me) dull ways.

Not all the fellows I met were as tiresome as the character described above. Most of my "blind dates" of that time were of the Presentable Mundane category, who didn't fill me with much enthusiasm and who in their turn seemed to rate me about 4 (or 3) on their 1 to 10 scales. It was all extremely 1950-ish.

Of course, lurking in the background, was the Big Problem that sooner or later I would have to face. Underneath my recently acquired veneer (very thin) of outgoingness and sophistication my lack of self-esteem and increasing depression each fed upon the other. Small incidents that anyone else would have laughed off made me endlessly miserable. I found it more and more difficult to cope, and was more and more sure that I didn't have the stolid temperament, or the dedication, to cope with the demanding career of teaching. Ultimately I left college, not knowing what the Hell I was to do with myself.

The next three years were a mess. I was lucky that I didn't have a nervous breakdown as I struggled to come to terms with myself and learn things that would be of some genuine use. A typing/shorthand course at Taree Technical College was very handy. Anything that would teach me something that would help in getting work or in coping socially was eagerly pounced on. Luckily I had a lot of good help around that time. The N.S.W. Department of Education had released me by this time. I had to travel down to Sydney by train to have an interview with a psychologist to confirm that I was by nature unfitted to a teacher's life. This was somewhat of a minor adventure in itself, and fraught with various difficulties and perils. However, its main interest here is that it led, among other things, to my discovering (or rather, rediscovering) Tolkien.

I had brought some spare money on my journey, in the hope of buying books (not very diversified in a country town): the main item being a certain paperback Aubrey Beardsley collection. In my spare time this was searched for, high and low, in every bookshop encountered; but it was nowhere to be found. One shop however, had a pile of paperbacks of "The Hobbit", so at the last moment I bought one of these instead. It proved so enjoyable as I'd remembered it, and when, not many weeks after, I joined another local library (in Taree) I looked up anything by the same author. They had the three-volume edition of "Lord of the Rings". I got the first two volumes out just before Easter, and the third one just after. (Some months later I was able to obtain the Aubrey Beardsley book that indirectly started the whole business.) I had to wait much longer until Lord of the Rings came out in paperback.

Before my twenty-first birthday I was back in Sydney, doing a Librarianship course and making various false starts. During this same year my parents moved down to Sydney permanently. They had been looking forward to this — my father slightly, my mother a great deal. It turned out to be much more of a hassle than an improvement — not only the sheer physical task of moving, but the snapping of old ties, the ending of friendships. They were both having health problems, too, especially Mum (both had undergone a dreadfully long list of minor and major operations, Mum had also continual thyroid problems.) This physical ill-health, the problems of moving, and a mixed batch of family worries had already caused her to give up her amateur dramatic and singing activities in Wingham — and she hadn't the spirit to put out the effort to get involved in similar activities when down in Sydney.

This may have been much more of a problem than she realized at the time, for ordinary housework was an insufficient outlet for her imagination and creativity. She had gotten tremendous emotional boost and satisfaction from singing and acting -- and had been very well known and admired around the whole district, acting in several musicals.

The one I best remember was that of the Stepmother in "Cinderella", a musical version. Sylvia and I had helped her memorize the part, and for years afterwards, if she had occasion to rebuke us, we would reply with taunting quotations about Wicked Stepmothers from that play, and snide remarks about Method Acting (the term was unfamiliar to us, but the idea was not.) She had written pantomimes as well as acted in them.

About this time I was not making things much easier for my parents, because I was having what could be called fluctuating luck -- very often I would get marvellous lucky breaks or chances to make sudden improvements in my life, opportunities for work that could have been truly emotionally and mentally satisfying. Each time, due to plain mischance or my own mishandling, the opportunities would dissipate. I was gradually beginning to come to terms with my own nature and potentialities but these continual setbacks, which at that time I considered entirely my fault rather than the fault of circumstances, did not improve matters.

I had been trying to write in Wingham, and my number of attempts increased greatly now that I was in Sydney. Poems aplenty were produced, some of them abysmal, some of them passable light verse, at least one was quite good, if short, and I still think quite highly of it. However, I seemed to lack the staying power to write short stories -- I would write a beginning, or more often a fragment, and could not seem to continue it beyond the first few pages. Obviously art was imitating life.

Fortunately, Sylvia was having far more success than I. She was taking a University course in Geology, and doing quite well. She had been an even shyer person than me, but soon the antics and pranks that she and her friends got up to, and the adventure of several field trips, brought her out of her shell. (I was somewhat envious -- although in some ways my opportunities had been better, I'd made such an abominable mess of them.) She was to make several long-lasting friendships there, and met her future husband (who was studying in Melbourne at that time -- this put a certain amount of serious inconvenience in the way.)

For nearly all her life my Grandmother had been marvellously healthy. Now everything seemed to go wrong at once, especially her eyes. She was in hospital to have these seen to, and some time afterwards to have a gallbladder operation -- for some strange reason, the surgeon cut her open, decided not to take it out after all, and sewed her up. Later, of course, she had to have the same operation done again -- this time it was removed. Operations can be very dangerous for people of that age, and it is not surprising that she began to have a series of minor strokes some months afterwards. Her eyes were affected, and as she could no longer cope on her own, Nan had to move in with us. A local doctor put her on a course of tablets, to which she was allergic. The poison built up in her body, destroying her sense of balance and making her intensely depressed, unreasonable and nervous. Eventually she collapsed, physically and mentally, and was rushed into hospital to dry out. The poisoning accelerated the strokes, and the strong-willed, opinionated, active woman who had been so capable and independent, was an almost bedridden and helpless wreck, at times

confused and forgetful.

So much for the marvels of modern medicine.

During 1972 I at last managed to settle into a permanent job. This was with the Commonwealth Department of Education. I had been trying to find work in a library, but at last for sheer economic reasons had to take third-best and settle for a job as a typist. This seemingly great disappointment turned out to be a partial advantage --- although the work was boring and, worse, I wasn't terribly good at it, it made the use of a typewriter natural to me. As Luke Skywalker learned to use the lightsaber as an extension of his body, I learned to type automatically, and now it is easier for me to be creative directly onto the typer than it is to handwrite material first.

At the end of that same year Sylvia married Garry Richardson. Fortunately grandmother was well enough to attend --- she had a very good time. I think she'd have enjoyed my wedding too, but she was to die (quietly, after slowly getting weaker for several months) at Easter.

In the same year I was to meet someone who was indirectly to change the course of my life. She was Georgina Stanning, an Englishwoman who was working her way around the world. She had a job as temporary typist in the Department typing pool. We struck up an acquaintance when I noticed she was reading Mervyn Peake's "Gormenghast".

Georgina was intelligent, sophisticated, at once cultured and counter-cultured. She taught me to appreciate books, art, plays, films, music --- I had enjoyed such things before, but she brought a fresh perspective. She was also knowledgeable about old buildings, historical matters, "nostalgia/camp" and so forth, long before the fashion became well-known. Though not a SF fan she had contact with fannish circles. It was by her advice that I got into contact with the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation. This was after she had returned to England (1974). We still correspond.

As I had no car and was a little wary of travelling by train at night to areas that were unfamiliar (hence easy to get lost in) I did not at first attend Foundation meetings. Finally I got up my courage and attended, not an ordinary meeting, but a Minicon. This was held at Eric Lindsay's place in the Blue Mountains. This was rather like the old-fashioned (and dangerous) custom of teaching someone to swim by throwing him/her into deep water. However, I must have swam, though a lot of water got swallowed. I was to meet another fan on the train, which I'd catch at Parramatta. I had never met Shayne McCormack before and only had the information that would be wearing an orange terrytowel hat to go on --- at least, this is how I remember it, my mind may be editing latter-learned knowledge in. In a appalling demonstration of neofannishness I was so gross as to mention Eric Von Daniken. Despite this ominous mishap, I seemed to have met with a favourable reaction. The only other thing that went wrong was that I had brought a very cheap-and-nasty plastic airbed to sleep on, and it started to deflate in the middle of the night. During most of the minicon I wandered around, talking to people, or read.

After travelling by train to the Blue Mountains, going to Foundation Meetings seemed much less of an effort. For years I'd been trying to write, but never produced more than a few poor-to-average short poems and several beginnings to, or fragments of, stories. Being actually involved in fandom gave me encouragement to write a full-length story --- 16 pages long. This was an awesome achievement for someone who'd never been able to continue beyond five (handwritten)

pages. The story itself was bloody awful, but at that time getting it written at all was for me an achievement.

Since then I've written a novel length story (also mind-bogglingly unspeakable, but at least it gave me good practice.) At the same time I started writing reviews, which were also appalling at first. These were soon to improve enough to be fairly popular with fanzine editors; I stopped being a neofan and started to become a fan.

In mid-1976 I met John Fox. He was not at that time involved in SF, although a member of other groups such as the Sydney Bushwalkers. It was I who brought him into SF, and since then he has branched into involvement in "Applesauce" and ultimately to the publishing of his own fanzine, "Rhubarb". In return (should I say in revenge?) he brought me into bushwalking. As I slid down slippery rocks on my backside or glared at the fat leeches sampling my ankles, I cursed most heartily: but when we finally reached the top of some splendid mountain, or wandered through bushes thick with honey-rich flowers, I saw the joy and value and achievement involved.

We married in 1978 and moved into a rented unit. The problems involved here have already been mentioned in "Applesauce". We found more convenient quarters in Lakemba, moved in, appropriately enough, on April Fool's Day.

This more or less takes my autobiography up to the present, so I will end it now. I'd like to add a few notes on my experience in writing it, as such will probably be most useful to anyone contemplating a similar task.

This is one of the most difficult pieces of writing I have ever completed -- it has given me the most unpleasant sensation of walking upon a knife-edge between giving perhaps embarrassing facts in a gushing Sodium Penthathal-like outburst, and being so vague and unspecific that the work entirely lacks the concrete facts and details that serve to crystalize both meaning and interest. I also had to continually analyse my own thoughts and actions, and frequently realized that I was not very proud of some of my deeds and attitudes. I don't think I have ever done any exceptionally evil acts, but like all sentient beings I have had my moments of cowardice, pettymindedness and plain stupidity. I also found that I was reviewing-wrong turnings, incorrect decisions, and false choices that had lost me many opportunities. If anyone remembers the unpleasantness of checking up after an examination and seeing what one did right and wrong -- well, you will have an idea of what I mean. I have also disliked writing from such a profoundly self-immersed and self-centred viewpoint. As this experience has been not altogether pleasant, it has been extremely useful to me and I have learned a good deal from it. I hope that some useful and interesting information has also been provided for my fellow fans -- this was the main reason it was written in the first place.

-- Diane (Southgate) Fox.

-----oo0oo-----

SPACED OUT IS KNOWING THAT
THIS ASTEROID IS ORBITING A
SUN GOING
SUPERNOVA...



The R. & R. Dept.

Ray Maultsaid,
Editor,
Futuristic Tales,
PO Box 19,
Spit Junction 2088.

The Ad Astra section of Wynyard is about the only method for distributing a product and making money, whether it be low-brow like Playboy and Women's Weekly, or quality stuff like Icarus and The Geographical Magazine. I recall Astounding's editor, John Campbell, bemoaning the fact that most magazines in the US distribution system were dumped in a supermarket cage for customers to dig through, unless they were high-circulation items like Life and Saturday Evening Post.

I was told the fanzines were giving us plenty of publicity, and even attacking us less violently than they do everything else (I must diffidently confess to not having read one; work pressures and all that), while general SFdom has been enthusiastic.

The sales of our publication make me wonder why there aren't several thriving competitors here in Australia.

Bob Smith
GPO Box 1019,
Sydney 2001.

Thank you for TM 30, and the thought kinda came over me that many more of these Australian-orientated "end-of-the-world" stories and you could produce an anthology!! I have no doubt the science experts who receive TM will zip into print with big-headed announcements that "that can't happen!" but I found it convincing and of course all the more worrying because it was here and now. I guess it does raise the question of just what is out there in Space, someplace out there in the Universe, that could or might affect this "island earth".

Actually, I found this issue of TM easy to take, with its very readable longish story, the hilarious cartoon, and then zap! into the meaty letter col.

I enjoy "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century"!! (Guess that'll quite thoroughly confound those who worry about my lack of response like a good Pavlovian dog to Star Wars and sequel(s). My son and I sit down to watch it whilst Mum is at her State Emergency Service meeting night (and there's an intriguing sentence, I guess...), and I wonder how many noticed some episodes back that one of the pilots named "Gordon" was Buster Crabbe? A very brief appearance, but sufficient to have this greybeard remembering the pre-war Saturday matinees. (My son, who tells me there is a Flash Gordon movie out, seemed surprised to learn his old Dad knew all about "Ming the Merciless" or "Checker Bald 'Ead" as us Pommy kids usually screamed when he appeared on the screen).

The latest Britannica Science Year Book has a fascinating pictorial article called "The Airship Returns" and I see Bert's story in is the latest Omega.

Roger Waddington: The day of the sf magazine we remember has no doubt gone forever (and in my opinion it vanished rapidly on that day in

1969 when Astounding became something else), and my memory links with paperbacks reminds me that back in the early 1950's it was the Star Science Fiction Stories collections that were mooted to be the thin edge of the wedge for sf magazines. I suppose the six paperbacks plus the Star Short Novels are almost collector's items now. Original stories in pb form were an advent back then; little did we prophets of the future envisage the vast amounts of reprint collections that would dominate the field some twenty years later. If I may use a useful fannish/Mad term: "EEECH!!"

John Playford: Why am I time warped from 1957, of all years? I don't get particularly nostalgic about 1957, as a matter of fact, because that was the year the army subjected me to a form of torture that still sends me goosebumps: I became Platoon Sergeant to fifty odd 18 year old National Servicemen. Even the Sow that seeing dear old Sputnik brought me couldn't quite eliminate the trying moments that 1957 seemed to pile upon me. Good job I managed to retain that fannish sense of humour, though....

John Gregor: Another time, another place, another war... Because of the American influence the soldier who went to Japan and Korea would find science fiction all over the place. (And this particular soldier found it in some mighty unlikely places...)

Richard Faulder: You make "rambling" look like a dirty word. A little rambling in the pages of any fanzine doesn't go astray, and it isn't all nostalgic old foggies getting drippy about the science fiction past: more its keeping in perspective what has happened, what is happening, and what will/may happen - something every true science fiction enthusiast should be doing anyway. I do agree with you that if the Western World isn't more adept at getting its collective fingers out, spacewise, then the future in space will be a Soviet one. I do feel that it's a bit of a shame that the cinema has to be thought of as primarily a medium of action or box office success as criteria for what makes a film worthwhile. As John Baxter points out in his excellent book Science Fiction in the Cinema, sf movies are not made for us, the sf enthusiasts, but for the ordinary person who influences that box office. So I guess in many ways the ordinary person is becoming conditioned, via the steady stream of blockbuster space films, towards a somewhat distorted view of the Universe. Does he realise, I wonder, how quickly we have slid from the funny rocket ships that John Gregor mentions on the Science Fiction League emblem and Flash Gordon tore around the planets in, to the incredibly complex sophistication of the "deep space animation" that dominates most "Sci-Fi" visuals seen by that ordinary person?

Buck Coulson:

No, Buck, I am well aware of the various ingredients that are supposed to make up Star Wars (some of the publicity made it difficult to ignore and the rash of slick magazines and coffee table style books that followed in the movie's wake seem determined to hook virtually every aspect of science fiction into Star Wars and by God if you the dumb ol' public couldn't see it then it was spelt out for you by glossy nostalgic stills and the razor sharp mind of Mr. Lucas) and I have no doubt the head shrinker would simply say that I was desperately attempting to protect my own precious memories of science fiction from being tainted by the full blast of modern commercialism. I believe that I am just being honest when I comment on Star Wars and so far no aspect of the film seen in the normal source of events has intrigued me sufficiently to plank down good money at the box office. I was on an Imaginative Tales kick back in 1955, in anycase. However, you may be interested to learn that the movie The Final Countdown had me reacting in a strange manner: I sat in the cinema and listened to the kids screaming in approval as the 1980 war machines blew the 1941 Zeros out of the sky,

and for reasons I don't fully understand a cold chill went through me...

Kim Huett I was interested to learn of the difficulty of finding
8 Crémorne Rd., locally published SF in Sydney. Cundletown is small by Australian
Crémorne Pt., a few miles from Taree which is large enough to have a local SF shop.
Sydney 2090 shop. In this shop I have found copies of The Web of Time
by Lee Harding, The Dreaming Dragons by Damien Broderick in
hardcover and The Fourth Hemisphere by David Lake, Looking for Blucher by Jack
Wodhams, Breathing Space Only by Wynne Whiteford, Displaced Person by Lee
Harding and The Rooms of Paradise by Lee Harding. Judging from this line up
there must be some distribution going on even if not very well organised.

/Yes,

as I said, they've a lousy distribution system. -- Ron7

I'm a fanfic fan so I was
pleased to see John Playford, who writes some of the best fanfic around. Life
Row was well up to his usual standards which makes me wonder why we haven't seen
him more in The Cygnus Chronicler or Crux, etc. Michael Black's story however,
was one of the worst I have seen for some time, but I suppose that I'm only
being subjective about it because you wouldn't have published it unless you liked
it.

The Fan History was a bit on the dry side but it was still readable -- more
interesting to me than the piece by Bob Smith which I only found mildly inter-
esting. The lettercol was one of the best I've seen yet and Grimesish Grumberlings
was short but enjoyable.

Michael's story in TM 30 was a minor but quite readable
story which made me wonder why I haven't seen any of his work before. However, I
have been reading Crux and it seems that a lot of the things in his story were
also in the editorials and fact articles he publishes in it.

I have to agree
with Roger Waddington about Bert Chandler's fixation about airships and Kelly,
one or the other seem to slip into everything Bert writes. This I don't mind but
I am afraid that something like this can go too far. As well as the stories that
Roger mentioned I know Bert wrote at least one other about Kelly which appeared
in The Second Void as Kelly Country. If Bert does ever do a chronology for the
Grime's novels I hope he adds the shorter pieces to them. I have at least a
dozen magazine stories featuring Grimes.

TM 31 was up to your usual high standard
though I must admit that John Alderson rehashing the energy crisis was not really
to my taste. Really nothing was said that hasn't been said before elsewhere by
John or others. Otherwise I enjoyed everything in this ish though I was a little
disappointed to see the lettercol had to be left out. I hope you don't have to
do that again.

I have to agree with Bob about the zine scene and fandom itself
lacking the controlled insanity which puts the world in it's proper perspective.
I mean, fandom is supposed to be fun! I think that a lot of people who don't
have much time would be able to contribute a lot more to zines if they write the
sort of stuff Bob mentioned. Not only would it make the zines more interesting to
read but the editors might not be so hard up for stuff to pub. We all need to go
mad sometime and if we can't do it here, well, where can we do it? Good on you,
Bob, beanies forever!!!

Tell me, Ron, why don't you use all blue or all white
paper for TM. It seems a little strange that the first and last pages should be

white and the rest blue?

Well, there are two reasons. The first is that they are the covers of the issue. The second is that each year will have a different interior colour. The covers are white because that colour gives a much 'clearer' and sharper illo than does blue (which is good for a nice 'deep' colour). Green (which you won't see me using) gives the worst definition -except maybe for mauve. -- Ron7

Michael Hailstone
P.O. Box 6,
Cooma 2630.

You're right in saying that we have the spittiest distribution system. Don't I know it! We have the ridiculous situation where such sf heavies as Petrina Smith have somehow managed never to have heard of Crux. I'd love to get hold of your Twin Earth's comic. I came in rather late on that, when Garry Verth and Vana were buzzing around in their flying saucer, then when he got taken away for brainwashing (obviously a ded pinch from 1984, which was big news at the time,) and the other story where Prince Torro and Punch abscond from the Terran spaceship in a lifecraft and fly to the Forgotten Islands, where they meet the invading pygmies. I only once saw the comic book; another kid had it one day on the bus (or it might have been the tram), but that's the closest I ever got to it. Strange how they came up with the notion of the flying saucers being powered by electromagnetic gravity - seems it could have a scientific basis and be more realistic than we think.

I agree wholeheartedly with Don Boyd about acience fiction with real science in it. Far, far too meny professed sf aficionados now- adays want to take the science out of science fiction; I wonder why. It's just a way of being arty and trendy, perhps.

It was good to see Out Of The Greenhouse in print, although I haven't red issue 30 yet. One little bone I have to pick however: you deemed it necessary to metricate my four feet of snow, and yet in your TM 29 editorial you commit the unspeakable heresy of expressing a temperature in the dreded Fahrenheit scale! A little inconsistent, don't you think? One other: in the sixth line from the bottom of page 4 you have "serials", which should read "aerials".

All this night stencilling is sending me blind...--Ron7

Raymond L Clancy
494 Midland Ave.,
Staten Island,
New York 10306,
U.S.A.

The Chinese, I notice, are fighting back their man-made deserts, but no people are yet out to reclaim them. Everyone drills for oil, pitifully few drill for water. I have been fascinated by your uranium, problems with the meat herds, and popular unrest, all courtesy of the National Geographic here. This periodical has devoted a great deal of space to Australian history and development lately. Sydney looks better in pictures, and seem,, from

was pretty good at desecration. On well, there remains hope. I can understand the reference in the Geographic to Uranium (mining) and with the meat herds (with the drought), but the popular unrest? - Ron/

You seem to have acquired a taste for disaster stories. This one was less than successful, I'm afraid. Hailstone's main fault was in spending too much time explaining the science of what was going on (which didn't convince me anyway) and not enough on creating credible characters. Not so much that they were cardboard characters, but rather that their emotions were too raw, and lacked subtlety.

Aargh!
Buck Rogers hasn't started yet on our local commercial channel (Griffith), and given their usual lousy taste in programming, I have no idea when it will. Prisoner is one of those things I wouldn't bother watching anyway.

To have Robert Mapson, Editor of Forbidden Worlds, find some of your fanfic (or, rather your contributor's) difficult to understand strikes me as irony supreme. Perhaps he knows how the rest of us feel after working our way through some of his zines.

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female gender to make themselves more distinctive. Given the prejudices of the cultures which gave rise to the English language, it seems more likely that men generated the word, in order not to have themselves confused with the "lesser gender".

I disagree with Buck Coulson that magic is an attempt to compel the powers that be to do something. Magic is certainly based on attempting to persuade or coerce some action. However, primitive magic, such as hunting or fertility magic, is designed to work directly on some part of the natural world. It is only later, when the existence of Great Powers has been recognised, that magicians have decided that it makes more sense to get the Great Powers to do the work, rather than doing it themselves.

Marc Ortlieb Usually I avoid reading fiction in fanzines, but in the
1/2 Water St., case of Michael Hailstone's story I made an exception, and it
Kensington Park, got me thinking. You see, what Michael has done is he has
S.A. 5068. written a beautiful 1930's British science fiction story.

This is an aspect of fanzines I hadn't previously considered. They provide a wonderful sanctuary for endangered story species. I mean, in our current literary environment, Out of the Greenhouse wouldn't last a second. It hasn't the necessary literary adaptations. True, a mutant strain of the story, in which Jackie catches John and Clyde in homosexual embrace, runs out of the shelter straight into the arms of one of the surviving politicians, say Malcolm Fraser, who rapes and kills her, might stand a chance, but, as it is, I'm afraid the story is destined to survive only as a living fossil in someone's fanzine collection.

John Alderson is stirring again. Not only that, but, for a "scientific" man, his grasp of scientific method seems somewhat tenuous.

Though every science does have its "facts", it is accepted by scientists that these facts are, at best, approximations of the truth. Even something as apparently obvious as the amount of oxygen that will combine with a stated amount of carbon to produce carbon dioxide is only "fact" on a very gross level. The "facts" in social sciences, such as anthropology are far less fixed, and are far more subject to individual interpretations. Indeed, I would go so far as to challenge the idea that there are any "facts" in the social sciences, since even observations made in such fields are strongly coloured by the particular school of social science to which the observer belongs. Anthropology may well be supplied with "facts", but the interpretation of those facts varies widely, even amongst anthropologists.

Take John's comments on "training" someone to be right handed, for an example. In a significant number of cases, there has been shown a correlation between being trained to be right handed and stuttering. (This applies, of course, to those who are naturally left handed.) Thus a blanket statement that such training causes no ill effects is not really on. John's argument on the term "man" is pretty pointless, since what he is talking about is historical linguistics, whilst what feminists are talking about is common usage. Certainly I may refer to a female as a pleasant man to know, and, by John's definition I would be correct in doing so. However, since in common usage the term "man" has a different meaning, I would either get branded a right idiot or slapped. For an observer of human behaviour patterns, John can certainly be obtuse and pedantic should such patterns not fit his expectations.

However, as a prompter of comments, his letters do a marvelous job. There's something

about his "Damn the torpedoes" attitude that always gets my letter writing juices flowing, so I guess I shouldn't complain so much.

His article in TM 31 was a pleasant surprise. So he can write without stirring! An interesting look at the economics of alternate fuel sources. (Mind you, I'm willing to bet it doesn't draw nearly as many LoCs as John's more controversial articles).

Given my basically fannish orientation, I was rather disturbed by Bob Smith's article. Rightly or wrongly I regard myself as a trufan, and to find an article claiming that I don't exist did come as a bit of a shock. Sure, Bob is right, a number of fannish traditions have faded into the never-never, and, from listening to Bob Bloch at CineCon, this may not be a bad thing. For some of us, Arthur Thompson has become a legend, and a rather vague one at that. I've heard of him, but I've never seen any of his cartoons. However, I think Bob is going a little far in writing off Rotsler's claims as the premier fannish cartoonist. For the present generation of fans, he is the premier fan artist, though, considering his recent output, he could well be on his way to oblivion in that great musty fanzine library in ~~Kevin Dillon's place~~ the sky.

Humour is still present in fanzines, though it can be a little difficult to find. I can't remember the last time I saw an issue of Quinapalus. Also much of the humorous fan writing has migrated to the apas. Denny Lien is one of the best humorous writers in fandom at present, but you're unlikely to see any of his stuff unless you're in ANZAPA, STIPPLE-APA or SPINOFF. Other fanzines with a humorous orientation include Marty Cantor's Holier Than Thou, Rich Coad's Space Junk, the Hayden's Telos and the increasingly infrequent appearances of the Mearas' Knockers From Neptune and Cas'n'Skel's SFDQ. It's still there, but takes a lot of effort to find, speaking of which, Ron, I'd like to send a zine or two to Bob, could you pass me his address.

[See his LoC earlier. - Ron]

Bert's column was a joy to read. Sigh, it's easy to tell the professionals from the rest of us plebs. Definitely one of the most entertaining pieces I've read in a fanzine in a long time.

All of which brings me to the Molesworth History. I must admit to having no appreciation of that particular golden age of Australian fandom. The idea of a club blacklisting potential members gives me the screaming fits. With such things built into the system, I'm not surprised there was so much bitching and back-stabbing. Let's face it, you're going to get that in any club, but giving the members ostracism powers really isn't on. I guess the FAPA blackball clause must date from about the same time, and my feelings about that are equally bad.

Judith Hanna
42/6 Wyargine St.,
Mosman 2088

Like the cover (of TM 31) - the first piece of Julie Vaux's artwork I've seen.

I agree with most of what John Alderson says about farming in Australia. We could scarcely devise a more cumbersome, illogical and generally unsatisfactory system of food production and distribution if we tried. The grain alcohol/protein residue/pig-feed/methane generator etc cycle he proposes sounds not only logical, but also practical. After all, its pretty much what we, as 'developed nations' are pushing on Third World countries as a supplement to their low-technology, but much more socially integrated way of life.

John doesn't go into solar energy other than as a input to crops. But, travelling over the country, one of the most noticable features of farmsteads is the galvanised iron roofing glaring in the sun. Being totally uninformed about the mechanics and physics of solar energy conversion, it seems to me that replacing this inert galvanised iron with whatever it is that they use to trap solar energy would give a farm complex most of the energy it would need for air conditioning and refrigeration. I believe that solar batteries are now practical - with that means of converting the heat energy to electric current, stored til needed, running the lighting off the roof-heat should also be practical.

The stripping of biomass, year after year off what was to begin with some of the world's poorest soil is as any farmer could tell us, killing the soil. Massive applications of superphosphate and chemical fertilizers are necessary to replace the minerals and trace elements so that new crops can be planted. But these fertilizers burn out the soil bacteria or 'soil flora'. So the dirt is just dirt, not actively composting, taking up water, and developing its own fertility. But with the organic wastes flowing as sewerage into the sea, not returning to the land, the farmer has no other option if he is to continue producing a crop.

Clearing trees also kills the soil - the tree roots hold the soil together, the foliage keeps the sun from evaporating off water that the pasture needs to keep growing, and the tree roots keep the water table from rising to the surface.

Salinity is a curse of Australian farming. 'They' aren't quite sure how it comes about that the surface of low-lying land - around creeks, soaks, swamps, etc - is invaded by salt that lies on the surface poisoning off growth. But it's clear that the clearing away of the trees that used to shelter from evaporation, and that kept the water from lying on the surface where it could be evaporated off, is a main cause.

Clearing of trees over large acreages is done so that machinery can work the land easily, without being jammed by stray sticks, punctured by stumps, or having to dodge inconvenient trees. Reliance on machinery means that farming ceases to be a way of life, a communion with the land. It becomes a capital-intensive industry, ruled like any other business by the slogan "get big or get out". And those who get out can survive only by leaving the country, joining the drift to the city where the jobs are.

In social terms, a city must be one of the least satisfactory environments imaginable, a dehumanising machine which reduces an individual to a cog in 'the system', to be considered only as a statistic amongst the mass. Since the fifties, sociologists have been warning that not 'individual freedom', but alienation from both self and others is the result of urban living. Living in a small community means a reduction in 'independence', as the closer bonds with neighbours render one vulnerable to the pressures of gossip, ostracism, etc. But these closer bonds also mean help and caring, sharing of common interests.

A small community set-up, which one is free to leave if one doesn't fit in, to move on to find another community which may answer one's needs, seems to be the ideal lifestyle. There would still be argument and disagreement - but if these can't be resolved, there is the freedom to move out. 'Decentralisation' is indeed a first stop in the right direction. But that doesn't suit monolithic, capital-intensive corporations, whose profit sheets disregard the 'hidden costs' that their modus operandi foists on the community - the transport costs John mentioned, and also the psychological toll on their workers,

deprived of a sense of control of their own lives.

Its not just, or even mostly SF that speculates on a possible 'small community' revolution, a 'small alternative' way of life. That was the great Hippie dream of the sixties. And surprisingly, or perhaps not, the 'commune' lifestyle is continuing to survive in certain areas. And to infect the younger generation of local yokels.

Perhaps one reason why the government gives only lip-service to Decentralization is that it realises that such a lifestyle is a logical step towards a productive anarchy, a diminishing of the authority of central government.

Neville J Angove
PO Box 770
Canberra City
ACT 2601

I have never seen such a collection of "facts" out of context as John presents in his piece on energy mismanagement. The part about "the consumer just has to pack his bags and go live next door to where the wheat is grown" is especially mystifying - I would dearly love to know the source from which John derives his "facts" about that! The major energy transport cost in converting wheat to flour and then to bread remains with the transport of the individual loaf of bread (or one kilo bag of flour) from the supermarket to the consumer's home. Moving all of us to the farm is not the most efficient way of reducing that cost. The cost of transporting a bushel of wheat from the farm to the flour mills is at most about 5 per cent of the cost of the wheat (or so says a spokesman from the Australian Wheat Board), depending on the particular circumstances. The energy cost increases when you convert the wheat into flour, and moving back to the farm will not reduce that cost - a kilojoule is a kilojoule, location regardless. There is naturally another energy cost in transporting the flour to a bakery, in baking the bread, and in transporting the bread to the consumer - but there is no way in which the total cost of this can be reduced by moving back to the farm (the local bakeries in wheat-belt towns still charge as much for bread as do city bakeries, even though the transport costs are less). What John has failed to mention is that the energy cost is in the transformation of wheat to bread (or cake etc), which is actually less when the process is centralised.

Australian wheat farmers are going broke for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are farming marginal wheat lands, which means that a successful harvest is a matter of luck in many years. Secondly, they over-use fertilisers - one report from the CSIRO indicated that for every dollar some farmers received for their wheat, they spent 50 cents on fertiliser for it. Decent crop rotation would reduce the dependency on fertiliser, but there are better immediate profits to be made in the short term by raping the land rather than by nurturing it. Thirdly, the average Australian wheat farmer spends umpteen thousand dollars on harvesting equipment, uses it for a few weeks, then leaves it standing in the open without bothering about maintenance for 11 months, then spends a small fortune repairing the machinery for the next harvest. Generally, harvesting equipment lasts only the equivalent of a few months of actual operating time, spread over three to five years. Maybe John is an exception to this rule!

I will agree with John on one point - present farming methods dispoil our soils. But who is it that uses these methods? The bloody farmers! And they know better!

Harry Warner, Jr.,
423 Summit Ave.,
Hagerstown,
Maryland 21740,
U.S.A.

Life Row, in the 29th The Mentor, seems professional in quality as science fiction, unless the literary and imaginative qualities of pro fiction has changed abruptly since the last time I did much reading of the paperbacks and prozines. If there isn't anything radically new in either the plot elements or the narrative style, the familiar basic components are assembled in good

working order, sandpapered and polished so they'll look brand new, and the ending is quite effective.

At my age, the question of whether I would marry a fan is almost as theoretical as querying me about whether I would break the four minute barrier in a mile race or which violin concerto I would prefer to play when Herbert van Karajan makes up next season's programs. But fandom gives one broad mental horizons, stretches one's imaginative potentialities, and so forth and so forth, so I got to thinking about even this preposterous matter. Before long, I remembered how I feel at the end of a con on the rare occasions when I go to a con, and this memory seemed to be a strong warning to me. During a weekend at a con, I'm constantly delighted to see so many interesting fans, familiar and previously unknown, I welcome the change from my usual dreary routine at home and at work in Hagerstown, but by Sunday night or Monday morning, I'm inevitably tired of talking and hearing so much about fandom and prodrom and I feel a strenuous need for conversation on other topics. This reaction is ominous for anyone with my characteristics who might be considering marrying another fan. If one weekend immersed in the same general topic produces this surfeit for me, I fear that a spouse who talked a lot about fans and pros and science fiction, not just for the first weekend of the new marriage, but every day of every week in every month after that, would soon leave me desperate for a change in subject matter or that cone of silence which Max Smart used to utilize back in the era when there was strong dramatic science fiction on television.

Vignette was too much for me. I managed to reach the decision that Michael Black is the long-lost son of R.A. Lafferty. But I don't think I would straighten out the author's intentions even if it turns out that Michael is actually the father of the famous pro.

It's humbling to realise how many exciting things were happening in Australian fandom in 1954, a year in which my own level of fanac was as low as it's been since I was a neofan. So I enjoyed all the information which is completely new to me in this instalment of Vol Molesworth's Australian Fan History. It's particularly nice to see that photo of Heinlein as he looked when he was healthier and a better writer than he is today.

Reading what Roger Waddington wrote about those who think science fiction is becoming science fact, I suddenly thought of a fine analogy. Most of us have known neighbors or friends who went on one of those packaged, guided tours of eighteen countries in Europe in fourteen days, and came back satisfied that they'd become an expert on the nations of Europe, which are now as familiar to them as their own back yard. The people who contend that science fiction is being supplanted by reality are in just the same condition as the travellers, too egotistical or ignorant to recognise superficiality.

I hope the inability to find Australian-published science fiction which you lament in this issue is the result of frantic demand for it, causing it to disappear from the shelves before you get around to looking for it. But, assuming that this happy situation doesn't exist, wouldn't Australia's population create a built-in problem for

anyone who wants to publish science fiction there? It's about the same as the population of New York City and immediate suburbs, an area which is capable of supporting only three or four newspapers and probably about as many magazines of purely local appeal. This is the publishing handicap which so many fans in non-English speaking nations of Europe have bewailed: when there are only a few million native residents, circulation is deemed to be extremely small in comparison with the potential market for science fiction in the United States.

Well, Sydney (with a population of about 2.7 million) has three morning newspapers and two afternoon ones - plus a country one, The Land - and I would say Melbourne has the same number, with the smaller State capitals slightly less. Of course in Australia the federal government pays a book bounty for books printed in Australia, which helps the publishers. And remember that Australia has one of the most urbanised populations in the world with, I think, over 80% in the cities and suburbs. - Ron/

ALSO HEARD FROM WERE:

Harry Andruschak: One page two of TM 29 you have the name of my genzine wrong. Intermediate Vector Bosons, not Bostons. Bostons are where we have too-large worldcons. Bosons are particles with a spin of 1. The IVB is the quantum guage particle of the weak nuclear force. OK??

As always with fan histories, it is hard to keep things in perspective. Reading the Australian Fan History is like reading The Immortal Storm. It all seems impressive until the time you realize just how few fans are the subject. I mean, Heinlein visited a club and only 58 fans showed up?? Fan history is a fascinating topic, and Vol 1 is to be congratulated on a fine work of scholarship.

Julie Vaux: I loved Mike McGann's cartoons - however, shouldn't Puppeteer's have two eyes to each head? Out of the Greenhouse was an interesting tale.

John Playford: Out of the Greenhouse was really well done. I enjoyed it - there seemed to be far fewer human casualties than are usually shown in a astro-catastrophe story. (Well, maybe space-catastrophe is a better term).

W Michael Black My usual response to critics of my writings has been 109 Victoria Rd., to treat them with the ignore they have earned. Regret- Werrington 2760. tably a recent R&R item has, however, raised issues of such significance for future amateur science fiction published in Australia that I feel compelled to address these issues in this, at most, my second last, reluctant retort regarding my satire, "Well, What More Had You Expected" which unfortunately lost its shape and gained an interposed title between leaving my pen and appearing in The Mentor. As I too have to type my own work, I shall be as brief as the importance of this matter requires, knowing the hard slog it must be to type the totality of each Mentor, let alone judicial adding of typing errors, new titles and reorganising.

Actually Michael, the typos are almost impossible to eliminate, the title was added (your title was left in) and nothing was re-organised (see the original I'm returning) - Ron

The above-mentioned item raised at least three major issues: Firstly, that the entry, in any form, of certain socio-politico-cultural references is to be eschewed, as such entries offend some readers. Secondly, that these same readers, apparent Flagellationists left over from the medieval Plague years, or, at best/worst, titillationists (distinguishable from the normal, red-blooded beer-can-thrower at any weekend's local Showground or Speedway's dirt motorcycle races by a literacy sufficient to ensure that the beer-can could not be other than a full "Foster's", or full "XXX", unless an empty "Cold Gold" was available), feel compelled to read all of the offending material despite their dislikes, thus, (by proxy), rendering the writers the possibly-unintentional flagellators of some of their readers.

Thirdly, and by this I imply neither that I, nor my work, attain any given literary standard, but rather that the rigid, selective yet undefined censorship of the kind demanded is of a scope possibly unintended: eg the critic may well be one of those who do not accept Stranger In A Strange Land as science fiction of an acceptable kind. Indeed, there are people who also do not accept any similar works and ignore Greek authors such as Plato, Homer, Sophocles; all the Spanish, Flemish, Italian, Arabian, Phoenician, European and even Amerindian inspirers of medieval and later artists such as Breugel, Van Rinne, da Vinci, Michelangelo, H G Wells, Jules Verne, not to mention the latter-day C.I.A. stooges who turn their backs on scientific and technological fact in order to delude and uninform those readers (apparently the effective majority judging by the rubbish largely in print) who believe anything that is down in black and white.

If acceptability were to be judged solely on an "Only the facts, Ma'am", (Joe Friday) basis, I would not altogether disagree about Asimov, Sagan and others such as "our own" Baxter, Messel, Oliphant, (imports all, but they do wear kangaroo - or sheep-skin belts, boots, shoes, coats, etc.) and other more recent politico-scientists riding the opulence bandwagon.

But I assume that the basis for acceptability is that the item is worth reading as science fiction. And it can be fascinating, on analytical reading, to see the way Lyell's admonition to his pupil Darwin: "no explanation involving sudden or cataclysmic changes is to be accepted" has resulted in general acceptance even of "tectonics" (of a daily-changing kind, as Mount Saint Helen's' activities invalidate hypothesis after false hypothesis) - a cataclysmic idea itself, if ever there was one - and totally invalidated both by land-based studies and by those of the Glomar Challenger, but imbedded as the keystone of accepted scientific mythology because any idiotic idea will do for the fanatical employees of the C.I.A. rather than admit, as NASA "UNEXPECTEDLY" had to, in the light of all its solar, terrestrial and celestial findings, to the truth of the writings and definite, though controversial, predictions of Doctor Immanuel Velikovskii in the 1930's. Although he was a life-long friend of Albert Einstein and often his collaborator, it is more pertinent to observe that Velikovskii did not need to employ the distortions of Minkowski or Riemann in order to understand the workings of reality, as current researchers are discovering (as they gradually crawl out from under the blanket of smog laid down by the self-serving, anti-progressive and anti-scientific Establishment), assisted in their efforts only by those people not afraid to see and read about the world of reality.

However, as a reader of The Mentor, my critic can of course be assumed to know and to have a healthy respect for the meaning of the term "science", knowing that nothing is scientific just because it was so described, nor because machines, mechanical and/or "electronic" (ie electrical) or other outlandish or unusual devices were somehow involved in associated procedures, BUT ONLY BECAUSE all of the following conditions are met by the item added to the stock of validated, reliable, incontrovertible human knowledge:

It is confirmed by all relevant, objective observations and not contradicted by any objective observation, nor by any other accepted hypothesis, and it yields predictions which are supported but not denied by all available empirical evidence to do with it, and it is in agreement with the fundamental assumptions that any effect has a cause, every cause has an effect, and existence is a fact.

No convincing "predictions" (post hoc) have been put forward by the anti-Velikovskians, despite the mangling science has received at their hands in order to extract "predictions" at all, and the mishmash which has resulted in only an illogically-cataclysmic mythology (in which many more cometary near-misses feature than in the whole of Velikovskii's tale of the Universe, let alone that part concerned with the Earth), and there is no extant evidence for the mythology other than the rhetoric of highly-paid, C.I.A.-appointed "authorities" concealing fantastically-expensive military technologies whenever and wherever their politically-motivated paymasters direct them to do so. As it has been vital to conceal the dilemmae "theory" has impaled itself upon, fledgling "science fiction fandom" has been richly fed with ever-increasing finance and "cult Leaders" of it have been created and propped-up in artificial and misleading rivalries in order to waste the reader's energies in internecine disputes about theory's Castles In Spain, when, all the time, not only has the world's wealth been squandered upon decadent military technologies, but any and all true innovations: incipient, struggling or barely off the ground, have been quashed through the activities of public and private groups, supported, if unintentionally, by people who prefer not to have to read about such things.

Furthermore, "politics" derives from the Greek word "polis", and thus, as all the Greek dramatists and philosophers sought to indicate by their homeomorphising of the elements of Nature's various facets (including Man) into gods, demi-gods, spirits, Heroes, etc., "politics" comprises the totality of Man's interrelationships: with other men, with his/her own self, and with all the other aspects of his/her own life.

In all of the above arenas, the dominant determinants, for the Greeks, were always the Essences - the intrinsic qualities - of each of the protagonists. Of this the Greeks were so certain that they were able to further characterise each of the fundamental qualities, and, in seeking the sources of these, developed a science of medicine at least the equal in many ways of that of Theban Egypt (a little only of which had been taught to a few Greeks 1000 years earlier). Thus Galen of 201 A.D. knew more of and better understood anatomical and physiological mysteries allegedly "discovered" by Harvey 1400 years later.

The first science may indeed be found in that of the dominant ancient Egyptian Kingdom, leading to that which flourished under the Pharaohs, and then the Greeks: civilisation which, under our technocracy, will soon know its decline and fall unless we unite to oppose the call of the masses: "No politics, just escapism and Blood!"

Second lastly, although as a mere contributor I know I have no right even to implore this, could it be possible in future, for a brief prefatory note to explain the details when titles/contents/format is/are altered, as was the case in John Carnell's early Science fiction magazines? Far better that harsher criticisms fall upon an author for his follies than that reader's written feedback be wasted upon an amalgam from which a writer can draw few clear guidelines for the future if he/she so cares.

[I don't usually change a title unless I think that a more clear and concise one would be better. As for changes in the story/article other than spelling/grammar, etc - policy at the moment is to clear any suggestions with the writer. - Ron/

Lastly, (relieved roll of drums), I'd just like to mention to anyone who has bothered to read this far, that, despite my parodies of it, following which I've been severely instructed as to how I should have referred to the C.B.F.S. movement, members, organisation, inventions, goals, and purposes, all of which being very much active, I have been permitted to pass on to them any legitimate enquiries from persons interested in helping them develop technology, for today's people, today.

And that is that for this issue. Today is Tuesday, the 2nd June. On Thursday Gay Williams and I are off in the Corolla Station Wagon to drive to Adelaide for the Con they are holding this weekend (Queen's Birthday weekend). It'll be the second Advention I've gone to. - I went to the first way back when. At the time I was escorting Shayne McCormack to it; and what a trip that was. On the first day out I had some sardines on toast for lunch and managed to make myself sick. Luckily Shayne could drive and we continued until I, white-faced, could continue driving. Hopefully this Con will be as enjoyable.

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