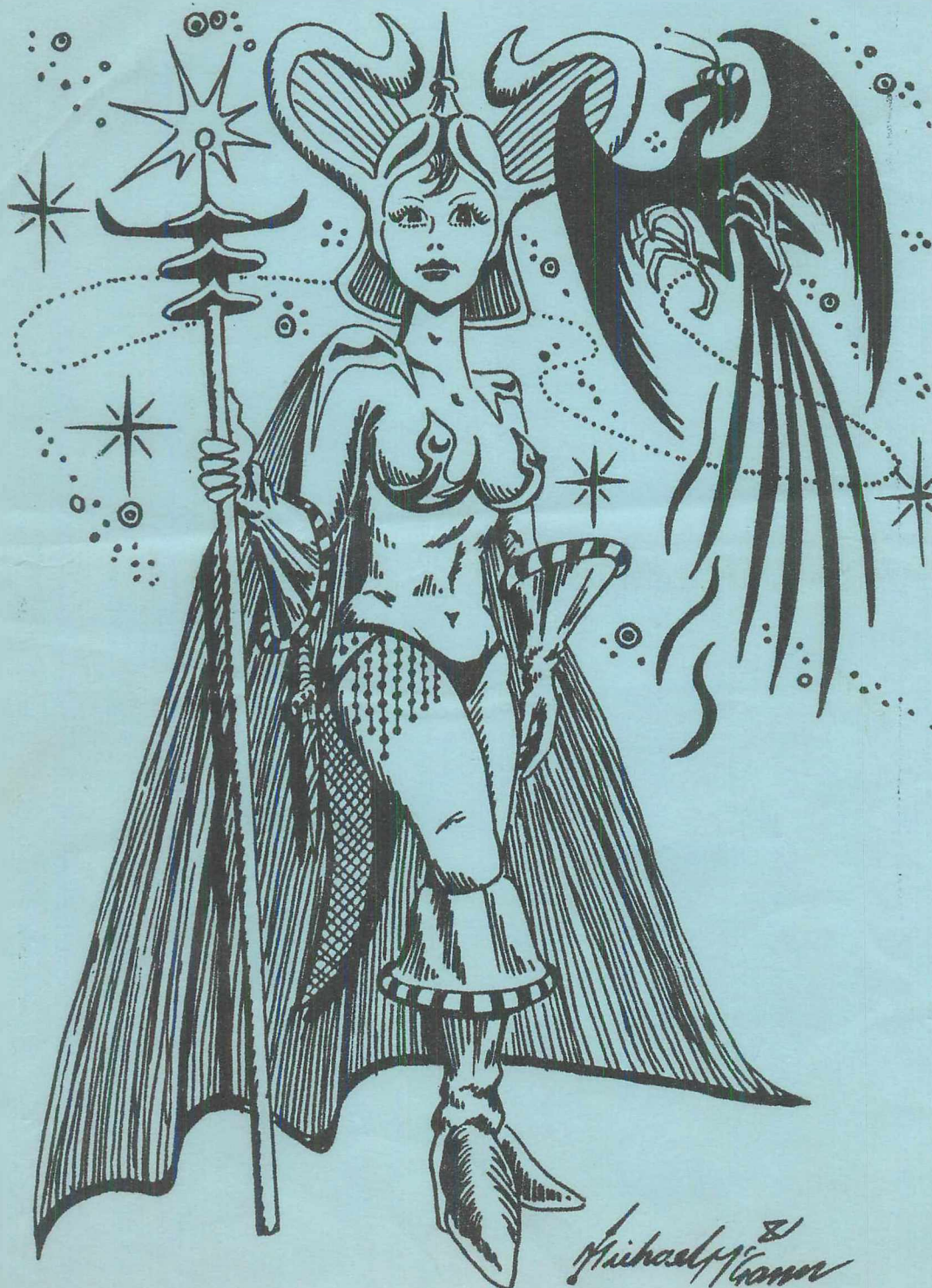


THE MENTOR

36

FEBRUARY 1982



THE MENTOR

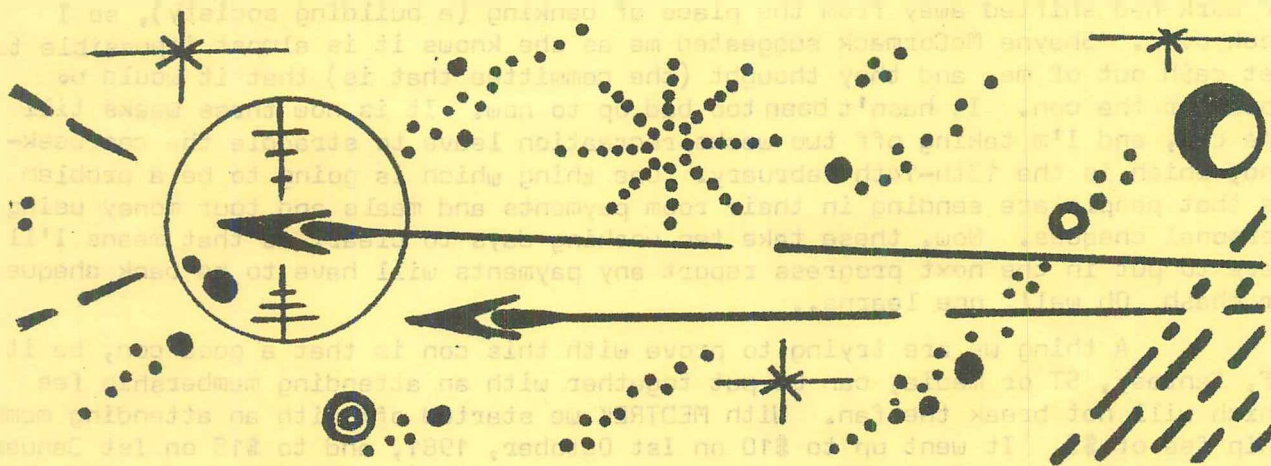
SCIENCE FICTION

FEBRUARY 1982

NUMBER 36

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An R & S PUBLICATION.



RON'S

ROOST

For the first time in many years I'm helping to run a con. Susan, my wife, is the President of the NSW Star Trek club ASTREX. About twelve months ago the club decided to run a media con. Susan looked around for a suitable place and settled on the Hydro Majestic Hotel at Medlow Bath, scene for many of Eric Lindsay's low key fan cons. Eric has given up on the Hydro as the room rates went up \$15 per day in September, 1981. Shared rooms are now \$70 and single rooms \$90 for the weekend. This amount includes all meals, which are usually four course, Meal tickets to them are \$12 to \$15 if one is not living in. Of course this rate is the special con rate - the usual cost is about \$120 per day.

John Fox had been having a rough time keeping the books since his place of work had shifted away from the place of banking (a building society), so I took over. Shayne McCormack suggested me as she knows it is almost impossible to get cash out of me, and they thought (the committee that is) that it would be good for the con. It hasn't been too bad up to now. It is now three weeks till the con, and I'm taking off two weeks recreation leave to straddle the con weekend, which is the 13th-14th February. One thing which is going to be a problem is that people are sending in their room payments and meals and tour money using personal cheques. Now, these take ten working days to clear, so that means I'll have to put in the next progress report any payments will have to be bank cheques or chash. Oh well, one learns..

A thing we are trying to prove with this con is that a good con, be it sf, fantasy, ST or media, can be put together with an attending membership fee which will not break the fan. With MEDTREK we started off with an attending membership fee of \$5. It went up to \$10 on 1st October, 1981, and to \$15 on 1st January 1982. It will be \$15 at the door. Since most of the fans joined when it was \$5-10, then I consider it well spend money. So far we have 140 people coming, of which 110 are live-in. The Programme book will be fully offset with board covers. So far the memberships cover that, the 5 progress reports, advertising, offset membership forms, the Con rooms (\$120 for the weekend for 3 rooms) and various odds and ends. Fan GOH is Shayne McCormack. Pro is A Bertram Chandler.

Who says you can't put on a first class con without rip-offs?

FOREWORD

There follows the tale of what happened on a hot Friday afternoon about a 100 years ago in a Comorri town called Carvod; the town council of the district (which bordered on the Red Leat Forest) had decided to build an intergrated secondary school for the adolescents of all local ethnic groups, races and species. The title of this tale is (for high school teachers) called:

SCHOOL DAYS

(AS NARRATED TO JULIE VAUX)

It was the end of a chaotic week. A beginning of summer freshness scented the breeze blowing from the corridor as I entered Group I's alcove and once again confronted my class. Class!! They were a group of twelve to fourteen years old horrors, whom I was trying to teach Interworld Ideograms. The subject this afternoon was Calligraphy and Composition, and I was relieved to see that the room and its purple dyed wooden benches was reasonably neat.

I sat down and looked at my class.

Cat-eyes, green, gold, blue, alien, stared back at me. Human eyes, brown as bark, green sharp and blue sky, pretended innocence. 'They must be plotting something - they're far too quiet,' I thought as I asked them, ironically, to write the character for peace and still calm, in the four main styles.

I looked out the east window, towards the lake, glimmering a water dance of green and silver. I should have gone to Moon Dome, where the windows show shadow and stars. I had had the chance and had turned it down.

I reviewed the week mentally, listening for any sign of disturbance behind me.

First day, Honour to our Lady Sun. Sigi the Brewer's son pulled Karha Goldbrow's tail - an insult to cat folk. She had pulled a knife and Sigi had "lifted" her through a (fortunately) open window. Karha's Irwin Karha had thrown Sigi after her. I had stopped them after Karha had started pulling her claws down Sigi's back.

Second day - Honour to our Mother of the Forest. The forest girls had

invited our six Darkling girl students to lunch in the fore-shore park with them. Sigi and Kharan, our two prize science students, had formed an interspecies alliance and Kharan had stolen dissolv-dust from the store-roon, which Sigi then "lifted" right into the girls' lunch.

Much to my horror, I heard later, that Kharan's and Sigi's fathers had congratulated them on their cleverness. I teach provincials and barbarians!! If I was back at Starbridge City, I'd have sent the whole class and their damn parents to a social councillor!

Third day - a near riot at the lunch break when the son of our Emyrri weapons tutor had cracked a joke about the cat-children's nearly raw grilled fish lunch being fit food for serfs.

Fourth day: "What was that noise!" I wheeled, on my toes, and glared at the class. Timi, the Arrox boy, has his hands under the bench. "Timi, why aren't you writing!" I asked.

"I was checking my ink container, O Revered Humanoid Female Tutor!"

"Show me your hands, Timi.."

Just as I bent over, there was a loud plopping noise. 'Dye-bags,' I thought, as a purple ooze neared my bare toes. I couldn't bring myself to look back as I walked to my desk, with the constant plopping of dye-bags behind me.

'This is the end,' I thought, 'I just can't control them or persuade them. I'm hopeless, and so are they.' I collapsed into my chair and watched wall, floor, benches become a chaos of discordant colour. Jewel green, dragonfeather blue, bark black, rho blossom purple covered class and alcove alike. Just as suddenly a memory flashed into my awareness:

I had seen these colours before - in the swirl of shirts and capes, the flash of jewels and emblems, at the transport station when I left the college. I see again my white-maned tutor's golden eyes glowing - Tazhi Fire eyes, a catwoman from this district. I hear her final advice, before I board the magno-monorail - "Alaya! Remember, cat children hate being ignored, and human children don't like to be stared at when they know they've done wrong. Remember Me!"

I remember, Tozhi! I remember!

I gather in my strength and centre it as I carefully, slowly, rise from the chair. I stand and stare, not entirely at the class, but vaguely at the back wall, as if I was beyond and above them. Slowly, one by one, cat and human, they turn, feeling the calmness of my mind. Slowly the sounds lessen and still before the growing silence. I stand before them and look directly into their now watching eyes. I speak.

"The subject of today's composition is," I paused, "'Why I am no longer a child.' You have two time-sections to finish." I smile as heads, blossom gold, pollen pale and leaf red, branch dark, bend over their work materials, scribing the title as I, at last, become a Teacher.

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FOOTNOTE: Alaya O Shadow was later famous for her memoirs "Adventures of a Teacher", which recounted her career: teaching children of the Pentangle Federation (to which Comor belongs).

1. Note to readers - "lifting" is telekinesis.

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THE WORLD OF THREE SUNS

On a palm-fringed coast and balmy
I dwelt in a basalt house
Whose windows overlooked
A shoaling rainbow reef
Where mermaids stayed all day
Disporting in their curious way;
Their liquid mode of play.

'Neath an ever-present moon
In that house of basalt hewn
I lived there with Leeune
Of the celestial race:
Green was her hair,
Black her eyes,
And golden glowed her face.

Through miles and miles of crystal air
Across the Mermaid Sea,
We see the city Zulba Zair,
My friend Leeune and I -
We see the whiteness of it's spires
Stained thrice by sunsets mellow;
First Blue, then Green, then Yellow.

When comes the waning of the day-glare,
We swim to the rainbow reef
And guileless love and play there -
Later, in the peaceful nightly scene,
The unblemished ever-present moon
Casts soothing rays of iridescent green
Over all, and the dark sleekness of Leeune.

BY PETER A KELS

THE DAEMONS OF THE DEEP...

'Tis said they creep at certain seasons
In the ruins of a kingdom
Submerged in ages long before,
'Midst throes and woes of seismic hell
And mountains' loudest fiery roar
And seas in pandemonic swell.

And their creeping has a meaning
In an eldritch tower leaning
Where they're bent on fell destruction
With a hideous device;
An Atlantean construction
Of daedal artifice.

So they wait for ships in passing
More than two miles overhead
When they stimulate a vortex -
Which sucks down all the dead,
And drags them to a cavern,
Where indignities are done...

In time a passing ship perceives
Some distant objects floating:
Naked, bloated, whitened corpses -
Some are rent and some are doubled,
Some are scarred and some are smiling -
One's a toothless grinning head.

And as the crew, aghast with horror,
Pulls aboard that nightmare flotsam,
There comes a horrid, putrid bubbling,
A sound of ancient evil troubling:
The ghastly, ghoulish, eldritch laughter
Of the Daemons of the Deep.

- PETER A KELS

GRIMESISH GRUMBERLINGS, A COLUMN BY A. BERTRAM CHANDLER.

NOTHING LIKE A GOOD WHINGE.

I am not a whingeing Pom.

I am an ex-Pom, now an Australian citizen, who whinges long and loudly on certain subjects, among these being slovenly or even non-existent research. A while ago my wife and I were among those present at a National Book Council luncheon at which the Guest of Honour was James (Shōgun) Clavell. On Susan's left was an author of cookery books (whom I had last met in Japan in 1977) and on my right were two lady librarians. While plying her chopsticks Susan talked cookery and I, while plying mine, talked books. First of all, of course, the two librarians and myself had a good whinge about that politician whom I always refer to as "Fraser's pet hamster" and the proposed, iniquitous sales tax on the printed word. Then the ladies had a whinge about the damage done to books by borrowers. I contributed a few horror stories myself. More than once, in the recent past, I have taken from our local library books dealing with military history in the mid-1880s and discovered that illustrations which I should have found useful had been torn out by persons or persons known.

The librarians whinged about borrowers who write comments, usually unkind, in the margins.

I confessed that I am such a borrower.

The temperature dropped several degrees.

I justified my acts of defacement - if so they may be called - by saying that I consider it my duty to steer innocent readers back on to the right track after they have been steered off it by some incompetent or ignorant wordsmith.

For example, there is one quite good writer of thrillers. His service in the Royal Naval Reserve is alleged to have made him an expert on maritime matters. All right, all right, he may have been an officer in the Royal Naval

Reserve - but in what branch? My guess is the paymaster branch. I still remember the gyro compass, invented by some fantastic Arab navigator, in one of his stories. The period was the early 1880s and the vessel aboard which this remarkable instrument was being used was a clipper ship. The author (understandably) was rather vague about the details but, apparently, the rotor had to be spun by hand. The average reader would know nothing about gyro compasses. I, however, do, and have papers to prove it.

That book contained not only a navigational absurdity but a gross historical inaccuracy. Some mention was made of the Opium Wars. According to the novelist these wars were fought to save the poor, heathen Chinese from the horrors of drug addiction, with the brave men of the Royal Navy playing the Good Guys. According to all the history books that I have read the part played by the Royal Navy was to ensure that the profitable - to British merchants - Opium Trade continued despite the efforts of the Chinese government to put it down.

There is one writer whose research cannot be faulted. (He is a professional historian, which helps.) That is George MacDonald Fraser, the author of the Flashman novels. Now and again he writes of something about which I have rather more than a layman's knowledge - for example, Flashman's use of Congreve rockets against Russian ships in Flashman At The Charge - and I can't find anything to whinge about at all. Perhaps I may, some time in the remote future, have a whinge about Fraser. He sort of half promised me, quite a while ago, that he would have Flashman among those present at the Siege of Glenrowan.

I sincerely hope that he keeps that promise.

But this article is about the sinners, not about the (very few) saints.

The average writer of sea stories, either of the here-and-now variety or historical, is a sinner whose experience, all too obviously, is confined to a couple of trips on the Manly Ferry (or the British or American equivalent thereof). There was one bright boy who had his sailing vessel steering a Great Circle course in Cromwellian times. I'll not bore you with navigational technicalities but, as a holder of a Certificate of Competency as Master of a Foreign Going Steamship, I assure you that it just couldn't be done. A sailing vessel is at the mercy of wind and weather far more than is a steamer. Too, steering a Great Circle course requires very precise navigation. Before the invention of the marine chronometer only latitude could be determined with any degree of accuracy and the determination of longitude was little better than guesswork. And Harrison, whose marine timekeeper made accurate navigation possible, was a contemporary of Cook, not of Cromwell.

A recent World War II novel really annoyed me. I whinged about it aloud as well as putting unkind comments in the margin. Susan said, "Don't complain to me. I didn't write it and, after what you've been saying, I certainly shan't read it. Get it off your chest on paper."

Well, the "hero" of this epic is a drunked American owner-master of some utterly improbable rustbucket blindly shambling around the Caribbean during the early days of World War II, before the entry of the U.S.A. into that conflict. Shambling around almost as blindly is a German commerce raider, a converted passenger liner, the incompetent crew of which succeeds in sinking an American cruise ship with the loss of all on board with the exception of two passengers, female, who are picked up by Captain Slade - that was the name of the "hero" - when he blunders on to the scene of the disaster.

Slade, although his ship is of American registry, takes it upon himself

to wage a private war upon the raider. It was his motivation that was so utterly incredible. Apparently he had played a minor part in a major maritime disaster just a couple of years prior to the outbreak of World War I. Somehow it had weighed heavily upon his conscience; he thought that he hadn't done all that he could have done. Over the years he had become an alcoholic, drinking to forget.

And this major maritime disaster?

The loss of the Titanic.

Slade, an American citizen, had been a junior officer aboard that vessel.

The White Star Line, the owners of Titanic, were a British shipping company. Their masters and officers were all British citizens. Titanic just did not have any American officers, no matter how junior.



But back to World War II and a sort of action between Slade's ship (he had managed, rather improbably, to "borrow" a small calibre cannon) and the German. The German had 6" guns, the extreme range of which was apparently little more than one mile. During World War II, during a tour of duty as gunnery officer of a troop ship, one of my toys was a very old 6" gun which had seen service during World War I. With it I could lob a 6" brick seven - seven, not one - miles...

The arch criminal, though, is Mr. Forsyth, who made his name with The Day Of The Jackal. (In the unlikely event of his reading this he will probably cry all the way to the bank. After all, he can afford a castle in Ireland while I have to be content with a small flat in Potts Point. Mind you, I'm not complaining about that. I'd sooner live in the city of Sydney than anywhere in Ireland. As a matter of fact we did think of moving to Ireland after my retirement from the sea; in that republic income derived from any of the arts is tax free. We decided, however, that we should not care for the climate - meteorological, intellectual,

moral or whatever.)

Mr. Forsyth is an extremely competent thriller writer. What annoys me about him is his publicity, in which his thorough and meticulous research is made much of. Thorough and meticulous research my left foot!

In The Day Of The Jackal, which is concerned with an assassination attempt on Big Charlie with a professional, mercenary killer employed by a group of disgruntled French colonels, mention is made of a previous attempt engineered by one of those same colonels. (Or he could have been a general.) It was to take the form of an ambush, with sharpshooters lying in wait for de Gaulle's car. Daylight, or lack of it, played an essential part in the planning. The scheme came unstuck because the colonel (or general) had used the previous year's Nautical Almanac to calculate the time of civil twilight, as a result of which he was twenty minutes out.

At this juncture I put on my professional navigator's hat. If, by some

mischance you are caught in mid-ocean on New Year's Eve without next year's Almanac you can continue to navigate with the old one, making only very minor corrections. Even if you made no corrections when calculating the time of twilight you'd be no more than seconds out.

Much to my surprise the makers of the Day Of The Jackal film spotted Forsyth's absurdity and did not use it.

Mr. Forsyth's next book was The Odessa File. Frankly, I quite enjoyed it but was told by friends with some expertise in the fields that it covered that it was full of absurdities.

But I found plenty to be annoyed about in The Dogs Of War, in which Mr. Forsyth made it glaringly plain that all that he knows about ships and maritime procedure could be written with a felt-tipped pen on his little finger-nail.

There was one series on ABC TV which annoyed me very much when it first started, although after the glaring error had been spotted and corrected I became a Faithful Viewer. That was The Oneidin Line. There were merchant captains and officers wearing Standard Uniform, cap badge, sleeve braid and all. The period was early 1880s. Prior to World War I there just wasn't any Standard Uniform for the Merchant Navy. The big companies had their own uniform trimmings. In the average tramp windjammer people, regardless of rank, just went to sea "to wear out their old clothes".

After 1918 Standard Uniform was introduced. Some of the big companies adopted it, although retaining their own cap badges. Some of the big companies retained their own sleeve braid and buttons as well as cap badges.

Recently, in Wellington, I paid a visit to the Head Office of the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand to request help in my research for the Ned Kelly novel. My intention was (it has now been carried out) to seize that Company's crack trans-Tasman liner Rotomahana and make her the flagship of the Navy of the Republic of the North East. Already I had been supplied with plans and specifications of the ship but I thought I would just like to know what the Company's uniform was in the 1880s. The Company Archivist showed me a glass case containing various Sacred Relics. Among these was a sleeve band bearing four stripes of gold braid with the middle two cunningly twisted to form a central diamond.

"This is what the Company's masters wore on their sleeves," I was told.

"This," I said, "is what the Company's masters still wear on their sleeves. But it was not introduced until 1918 at the earliest. I want to know what they wore in, say, 1885."

Shortly after my return to Sydney I received a large envelope from Wellington. In it were group photographs of the master and officers of Rotomahana. The Company's cap badge was the same then as it is now. It was the only thing that was the same. The caps had gold chinstraps. (Today they are patent leather.) The only person with gold braid on his sleeves was the master and he had just one band, of the same style as that worn by a sub-lieutenant of the Royal Navy. He had no "scrambled egg" on the peak of his cap but the cap band was gold. His chief officer had three narrow stripes of gold braid on his cap band, the second had two, the third had one and the fourth had to be content with his gold chinstrap. The engineer officers' caps were similarly decorated, although with gold cord rather than gold braid.

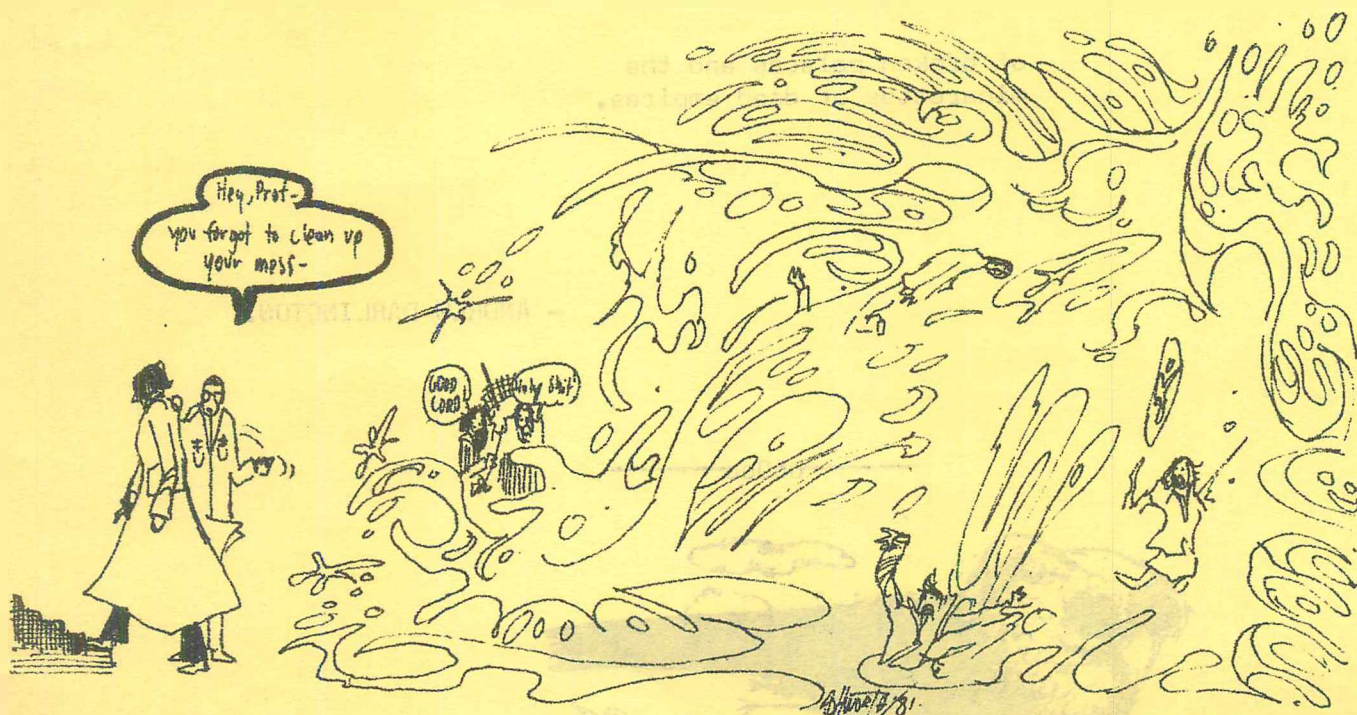
I admit that all the above didn't make one scrap of difference to the story - but it helped me get the feel of the ship and the period.

Back to whinges - I still remember an occasion when one of mine really bounced back on me. It was some years ago, in Auckland. An old friend and ship-mate, now master of a dry cement carrier on the New Zealand coast, had asked me out to his home one fine Sunday. At that time the NZBC was rebroadcasting a BBC series of radio talks called Science Fact And Science Fiction. After dinner my host switched this on, thinking that I should be interested. The subject, this evening, was Communicating With Aliens. Well, the speaker was saying his piece on the radio and I was saving my whinge. "Why doesn't the stupid bastard read some intelligent science fiction?" and so on and so on.

And then, in that impeccable BBC accent, "The problem was handled in a most ingenious manner by A Bertram Chandler, in his short story The Cage..."

My host and his family collapsed in helpless laughter and I shut up.

- A Bertram Chandler.



VIVA LA TRANCE

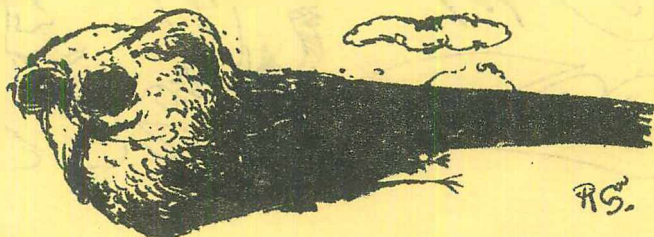
through a swarm of
crimson dragonflies,

among the petroleum tanks
and wrecked automobiles that are
carpeted with chick-weed
and dandelions,

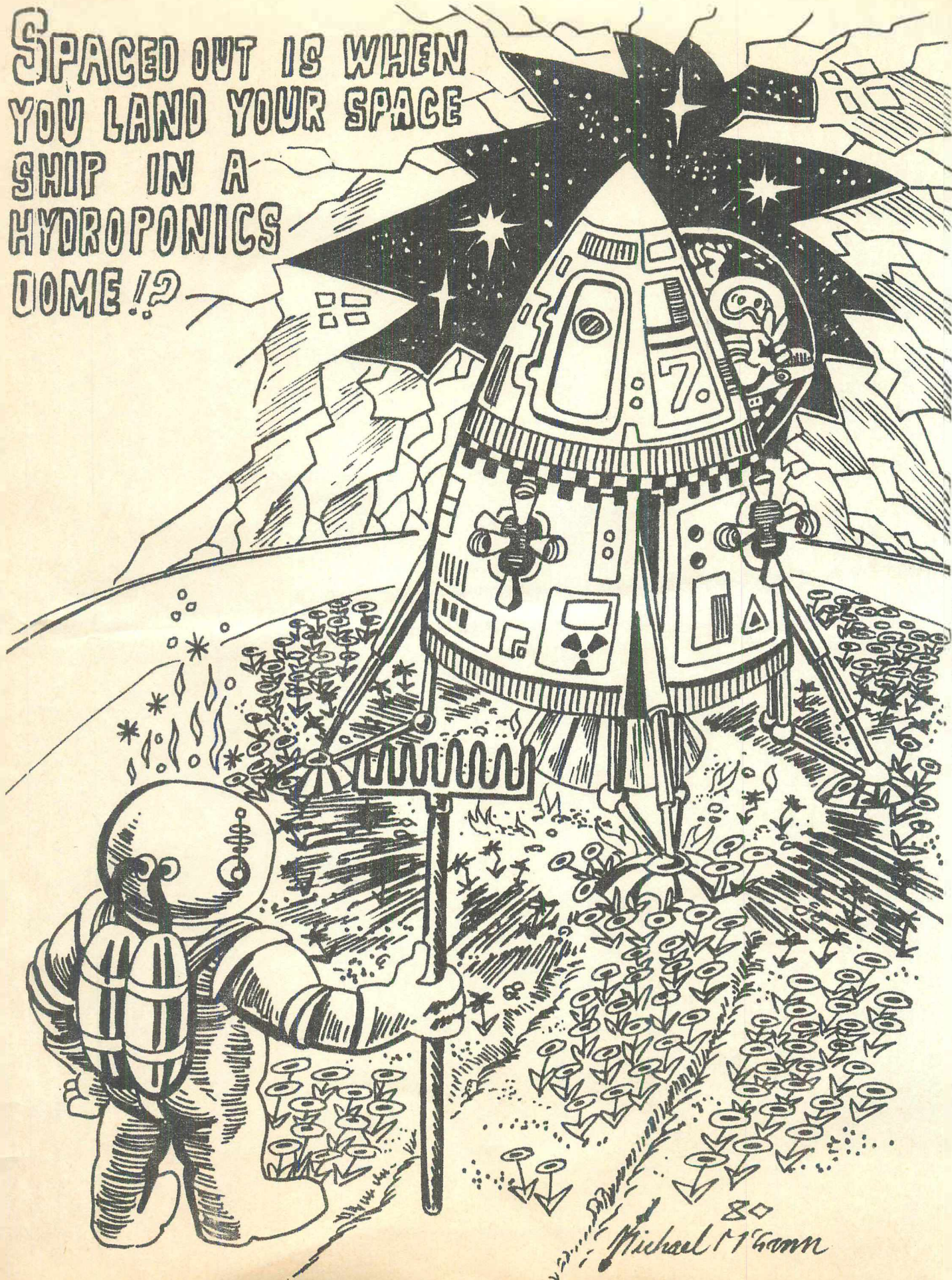
poets word-weave concrete
and neon mythologies,
recording the
shattered wing-mirror reflections

of broken palaces and the
minaretttes of dead empires.

- ANDREW DARLINGTON.



SPACED OUT IS WHEN
YOU LAND YOUR SPACE
SHIP IN A
HYDROPONICS
DOME!?



HOWS THIS FOR A TWISTED VISION? —WHAT IF HUNTER S. THOMPSON

DA GOOD
THINGS IN
LIFE!

(Duke to all you Donnesbury fans)

© ASHWORTH 81.



GODHELL!

YOU'RE A SCIENCE
FICTION TYPE
PERSON!

WENT ON
THE
MOTHERSHIP

HOOD
we'd be
-up shit
creek 'ou.

BLUE BLAZING IGUANAS!!

THOSE SWINDISH ARMY DEVILS
MUST REALLY WANT MY DRUGS
BAD TO EVACUATE THIS ENTIRE
COUNTY - where's my damn Attorney -?
AHA - THE BLASTED HEATHENS DOWN
THERE TAKING IN THAT OTHER!

You are invited
to the party
and you are subject to

IN DOLBY

COUGH!

NEVER WOULD HAVE GOTTEN
AWAY IF I HADN'T LODGED THAT
SILVER PAPERWEIGHT I GOT IN
VEGAS IN THAT CRETIN'S SKULL

-AND THEN I HAD TO RUN
OVER THAT RAVING FROG
SCREAMING "YOU WERE
INVITED!"

INVITED? INDEED!

WAD DAFUQ IS THIS?

GOOD LORD - THIS MUST HAVE
BEEN WHAT THAT FRENCHMAN
MEANT - IT'S A GOVERNMENT
SHINDY - THEY MUST HAVE WANTED
ME TO SUPPLY THE DRUGS!
NO WONDER THEY WERE
AFTER ME -

I WASTED THAT
PAPERWEIGHT FOR NOTHING!

This is
not a
drill

Where the
damn guns
are

WELL - THAT MAKES SENSE - I'LL JUST
SLIP DOWN THERE - BUT - I'D BE H-
HAVE SOME WILD TURKEY AS A BRACE

And some speed and some coke and some
dope and some acid and some mescaline
and some - I wonder who those
people hiding behind those
rocks down there must
be - probably fellow
journalists.



GLIP SNORT CHEW SUCK
SNAK SLIKS SNUP SNURT

GOOOOON
-I NEE

-Ded!

WILD
TURKEY

JEZUZ PALAMINO!
GRINNING DEMONS!!

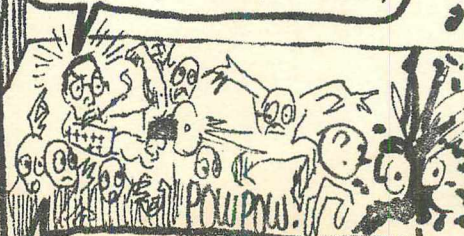
We want to discuss your case -

MY CASE?
YOU DIRTY SANOUS!
NO ONE TAKES
MY CASE!

-sides - I never trust
anyone wearing
sunglasses! - cheap
polaroids
too, I bet!



MATER CHRISTI - WHAT ARE YOU
BLOODY LITTLE MONKEYS DOING?



PUT ME DOWN, YOU MERCILESS MUNCHKINS,
OR EAT MAGNUM - 45 MURDER!

(Due to
Hunter's
tender touch,
the aliens
decide to
level earth-
and Steven
Spielberg
never made
'1991'
-see - THERE IS
a good
side!)

(GOOD LORD - GERROLD WAS RIGHT ABOUT DRUGS!!)



AAARRGGH!
A GIANT COVINC
CHANDELIER!

-And - IT'S
FALLING!
Viiiiiiii

The R. & R. Dept.



Judith Hanna
42/6 Wyargine-St.,
Mosman,
NSW 2088.

Much of the lamentable delay in getting this LoC to you is* to the difficulty I've had working out just where to start disagreeing with what John Alderson has to say, in TM 32, about magic. *due

"Is Magic debased religion, the forerunner of religion, or something else?" he starts off asking, and after giving an outline of various features of one Aboriginal "cult", the "Djanngawul" cycle of Arnhem Land, says of it, "It is obviously not a religion. It is indeed doubtful if the Aborigines have a religion." The reason given for this conclusion is that throughout the song cycle and myth there is little evidence, if any, for superior beings, either gods or demons." From this I deduce that he subscribes to a definition of "religion" as "a system of belief in superior beings", an acceptable enough definition which, of course, fits "von Danikenism" as easily as it does Blavatsky's Theosophy or Crowley's Magick: indeed most systems of magic are based on belief in a cosmology which attributes control of events to "supernatural", and thus in at least some sense "superior", beings.

Nor does this definition exclude from the status of "religion" Aboriginal, so-called "animistic", beliefs. John himself informs us that the Djanngawul sisters and their brother were "Dreamtime Creators" who "make country". The myths of the cycle tell of their journeying around their country, their actions as they travel creating the "sacred sites" the fertility centres where new life is stored before entering women's wombs, and from which, by the performance of the proper rituals (the knowledge of which is entrusted to the traditional owners of the lands and forms their title to that land), it is released to other species of animal or plant. The Djanngawul are the "sacred ancestors", the creators and shapers of both the land and its inhabitants, and as such are very much "superior beings".

So much for what I take to be the central thrust of John's argument; an argument which bears no relation to John's initial query as to the relationship between magic and religion. Now for a couple of the extraneous confusions he puts in along the way.

Generally, John's quasi-anthropological writings tend to totally disregard the fact that any society is an integrated system, and that any cultural feature — eg. the custom of circumcision — fulfils a particular function within that system. The "same" practice in a different society will occur as part of a different context, and therefore may be expected to carry a different meaning; as would the same sequence of sounds as part of the lexicons of two different languages. This "cultural relativity" invalidates such simplistic cross-cultural comparison. as equating, as John does, the meaning of

the circumcision of young boys as part of Aboriginal initiation ritual with the Hebraic practice of circumcising male infants. Had John attempted to place the Djanngawal cult as part of the total socio-cultural system, it would surely have been borne in on him that far from the Aborigines being devoid of religion, every aspect of their culture is permeated, shaped and justified by traditions embodied in the sacred and semi-sacred myths; this is emphasized not only by the Berndts, but by every anthropologist who has studied traditional Aboriginal culture.

John's

other basic mistake is in discussing myth as if it were an historical account of actual happenings. For instance, "the cult... was brought to Arnhem Land from the 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." Oh, come now, John. The historical dating of Exodus is valid enough: history's a matter of writing down some account of contemporary or recently occurred events -- the Jews were able to write down their traditions early enough for them to correlate fairly reliably with written records of Egyptian history. But Prometheus? The Titan son of Gaia (Earth) and Uranus (Heaven) who created humankind from clay, and carried fire stolen from heaven down to earth in a fennel-stalk? Historical? About as historical as Bralgu, or the Djanngawal sisters and their earth-transforming trippings. A myth's a symbolic tale, mate, embodying a currently ideologically acceptable version of traditional lore. It's part of the contemporary culture in which it is recited, not an absolute truth carried down, unchanged, from the Beginning.

The myths, so wide-spread through Aboriginal cultures and with analogues in other, unrelated cultures, which tell that women were the original possessors of magical knowledge which was stolen from them by the men, are to be read in this light -- as embodying a version of the contemporary, always unstable, balance of power between the sexes. They're not to be interpreted as truthful accounts of some former situation -- no evidence, either way, can possibly be established on that -- but must be considered in conjunction with all the rest of the complex of custom, tradition and actual behaviour which governs relationships between men and women. And this, it should be pointed out, is not a system which can ever be fully discovered by a male anthropologist, or by a female anthropologist -- each will be shown only one side of the system -- but only by a team like, for instance Ronald and Catherine Berndt. That such teams are now operating, and that female anthropologists are moving out into fieldwork, is balancing our knowledge of just what part women do play in various cultures: anthropology is ceasing to be so narrowly "the study of man". (And to think I dropped out of Uni to avoid having to write this sort of stuff!!)

John makes more sense when he writes about farming and the reforms so urgently necessary to reverse the current rape of our soil which, among the poorest arable land in the world, simply cannot for much longer stand up to the commercial exploitation inflicted upon it. Quite literally, we're killing the land, burning out the soil micro-flora with chemical fertilizers so that it becomes inert dust, shipping off the organic matter to flow out to sea as sewerage instead of bringing it back to be ploughed back into the soil from which it came in order to nourish new crops. On that issue, John's right on.

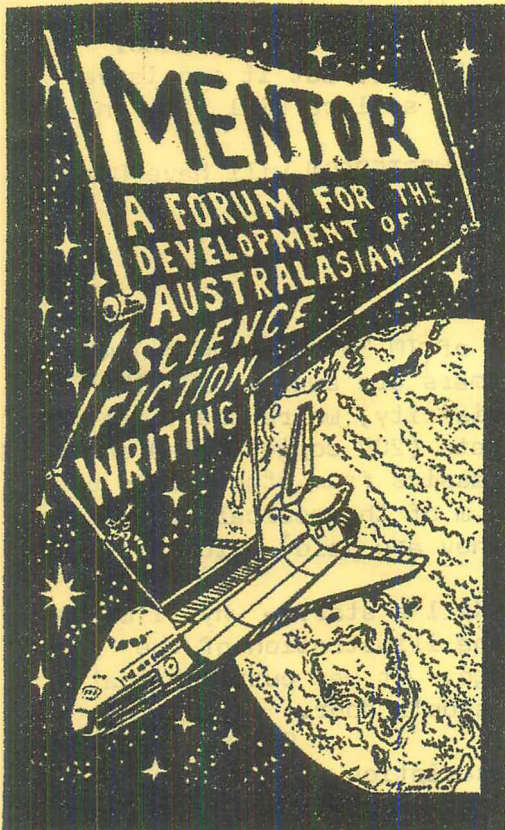
My compliments to Peter Kells on his quality contributions, and to your stable of artists.

Graham Ferner
2/16 Hollyhock Pl.,
Browns Bay,
Auckland 10,
New Zealand.

The Mentor's format and layout reminds me in many ways of Hyphen, Chuck Harris and Walter Willis's fmz in the 50's, the only difference being that Hyphen contained more fannish writings, and The Mentor tends to take a more serious approach. The one true fannish article you did include, however, was certainly worthwhile. I'm referring to Bob Smith's article

Reflections of a Fringe Fan. His comments on fan fun in fandom appear to be quite true when comparing many of the 50's fan that I've seen with those fmz of today. Also the comments he made about the Fancyclopedia II were indeed words of wisdom, this being a true Gem. Because of the rather personal nature of the whole article I can't really pass judgement on it, except to say that it was very much enjoyed.

Your comments about active femmefans in Australia, are very true of New Zealand. Most of the femmes that have anything to do with fandom are usually in some way connected with Trekfandom or womens lib. In New Zealand there is only one femmefan who produces a fanzine (and it's cruddy) and only about five femmes who are active. I guess they really are all into romance.



Julie Vaux I have a couple of complaints
14 Zara Rd., for you:
Willoughby, 1. Artwork. I've given
NSW 2068 you about 20 drawings and
you're only using them 2 at
a time. I'm going to have to ration you.

2. I give Sue an important note to give to you, concerning advertising, asking you to repeat the ad published in WWW 4. If you don't publish it in the next issue NO MORE DRAWINGS. (Yes, this is a threat.) I NEED (really truly) any offers of accommodation I can get so I can plan my itinerary in Britain and Europe (I don't want to spend all my time there, sleeping in Youth Hostels) - I can only afford the el cheapo rate.

Please print my ad in the Feb. issue, or else NO DRAWINGS. I dislike being so demanding but this really is important!!! I don't know anyone in

Europe and my only relatives are very distant cousins. I want my trip to be an adventure, not a disaster.

* T H E A D *

24 yr. old artist, Anglo-Celtic, Gemini, (anglican).
Christian, Taoist, needs and seeks any offer of accommodation in Europe and UK she can get. Does not drink or smoke (pot or tobacco). Likes X-men and Elfquest. Ditmar nominee '81. Water colourist. Other interests: sf, fantasy, classic music - like Baroque, art in general, Oriental culture, poetry, cats, dolphins, etc.

Andy Andruschak
PO Box 606,
La Canada-Flintridge,
Ca. 91011,
U.S.A.

In answer to Gay Williams' question in TM 33... in the USA, the "Huckster Room" is vanishing from the scene. It still remains at a few old fashioned Science Fiction Conventions. LASFS held LOSCON 8 earlier this month, and we had an honest to god HUCKSTER ROOM. We are the last convention in Los Angeles to do so.

The rest have "Dealer's Rooms". Filled with Dealers. Who sell t-shirts, stills of movies and by and large all the shit you expect to be sold at media sci-fi cons. The media fans are in control. They want dealer's rooms. They are the central point of the media sci-fi cons. All else is considered secondary. Well, perhaps a movie room or two... and a video room.

We also have an annual "World Fantasy Convention". It too does not have a huckster room; just a dealer room.

CHICON IV, the next worldcon, still has a Huckster Room. Perhaps this is the last worldcon at which this is true, but at least for 1982 we cling to the old traditions. I just checked. The next WESTERCON also has a Huckster Room... but it too is very much a traditional SF con; not Sci-fi... but a few book sellers will slip in thru the back door, and be tolerated.

However, the 1983 WESTERCON will have Dealers, not hucksters. The media fans are taking over.

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

That weird pair on the cover of TM 33 makes me chuckle. On Ron's Roost - the way the Ditmars are awarded is like our own professional awards in this city, where the Times best-seller lists promote their pets (200 copies sale) and don't even mention million copy near classics from other parts of the country. The Con fees remind me of the medical profession around here who write you a prescription (for which they are paid) which costs more than the poor patients monthly food.

Liked Peter Kell's story - why, I wonder. Guess it's the characterization. And description. The illustration of the Antique Shop was very like a scene in Germany years ago. It was puzzling that the door glass was broken from inside to unlock the shop's door.

Gay Williams' report was interesting for its masterfully written description. Only heard of the Murray twice in a lifetime, and it was called "the mighty Murray" the other time too. Wonder whether the Barossa valley has New York roots to its vines, as, I am told, all Europe has. The Illustrations were art to me. I noted that you were there too. Liked A Dreamer's Quest, but again I don't know why.

Sorry to disagree with John Alderson, but the Sumerians had chariots (military use) before Hittites came down into history. They were useful in war, in spite of solid wheels, and only onagers to pull them. Of course they were a primitive thing compared to the Hittite horse-drawn swift vehicles. Wonder whether John ever came across the belief that the oldest roots of all languages can be traced back to the Pygmies.

Chandler's 'column' was amazing. Guess I should have been more impressed and less critical myself. We have this thing here too, in tinier compass. A visitor from Brooklyn across the harbor sneers at us, and is sneered at in turn.

selling the house; I'm told some lending institutions won't lend money on places with 'unapproved' structures).

I'm especially sorry I didn't read TM 34 sooner, because of your editorial on the lack of female fanwriters. I really can't speak for anyone else, but my reasons for not writing many articles anymore is lack of time. I did write quite a few during the year or so before I started my own fanzine. Actually I guess I mostly wrote book reviews, but I did do several articles on female sf writers and related topics. You overlook Judith Hanna, who contributes quite a few articles to various zines. But I agree it's a pretty thin field. My suspicion has been that (of the women I know personally anyway), they don't see many fanzines publishing the sort of things they're interested in, so they don't bother to write anything. When I started WWW I got a lot of interest in the sort of serconish stuff I'm into... which it would not have occurred to me to send to any of the Australian zines I'm familiar with. That may be unfair to the zines' editors, but it is the impression I've had. Just different spheres of interest. Another factor could be that female fans interested in writing things are often interested in writing fiction professionally, and spend their writing time on that rather than fanwriting. Examples that come to mind are Carole Cranwell, Barbara de la Hunty (who used to do a column for the WA clubzine), Judith Hanna again. Diane Southgate Fox, and myself. And of course, Leanne Frahm, who dropped out of even Applesauce to make more time for serious writing.

Speaking of fiction, several times it has occurred to send you a piece of my fiction, but I have resisted because if I thought it was good enough to publish, I wanted to get it into a prozine; if it wasn't good enough, I didn't want to offend a faned by dumping it on him. Perhaps that's not fair. What do you think? Actually, I'm now building up a small stock of stories that I consider publishable, but which haven't found a buyer, so perhaps I should offer them around.

Well, Yeah, I publish fiction so as to enable the writers to get comments from people who have read a lot of sf, and who are willing to give their opinion of the stories. And, of course, the faned is not obliged to take that particular contribution. Send me along what you think I may like and I'll have a look at it. - Ron.

Terry Jeeves seems annoyed that the sort of sf he used to like is giving way to another sort, and is looking for excuses. Tough luck. The latest sf has a much higher proportion of writing that interests me, and if he doesn't consider it sf, I don't care. You can call it boiled potatoes if you like, Terry.

I'm enjoying Bob Smith's musings more each installment, and have a comment on Reflections 2 - regarding Fandom is Fun and a Sense of Fun. Has Bob met any Perth fans, preferably in their native habitat? Or been to a Medvention (late lamented)? My whole interest in fandom has certainly revolved around that Sense of Fun -- maybe it ain't what it used to be, but then I've only been involved for a few years, and it's a hell of a lot more fun than anything else I've done... it took me well over 30 years to learn to relax and be frivolous; now I'm heavily into decadence and hedonism. (Tolkon had a lot of it too.)

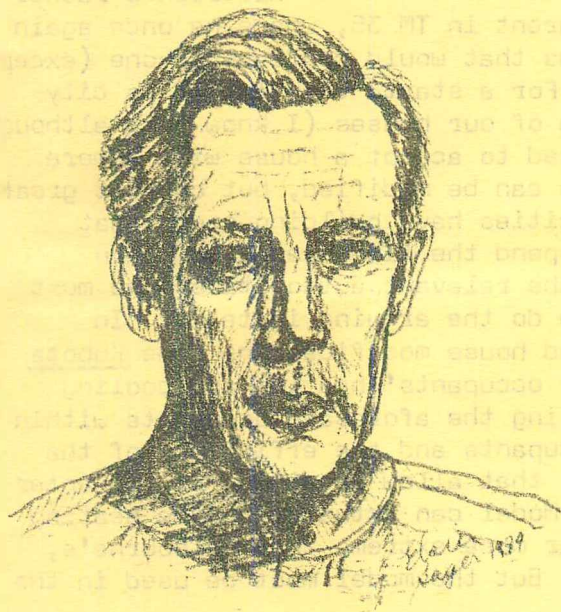
Peter A. Kells
PO Box 1670,
Southport 4215,
Qld.

'Twould seem that Mr John K. Playford (author of the crude and depressing 'Trilogy') has taken a strong dislike to my refin'd verse. In view of the vulgar quality of his TM 35 letter, I find this hardly surprising. It appears that his sole means of literary emphasis is the frequent and indiscrim-

inate employment of a certain time-worn and hackneyed expletive. I never use this expletive, as I find it strangely illogical to say or write 'copulate' (or it's vernacular equivalent) when something goes wrong, or when one wishes to add emphasis to a word. Now, let me state that I like criticisms of my literary products - be that criticism positive or negative. But I do demand intelligent criticism. It seems that Mr John K. Playford's critical powers are rigidly confined to the written equivalents of bestial and pig-like gruntings - to wit (and I quote): "bleah" and "aargh".

After reading John J. Alderson's TM 35 article on the "Biodynamic House and Garden" I sat for some moments in stunned disbelief. Then I laughed. Of course!, it was all an elaborate practical joke; the product of someone with a highly original, yet bizarre sense of humour. Either that, or it was one of the most fevered flights of Utopian fancy that I have ever read. And I suspect, from it's tone of naive optimism, that it was written by one who has read of all these techniques in the 'alternative' literature, but would never dream of actually getting his hands dirty, as I have. As a salutary anti-

dote to the fantastic ramblings and chimerical concepts of this Don Quixote in gumboots, let me now declare than anyone who is rash enough to attempt self-sufficiency on a "city-block" will most certainly STARVE TO DEATH. I do not doubt that Mr Alderson is quite genuine in his efforts to disseminate knowledge of alternative energy sources, energy conservation, and food production, but in "The Biodynamic House and Garden" he confuses, with reckless and almost comical abandon, the possible with the practical.



As to Atlantis, I was annoyed by Mr Alderson's curt dismissal of Ignatius Donnelly. Mr Alderson, you claim to find a flaw in Donnelly's theory by declaring that the till is all round the Earth and not, as Donnelly claimed, only on one side - but are you quite certain that you mean the same thing as Donnelly when you speak of 'till'? And even if the till is all round the earth, this may simply mean that comets have struck the Earth not

once, but many times. Then, with yet another airy wave of his hand, Mr Alderson declares that "Donnelly's times are indefinite". This is not so. Donnell went to the trouble of quoting the entire text of Plato's Critias just to indicate the degree of confidence he had in the philosopher's dating of the catastrophe. Subsequent discoveries have shown that Plato, and hence Donnelly, were quite correct in considering the date of the cataclysm to be around 9500 BC. (That this date coincides with the end of the Quaternary ice age is no accident.) For those who would like detailed facts and figures on the cataclysmic submergence of the Mother of Civilization, I suggest a reading of Otto Muck's The Secret of Atlantis (Fontana pb 1979). On page 103 of that book, Muck lists a number of violent geological events which occurred in the general vicinity of the catastrophe. Now, the ages of these various upheavals are known, and therefore by calculating their average it is possible to get a good idea of when the comet struck, and Atlantis

sank. The average, thus calculated, is a date 12000 years ago. Once more, Plato and Donnelly are vindicated. And once and for all, it is time all this ABSURD PHANTASY about the Middle Eastern origin of civilization be swept away. The origin of all civilization is in the distant West; in the Land of the Dead (drowned); in the "underworld" (which doesn't mean "underground" but "below the horizon").

Absurd rumours have recently appeared in the R & R Dept. that I am not really Peter A. Kells. Fools! Can you not guess who I am? I tell you it is I! I! I! I really am Peter A. Kells. Who is this Robert Franklin, and where may I behold his writings that I may compare for myself?

Neville J. Angove I don't know whether I should be flattered or chagrined
PO Box 770, that my arguments with John Alderson have reached such a
Canberra City, stage that they are being converted into a comic strip! But
ACT 2601. GJA had better get my name right next time!

Alderson's rather liberal attitude to "facts" is once again apparent in TM 35, where he once again glosses over (or ignores entirely) the problems that would confront anyone (except Alderson) attempting to implement his ideas. For a start, very few of us city dwellers have any choice as to the orientation of our houses (I know that although I started with the best intentions, I was forced to accept a house with a more west than north aspect). Of course, the house can be modified, but only at great expense (John conveniently forgets that most cities have building codes that have to be met, and unless one can afford to spend the time needed to learn enough about building to argue one's case to the relevant authorities, one must pay through the nose for a licensed builder to do the arguing instead). In passing I must comment that one of the proposed house modifications (the Kubota Model), as described by John, would reduce the occupants' heating and cooling bills through the simple expedient of suffocating the aforesaid occupants within 24 to 48 hours, depending on the number of occupants and the efficiency of the occupants in blocking all the chinks and holes that allow breathing air to enter the house! When properly applied, the Kubota Model can actually reduce heating and cooling bills to zero, even in climates far more extreme than Melbourne's, without killing the occupants as a byproduct. But the model must be used in the initial house construction.

The attached glasshouse concept is probably the most useful (in that it can be used by most people without too much expense).

I would counsel any reader who is thinking of John's cheap solar hot water system to ask a plumber why copper pipe and not poly pipe is used in mains pressure installations: John's alternative can be used, so long as it is completely independent of the household water supply system, which does limit its effectiveness.

John's exposition of companion planting/Steiner Biodynamic Planting/intensive cultivation (pick whatever name suits you) is superficially quite reasonable. But a few points: there is no such thing as a "blood tonic"; watch what nettles you eat, since most varieties are more than a little deadly to humans; most weeds found in cities are also quite poisonous (especially the various flatweeds); the herb garden should not be planted at the kitchen door, but should be spread throughout the garden to discourage pests.

But John goes a lot further than Steiner, about as far as the Chinese go, with the same possible effects. Livestock, especially

birds, carry many passengers that would not be welcome near human habitations (lice, mites, fleas, nematodes, flukes, hydatids). The water snails you need in your duck pond (to eat the algae) are an intermediate host for hydatids. If the manure you use to compost your vegetables comes from a contaminated animal, then you will shortly carry the same internal livestock (but perhaps you can cure this using John's blood tonic). The trick is to not use manure for root vegetables, or ground fruits (strawberries are a good example of the latter - nematodes introduced via one batch of contaminated manure have lasted as long as ten crops), and to liberally apply a variety of pesticides.

I cannot see how the purchase of food accounts for half our income, and neither can the Bureau of Statistics. Less than a quarter of the average weekly income is spent on food (assuming a family of five); Peta and I spend only about a tenth of our income or less (under \$50 a week) on food, rising to a maximum of only 17 per cent of my wage alone (and I earn less than the average wage).

I would be interested to learn how John plans to pressurise his primitive digester (I am now referring to his response to my letter), since unpressurised methane is good for making UFO's and nothing else.

I still believe that we can move all our polluting industries into space. If we all decided to make our cars last just an extra year, the industrial capacity so released could produce an orbital factory without any increase in pollution. Once the first factory is in operation, it can produce components for other factories, and so on. The end result is a transfer of heavy industry away from human habitation.

I have no need to refuse to live in a world described by John Alderson, since such a world would not exist past a single generation. John's description of life as he wants it is too similar to a Jehovah's Witness's view of the future - it is something you can believe in, but you have to keep on making excuses when you find it doesn't work. Bloody evangelical farming, for Murphy's sake!

Burt Libe
PO Box 1196,
Los Altos,
Ca. 94022,
U.S.A.

Biodynamic house sounds too impractical and unfeasible for most. Much of Alderson's article seems too overidealistic, theoretical, and extrapolated. Has he personally constructed or worked directly with such an eco-system? If so, would like to hear more about what success or other experiences, if any, he's had with it.

Always happy to see continuing general discussions on science fiction as a literary art form. I've always had a persistent and gnawing curiosity as to when science fiction actually started - how far back? (By-the-way, digressing for a moment, Nikola Tesla is supposed to have coined the word "automaton" in the early 1900's.)

The gnawing curiosity rages on. Right now I'm hot on the trail of some early pre-SF works by Cyrano DeBergerac, Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton, Nicolaus Copernicus, and others. Success could result in The Mentor receiving some book reviews 300 to 400 years overdue.

Most of you know Cyrano DeBergerac (1619-1655) as the long-nosed flamboyant swordsman, soldier, womanizer, Rakehell of French history. How surprised I was to learn of his other reputation as a prolific writer. If you think that's interesting, Giovanni Casanova (1725-1798) also found time between sexual endeavors to scrawl out possibly an SF story or two. I'm searching for their works right now. So, it

seems, many colorful figures of the past are not far different from some of today's SF fans.

Galilei (1564-1642), Newton (1642-1727), and Copernicus (1473-1543) - even Da Vinci (1452-1519) also may have written early SF, quite possibly in Latin. (Never thought I'd have to hone up on my Latin to trace the early roots of SF!) These people, I would consider the more serious writers of the genre.

As I keep pressing backward in time, past the Renaissance, toward the Middle Ages, published works begin to suffer from intellectual stagnation, tyrannical restrictions, entwinement in religious zealotry, cultural decline, and widespread fear and ignorance. The earlier genre which preceded SF is commonly called "Imaginary Voyages". This also included such early fantasy tales as Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745).

Language barriers also arise; English fades away as a dominant tongue. Latin, Early Greek, and other dialects prevail. Dark-Age and early Middle-Age English differed radically from today's standard. It had strange words, extra Greek-like letters in its alphabet, many present letters in altered form, and throat-gagging pronunciations. In those days you simply didn't run down to your friendly paper-back publisher or crank up the nearest Xerox or mimeo. If caught doing speculative writing (assuming you were fortunate enough to be literate), you wound up in some dungeon as a heretic for such blasphemy. (Bet many pre-SF believers filled the ancient dungeons.)

Scribe-copying, even the earlier typesetting techniques, made book publishing a monumental labor, even for very few copies. Most information was gleaned through "sittings" and "readings" to the few who could comprehend. Therefore, any pre-1400 works most likely would exist in scrawled (almost unreadable) manuscript form. Also, I very much expect to find strong rudiments of SF in the Middle Ages and Dark Ages. Because many of today's SF fans - at least those here in the U.S. - exemplify (in their tiny realm) the same stultified fanaticism, occult fears, cult-worship, stifled dictates, and feudal submissiveness so rampant in these earlier periods of cultural stagnation.

Diane Fox
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Lakemba,
NSW 2195.

John Alderson's ecologically organised and solar-powered house is fascinating. It may appear in one of my future stories. I hope that when we get our own home built we can use some of the ideas here. (I suspect that a good deal of knowledge would be required to set it up in the first place, though. More than most people now possess. And more exercise of their IQs than they can handle.). "Worm burgers" sound yucky, and make me think of Martin Luther's Diet of Worms.

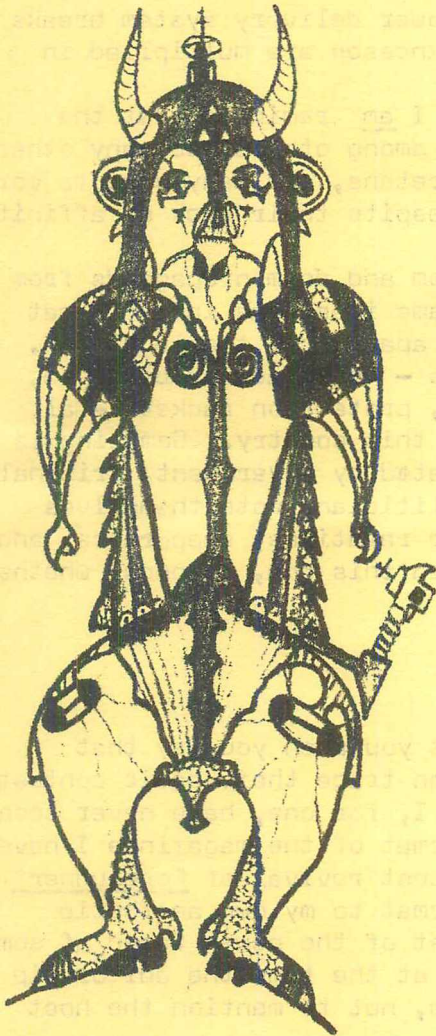
Nudity as a social trend might ultimately encourage the use of wool. Clothes of course would be worn outside buildings - especially in very cold or very hot weather. Nudity would make the skin more texture-sensitive; people might be less tolerant of non-natural fibre against the skin, and would go back to the softer texture of natural materials - cotton, linen and wool. I've met at least one woman who hated the feeling of nylon stockings and panty-hose, underwear, etc.

Sue's robot story (with Terry Jeeves' fine illustration) made me wince, it evoked an all-too-familiar sense of frustration and panic. I don't need an over officious robot to be put in this state, alas!

Another Spaced Out from Mike-I do hope he makes a book of these. Thought at first the stranded miner was a Russian, but then noted that the flag bore a pick not a sickle. (Wonder if the Russians would be first to colonise the asteroid best?). I loved the Angove/Alderson post-holocaust confrontation. Nice artwork and a good if somewhat nasty idea. Heh, heh.

Peter Kell's reply to Ralph Silverton was most apt. He will find the Kubin novel most interesting, disturbing and visionary. Also agree with his comments on obtrusive/unobtrusive technology.

The dislike people tend to have for technology is not anti-technology as such, but fear/distrust of large scale 'macho' or 'state' technology which seems mainly designed to coerce/control large masses of people rather than the environment. If it is aimed at controlling the environment it controls it by brute force rather than subtlety - using a cannon to swat a fly, etc. Defoliants, control of insects by large scale spraying rather than by breeding better insect predators, etc., using drugs to control 'hyperactive' children, etc are all examples of 'large' technology applied on a smaller scale. 'Large' technology is designed to increase its manufacturer's wealth and power, rather than to be used by individuals. Small-scale technology is used to improve the quality of life - to make it more comfortable, pleasant and interesting. We see the conflict between the two technologies in the Star Wars films - yet another reason for these films popularity.



/But Diane, using drugs to control hyperactive children does go for better quality of life - for the parents. And I wouldn't call breeding better insect predators a 'small' technological operation - imagine what happens if a point is overlooked in the insects' habits, or a new one rears its head and it all ends with the predators wiping out populations/vegetation with a far worse impact than the original insects made? And what of the 'large' technologies such as Weather Control, be it global or just State wide which will happen in the future? Not all 'large' or state technologies are bad. Child beating is a good example, on the other hand, of something that 'small' technologies may find it impossible to handle - it may take the state-wide resources of medical/law enforcement to

control or prevent satisfactorily. - Ron./

Raymond Clancy
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New York 10306
USA.

Terry Jeeves did a good job if my memory serves me. I seem to remember that the early science fiction was more science than fiction. There are many books on the science fiction shelf at the local public library, but they contain little science or literary merit.

Liked P A Kells' poem about the moon. Must forget paraphrasing to remark that I enjoyed Bob Smith's article. Not sure I agree with his conclusion, though I've met many in fandom who did. For me, it was a shared sense of wonder, fandom, of hope, prophecy, growth of critical faculty et cetera.

A Bertram Chandler helped me to a chuckle when I needed it very much. More than one. I agree with his conclusion. The reproduction of the lady on the page which ended his article - extremely impressive. And she - Art!

Glad to meet John Alderson and energy again. Still ponder on that picture in the National Geographic though - farmer in Indonesia, scarcely any expenses, and producing three times the amount of food as our highest technology does. Spaced Out reminds me how often our power delivery system breaks down, both locally and throughout this land. Man's weaknesses are multiplied in his creations.

R & R was full of fascinating comment. I am reminded that the runes of Northern Europe, the Ogham script of the Irish among others, so many others, seem not to have been derived from the Phoenicians or Cretans, and many scripts were written with what our scholars classify as alphabets, despite their back of affinity with the "original" one.

Steady stream of hysterical gloom and doom propagands from all the media here around New York. Doesn't have the same impact as in the Great Depression. The current generation has its own economy apart from the legal one. Bank-robbing, smuggling drugs, weapons, cigarettes, gems - the practice of arson, stripping cars and buildings, new or abandoned, piracy, protection rackets - all business, trade, service industry to the new people of this country. Gambling is a source of jobs and so income to very many, whether operated by government, criminals, or others. Bureaus swarm with well-paid parasites. Politicians vote themselves enormous salaries and the power to create jobs for their relatives, supporters, and favorites. As other countries are even more corrupt than this one, I wonder whether the world economy won't stand up this time.

Richard Faulder
c/- Yanco Agric.
Research Centre,
Yanco 2703.

Hmm, I think I must contradict you when you say that "fanzines published in Australia can trace their basic contests and layout back to two fanzines". I, for one, have never seen either Gryphen or ASFR, and the format of the magazines I have published - early Enigma's, the latest revival of Forerunner in its early stages, and my own Xenophilia owe their format to my own aesthetic predilections. I am sure the same could be said for most of the newer faned of some years standing now, had not seen many, if any, fanzines at the time the editorship of Enigma was thrust upon him, Jack Herman, Marc Ortlieb, not to mention the host of weird WAZines.

Oh, I wouldn't say that, Richard. Though the faneds haven't seen those zines I mentioned doesn't say they haven't been influenced by the zines following in their footsteps, and even if a faned hasn't seen any other fanzines, the format s/he does put out will (or has) still followed those zines. - Ron./

J. Gregor is going to incite some acid comments from some of the more militantly feminist fans, with his assumption that the place that women SF writers are coming from is the kitchen. Or is he just being stirring?

Peter Kells has an interesting point in postulating that true civilisation will only be achieved when the provision of the necessities of life has been taken over by, well, robots. I'm nor sure he's right - it could be that human beings need to feel some sense of

achievement in providing for their own needs. Taking his postulate as given, though, there is no way that such a civilisation (and it would be the first such, not a "return to") could be achieved without a drastic reduction in the global human population, to enable the planet to support such a high standard of living.

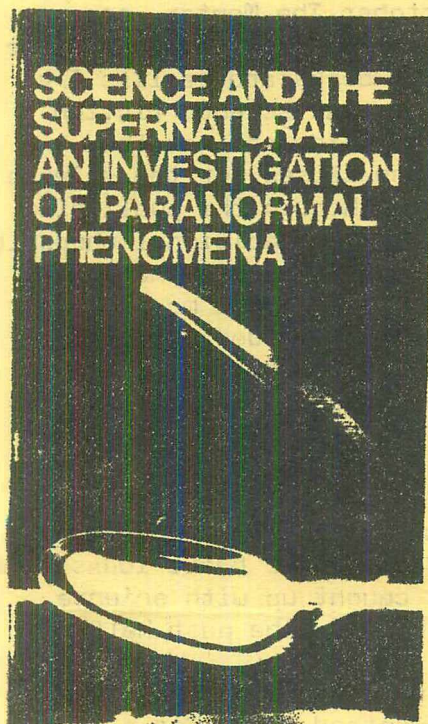
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Maryland 21740,
USA.

Terry Jeeves' article in the October The Mentor erases of the guilt I experience when I read lots of reviews in other fanzines of the latest science fiction books and realise I've not read any of those volumes. If the real science fiction is going, going, gone, maybe I'm not sinning against the literary gods after all. I imagine the causes for the science fiction situation are complex. There's a determination all through the publishing field nowadays to break free from the methods of the past: the traditional whodunit is almost extinct and replaced by suspense stories which concentrate on character or society rather than deduction; stories about the American West are mostly devoted to smashing systematically the image built up over the decades in cowboy stories; if this is happening in these and other genres, science fiction must also be affected by this half-conscious, half-id-motivated refusal to follow old patterns. Then there's the basic problem with science fiction: it took only a few decades for the writers to create excellent stories on all the themes that 20th century knowledge can consider valid, and the basic appeal of science fiction, its innovative contents and stretch of the imagination, weakened after time travel, human evolution, global disasters, contact with bems, and the other basic ideas have been converted into fiction often enough. Science hasn't caught up with science fiction but it hasn't provided ideas for any new basic themes in the past half-century.

Then there's the inability of publishers to survive without appeal to a mass audience nowadays. It's almost impossible to get newsstand space for a paperback or magazine which will sell only twenty thousand copies or so, a circulation which kept many prozines alive in the pulp era. The more copies of something you want to sell, the less likely you are to put into it something new and different enough to alienate the bulk of the public which wants more of what it's already enjoyed; thus the current mania for sequels to sequels and three-decker novels and reworkings of old characters or fantasy worlds.

Bob Smith's article this time is about the years when I was just resuming full fanac after having been semi-gafiated for more than a decade. So it's all the more nostalgic for me in particular, with its emphasis on fannish traditions which had extra appeal for me at a time when I was well rested in a fannish sense and more receptive to good fanac than I'd been in the 1940s or became by the 1970s. I'm sure Bob realises though, that the fandom is fan philosophy wasn't all-encompassing in the years he is writing about. Just like today, there were fans in the late 1950s and early 1960s who were a nuisance for overly combative natures, others who tried to use fandom for political purposes, and those who thought fanzines should publish no material other than articles about science fiction writers and their stories. The only trouble is, the fandom is fun adherents are harder to find nowadays because they're increasingly outnumbered. Sometimes I think there are just as many Lee Hoffmans and Shelby Vicks in fandom in 1982, but they are almost lost because the field has grown so much. Worse, those in this minority group don't seem as willing to write fanzines articles as they once did.

S.F. BOOK RELEASES.

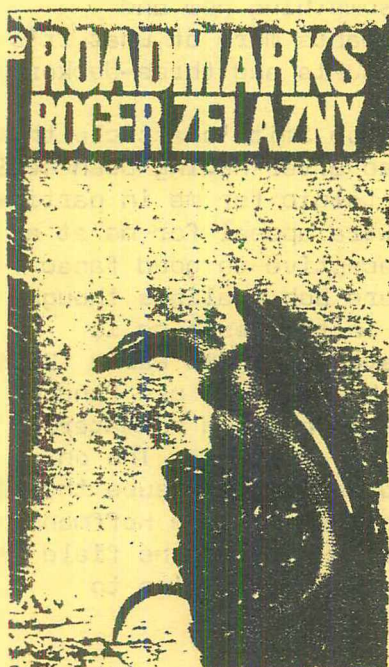


SCIENCE AND THE SUPERNATURAL - An Investigation Of Paranormal Phenomena by John Taylor. A Paladin Book, Distributed in Australia by Granada Publishing Aust P/L. 192 pp. A\$7.50. On Sale Now.

John Taylor is Professor of Mathematics at King's College, London and he brings his scientific training into investigating such paranormal events as Psychic Healing, Clairvoyance, Telepathy, Precognition, Psychokinesis, and many others, including SHC and spoon bending. This is the book to settle those queries from those readers with a "sensible", rather than a "believe anything" approach. Definitely recommended, though he does leave some weak points in his thesis, together with the way he carried out his research, and findings flowing from it.

Taylor also goes into such things as the likelihood of fraud, mischief and the 'willingness to believe'. When I first received this book, I was not looking forward to reading it, but found it fascinating reading, though it did crystalise much of what I thought myself.

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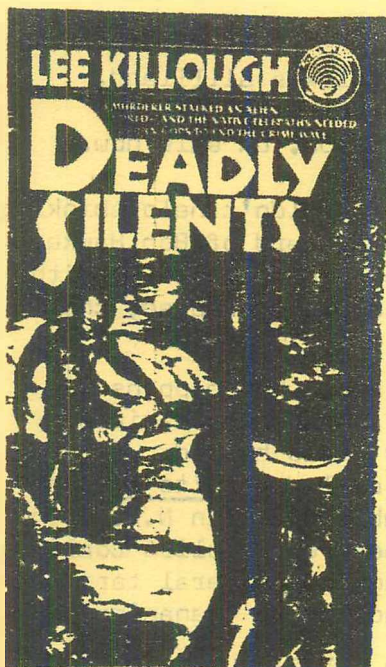
ROADMARKS - Roger Zelazny. Orbit Paperback, distributed in Australia by Tudor Distributors. 189 pp. A\$4.95. On Sale now.

This is a good book to have with you on any long journey when one wants to be engrossed and not notice the time going. The type to be read entire in one sitting.

The idea behind the novel is a bit off-the-track - for instance I can't really see it existing 500 years ago, but the pace of the novel makes it's tracks well. It is about a road which runs through Time, and the plot tells of one of the travellers on it as he goes along the Road trying to keep ahead of hired assassins from all Times; dodging some of the most ingenious killers in time.

This novel is a lot more easier to follow than a lot of Zelazny's other works - and is a joy to read. Recommended.

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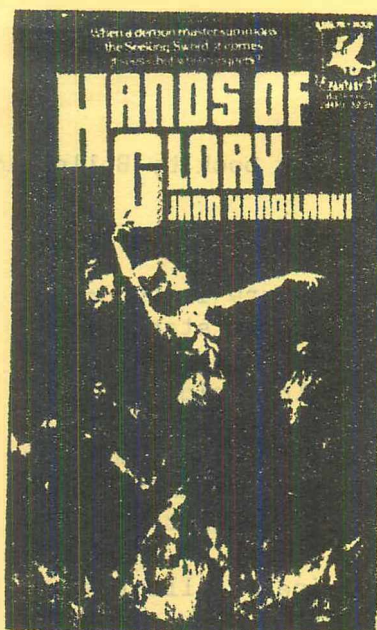


DEADLY SILENTS by Lee Killough. A Del Rey Book by Ballantine. Distributed in Australia by Tudor Distributors. 246 pp. A\$3.50. On sale now.

The back-cover blurb reads "Who was the cop killer?" This is quite a good sf thriller, with lots of action and clues to follow. The police force on a planet of telepaths attempts to find that cop killer before he/she can murder another cop (or citizen). The background is well thought out and the plot is logically followed through, though I did figure out who dun it before the secret was revealed - but not the 'motive'.

Overall I found this book an enjoyable read, and recommended.

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HANDS OF GLORY by Jann Kangilaski
A Del Rey fantasy by Ballantine. Distributed in Australia by Tudor Distributors. 295 pp. A\$3.50. On sale now.

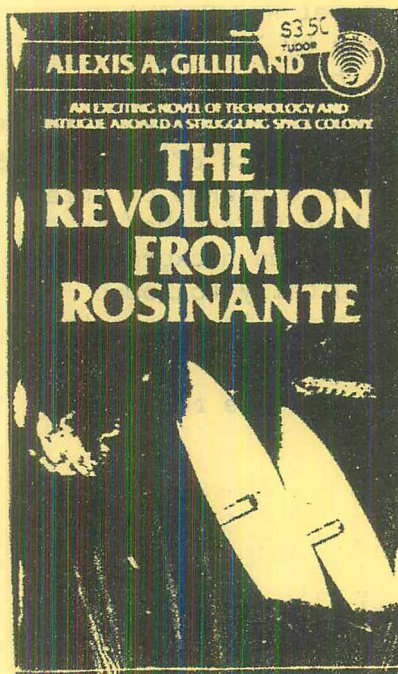
Gay Williams notified me that she had found the other novel by this author, with the "Seeking Sword" also involved, much of a bore to read. Thus warned, I started this rather thick paperback.

It is set in the 1500's and, but for the sorcery, and the seeking sword itself, the setting and the background of Northern Europe reads well researched and aids splendidly in the 'willing suspension of disbelief'. Though Christian theology is part of the background, it is the pagan myth which proves to be the stronger, and wins through.

Reading this book one believes it could have happened.. and it proved to be an enjoyable two hour read - and I think the reader would come out of it with better comprehension of what life was like back in that century.

Also recommended.

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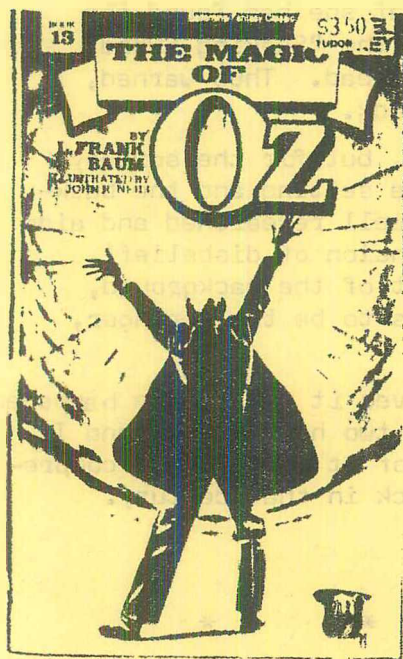
THE REVOLUTION FROM ROSINANTE by Alexis Gilliland.
A Del Rey book by Ballentine. Distributed in Aust.
by Tudor Distributors. 185 pp. A\$3.50. On sale now.

After finishing this novel I couldn't help thinking that obviously Gilliland has never heard of Bob Hawke. The activities of a certain Union had a lot to do with the plot of this novel, and it shows, I suppose, the primitive state of US Unionism.

The story is an attempt to show what happens if the present political climate of the North American Continent keeps on going the way it is headed. Set in the future when space colonies (called Mundito's) are being built in deep space; trouble brews in N.A. with the last flailing activity of the Creationist Coalition (sound familiar?) striking out against several targets, including the Mundito the protagonist is 'managing'.

The action is a bit show in parts, but if you are interested in L5 colonies - this is a book you may be interested in obtaining.

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THE MAGIC OF OZ by L Frank Baum.
Illustrated by John R Neill. A Del Rey book by Ballentine.
234 pp. A\$3.50. On sale now.

Not having read any of the OZ books before I approached this first OZ read with trepidation. Once started I found the writing flowed well and I finished the book entire between Sydney Central and Faulconbridge (1½ hours) in one sitting. The illustrations put the finishing touch to an enjoyable light read. Baum wrote a well scripted fantasy and did not write down to his readers, which too many writers-for-child en tend to do.

I do have a carp with the (original?) illustrator who, in one of his sketches illustrating soldiers with "waving plumes", showed the ordinary footsoldier of WW I - including boy-scout hat and steel helmet!

For a change in pace this book was a good light read -- well suited for any children from 8 to... 80.

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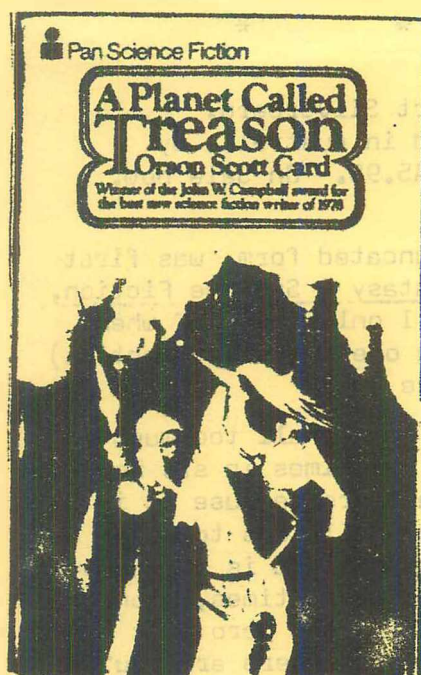
GLINDA OF OZ by L Frank Baum.

A Del Rey book by Ballentine. Distributed in Australia by Tudor Distributors. Illustrated. 256 pp. A\$3.50. Now on Sale.

This is the last OZ book Baum wrote before he died in May, 1919. It tells the story of how Dorethy and Ozma journey through the land of Oz to try to prevent a war between two 'tribes', one of which lived on a mountain - and had no brains, except for those in cans - and a lake dwelling people. As in other OZ stories magic of various types play a part, ' the logical development of which is nicely done. Though the books were primarily written for children, their appeal is wide and the books make an easily read fantasy series.

One of the interesting facets of the series is that the main (and most powerful) of the characters are girls (or women if their chronological age is taken), and the series is thus a good one to give to children, to get their minds sway from the straightjacket of society's sex roles.

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A PLANET CALLED TREASON by Orson Scott Card.

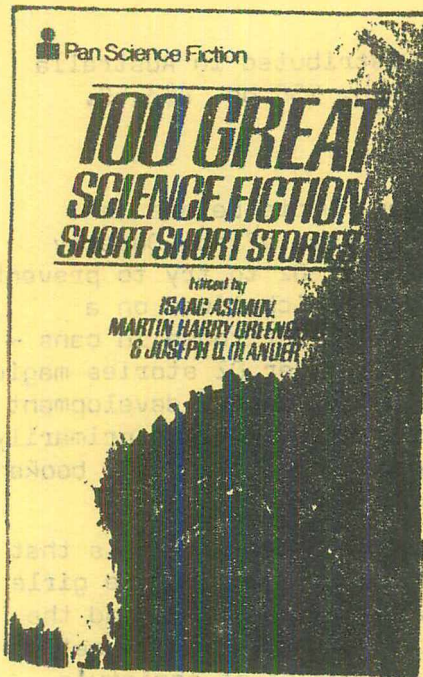
Pan science fiction. Distributed in Australia by Williams Collins Pty Ltd. 294 pp. A\$3.95. On Sale now.

I do not know what it is which does it, but I think that this book, with a little re-writing, could have been really great. As it is, it is a rousing 'quest' novel, though science fiction rather than fantasy - something along the lines of Lord Valentine's Castle by Silverberg.

Thousands of years before, the Republic had banished the dissidents to a harsh planet which had nearly no heavy metals. Over the years, the inhabitants, the descendants of mathematicians, geologists, communication experts, politicians, had worked to get enough iron together (within their own 'family') to build a starship and escape the planet - called Treason. The story follows Lanik Mueller, heir to one of the richest families as he tried to escape his body - which is capable of rejuvenating, but sometimes goes wild and rejuvenates extra arms and legs, etc, instead of keeping to the usual two of each. Actually I was surprised that Card didn't throw in a person whose body had gone cancerous and it goes wild....

Overall a good adventure sf novel, not too much on the heavy side, but good for a couple of hours entertainment.

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100 GREAT SCIENCE FICTION SHORT SHORT STORIES.

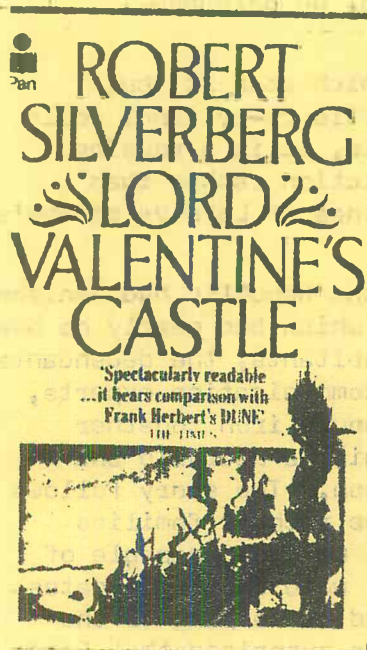
Edited by I. Asimov, M Greenberg & G Olander. Pan science fiction. Distributed in Australia by William Collins P/L. 301 pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

Science fiction is renown for its short stories. This is a collection of short short stories - most are not over four pages in length. They are the sort used by the prozines to fill spaces - twist endings and puns abound. Since Asimov is one of the editors we have his 'one line' introductions - which the book could do without.

If the reader is just starting out reading sf, or is, like me, a long term reader, then this volume will still suit him. It has stories from many sources - and most of the stories are very good. There is some fantasy (about 20% of the stories are fantasy), but in a volume like this the reader needs some change of pace. I read through in two sittings, which is unusual in a book of stories this short; one tends to read several and then get bored.

Another recommended volume - if you have read a lot of sf there will still be stories in here you won't have read.

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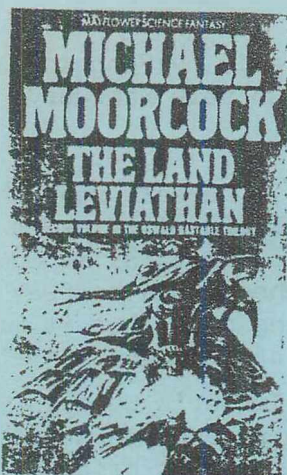
LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE by Robert Silverberg.

Pan science fiction. Distributed in Australia by William Collins P/L. 506 pp. A5.95. On Sale now.

This novel, in somewhat truncated form, was first published in The Magazine Of Fantasy & Science Fiction, where I first read it. In fact I only buy F&SF when either it is a special issue (eg one author collection) or it has serialised a novel like this.

A quest novel is something we see all too much of lately - in fantasy mainly, but sometimes in sf. Most quest novels are used by newer authors because it is less a strain on their writing capabilities to carry on the plot because of the fast action. LVC is not a novel of this sort. It moves, ponderously at times, along its predetermined course (after all, the hero must win through at the end of his quest, else where are you?) to it's finale. Because of Robert Silverberg's status as an sf writer, the novel is much more than that run-of-the-mill quest novel. The cover of the paperback compares it with Dune. I don't think you can compare them- they are in separate categories.

If you haven't read LVC I suggest you go out and buy this book - it's well worth the \$5.95 asked.



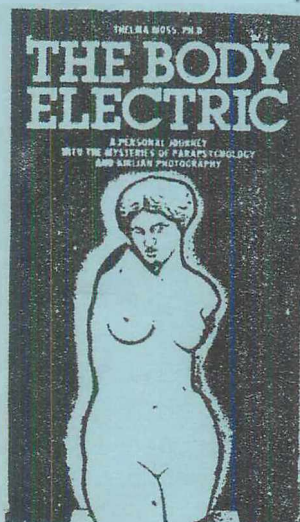
THE LAND LEVIATHAN by Michael Moorcock.
Mayflower science fantasy. Distributed in Australia
by Granada Publishing (Aust) P/L. 173 pp. A\$4.95. On
sale now.

This is the second volume in the "Oswald Bastable"
trilogy. If you haven't read the first - don't worry,
you can pick it all up without trouble.

Set in an alternate "present", even this novel
has that atmosphere engendered by Moorcock during the
last couple of decades, as evinced by the Cornelious
novels. This book follows the adventures of Oswald
Bastable as he journeys across a devastated earth in the
early years of the 20th Century. The novel starts off
somewhat slowly as it switches main characters a third
of the way through - disconcerting to say the least;
though with the emergence of the character the Black Attila,
who reminds me of another character in the Iron Dream..
the action hotted up.

This is another novel which is not for those thought-
ful readers, but for those with a few hours to kill. Or
for those who like the Moorcock style.

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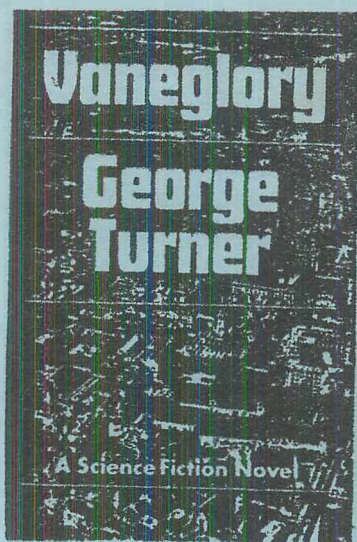


THE BODY ELECTRIC by Thelma Moss, Ph.D.
A Paladin book by Granada. Dist in Aust. by Granada Pub.
(Aust) P/L. 256 pp. A\$8.50. On sale now.

I commenced this issues list with a book which explored
scientifically the world of the Psychic. This is another
of those books, apparently in a series put out by Granada.
This book however, is from what one might call the other
side of the fence - it presumes that the phenomena exists,
and then tries to prove it. This rather long book is
really an autobiography about how Thelma Moss set out to
prove that Kirlian photography works, and it details her
work from the beginning through to when her research was
abruptly terminated. If nothing else it gives a glimpse
into the work going on behind the Iron Curtain and how the
talks and lectures for these types of subjects are run
and the frustration involved.

This edition has eight pages of black-and-white
kirlian photographs, which illustrate the text. Paladin
books are very well presented on first class white paper
and are well printed. Oh yes, if you saw the special on
TV on Kirlian photography -. Thelma Moss was one of those
who did the background for it.

If you are interested in Kirlian photography and
parapsychology in general, this book is interesting reading.



VANEGLORY by George Turner.

Faber & Faber. Distributed in Australia by Penguin Books Aust. Ltd. H/C. 320 pp. A\$14.95. On sale February.

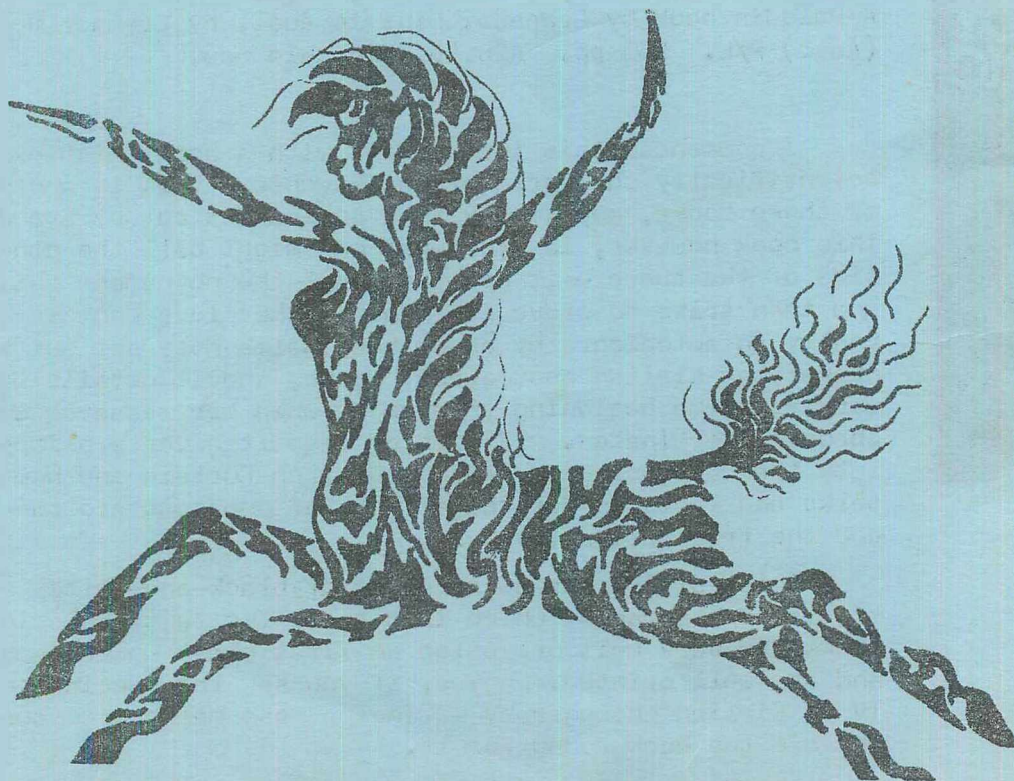
This is the sequel to Beloved Son. I haven't read the latter and to adequately enjoy this novel I think it essential that Beloved Son be read first, as it would aid understanding of this novel. When I was halfway through this, it seemed to be slowing down, but it got into stride again in the last part of the second half.

The jacket blurb says "George Turner's Beloved Son was the first volume in what is now recognised as one of the outstanding sf achievements of the past decade". Which is interesting, since the last volume hasn't been published and this is the first time Vaneclory has seen print. Talk about running off at the mouth.

Set in the years 1992 through to 2037, the novel follows the careers of Will Santley, Angus, and Donald Baird as they wend their way through the intricate plot.

Except for a few rough edges I found this novel most enjoyable and a cut above the space operas flooding the market. Definitely a contender for a Ditmar.

* * * *



(Julie Vaux)