

THE MENTOR 49

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THE MENTOR

SCIENCE FICTION

APRIL 1984

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ARTWORK: Front cover -- Kerrie Hanlon.

Woe! Woe! No other artwork.
What with Leigh Edmonds back-
sliding and having sf in his
fanzine -- next thing he will
have cover and interior art.
And I'll have none! Artwork
is wanted -- both interior and
covers.

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RON'S

ROOST

TO ROOM OR NOT TO ROOM

Over the years the business of running Cons in Australia has not changed to any great extent. The one noticeable thing that has changed is the number of fans coming to the events. This has created some problems as well as highlighting others.

I have just finalised the books for MEDTERK 84. I was roped in as Treasurer because Susan knows it is almost impossible to get money out of me, and she thought this would be a Good Thing for a Convention Treasurer. So far all the Cons I have been Treasurer for have ended up in the black. Including this one. One of the things I did find that gave us most concern was the Convention Rooms themselves. The idea with Con Rooms is that you get a certain number of fans living in/rooms booked, and you get the Convention Rooms where the Convention actually takes place, for nothing. You do have to spend other money, of course, like a Banquet or coffee laid on for the Convention attendees so that the hotel can get other money in, but this is small bickies compared to the Convention Rooms.

The system we used was that if a fan wanted a place to a room, they sent in a \$10 booking deposit. This came off their room total when they booked out (one of the problems being that they had to register in the first place - if they didn't register, their \$10 did not come off their room cost). This created additional hassles for the Con committee in keeping track of how many rooms were booked up full and having to book additional rooms when they too became filled.

Of course the usual thing is to have one double room left and a male and female fan who do not know each other and who you do not know, both wanting a double room. Talk about blind dates.

So, I was wondering if any fan has a suggestion as to the best way around this. The main thing is to ensure than the Con gets the 60/whatever rooms filled on the day. And you must have those rooms filled.

- - Ron.

GRIMESISH GRUMBLINGS:

ALL ABOARD FOR ARMAGEDDON

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

The organisers of LACON II are already trying to find approximately square holes for the square pegs who will be attending the convention. I have been asked to sit on the World War III panel. I replied to say that I am well qualified to do so, having been under fire in both the First and the Second World Wars - and also, come to that, the Sino-Japanese War. Now I have a further qualification. Not long ago, as I write this, I was treated to an extremely detailed scenario of the Third World War.

During the course of a long and misspent life one acquires both friends and acquaintances. The friends one does one's best to keep. Many of the acquaintances one would happily jettison - but it is those very persons who stick to one like the proverbial shit to a blanket.

For quite some years prior to, during and after World War II I was in the employ of the Shaw Savill Line, an English shipping company that maintained regular freight and passenger services between the U.K. and Australia and New Zealand. I was a frequent visitor to the port of Auckland. In Auckland there was a sort of unofficial SF fan club. None of the Auckland fans was, in those days, an intellectual giant. One or two of them could be classed as intellectual pygmies, the sort of people who combine with their addiction to SF of the most primitive kind a pitiful credulity insofar as the various nut cults are concerned.

One of them sort of cottoned on to me, despite my attempts to shake him off.

Time passed and I resigned from the employ of the Shaw Savill line and entered that of the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand. For a few years I never went near New Zealand; I was serving in Australian registered vessels trading around the Australian Coast. Finally, however, having attained the dizzy heights of command, I started to run trans-Tasman. Frequently, when I was in New Zealand ports, the local media would interview me - after all, literary shipmasters aren't all that common. Should I be in Auckland my faithful fan would inflict himself upon me. My last time in Auckland, as a shipmaster, he insisted that I take a precious book of his - the sort of book that I should never dream of buying or even borrowing. He thought that I, as a professional navigator, might be able to understand the peculiar mathematics with which this magnum opus was crammed. It was - in my opinion, although I did not tell him so - typical UFO rubbish, an attempt to prove that the Earth is emmeshed in lines of force woven by the Saucerians and with New Zealand as a sort of nexus. It seems possible that the author

pf this hogwash was the "very clever astronomer" responsible for the World War III scenario.

Early in 1975 I retired from the sea, thinking that I should never visit New Zealand again. But I was to do so as GoH at the NorCon, in Auckland. This received some media coverage. So, once again, that unwanted acquaintance got in my hair. But when the Convention was over I thought that I had seen the last of him.

And then he started making the occasional visit to Sydney on some business or other and, if I happened to be having an unlucky day, he would find me in. The last time -- and I hope that it is the last time -- was a few weeks ago. He announced, in a sepulchral voice, "I've come to talk about the breakdown of civilisation..."

This started me off. I earbashed him at some length on the subjects of crime in the streets, juvenile delinquency, drugs, corruption in high places and low places and all the rest of it. I told him what I would do about it in the extremely unlikely event of my ever becoming dictator. Then I ran short of breath.

He said, "I didn't mean that. I mean a complete breakdown, with only 10% of the human race surviving."

I asked, "A nuclear war?"

"No," he assured me, "there won't be a nuclear war. All these deep shelters that are being made are for Something Else..."

He has, it seems, this "very clever friend, an astronomer", who has told him that the world's governments are Keeping Something from their people. There is something invisible coming in from outer space, a large body, but it can't be seen...

"A Black Hole?" I asked.

No, it wasn't a Black Hole but it is invisible.

"Then how the hell," I demanded, "do this very clever friend of yours and his very clever coppers know it's there?"

X-rays, he supposed. And computers.

And so he went on and on it got worse and worse. I listened with a sort of fascinated horror as the scenario developed, turning into something that no competent science fiction author would be capable of writing even in an off moment. I realised that he actually believed, really and truly believed, all this garbage.

The Thing from Outer Space is going to pass through the Solar System without hitting anything of any importance but it will hit the sun. The force and angle of the impact will be such that a huge jet of molten matter will be ejected from the sun, aimed directly at us.

"But the world's governments are ready. The huge laser cannon have been set up..."

And the laser cannon will open fire -- but with only partial success. The head of the column will break off and continue on its trajectory and will plunge into the Pacific Ocean.

And the devastation will be dreadful. Tidal waves a hundred miles high... But before it hits the Third World War will start. The Chinese, knowing that their low-lying country will be wiped out, will march west, into Russia. They will over-run Russia..."

I asked, "And just when is all this going to happen?"

He said, "June."

I asked, "This coming June?"

He said, "Yes."

Trying to make a joke of it, I said, "This is rather awkward. My wife and I are supposed to be flying to Japan at the end of July and we always like to make our bookings well in advance..."

He told me, "Nothing will be flying."

I said (I was beginning to lose my temper), "And, if you're right there won't be any fucking Japan to fly to either."

He ignored this. "And then the Chinese will march into France. And then the French and the Chinese will invade England. But the young king and his queen will take refuge in a deep shelter in the Welsh mountains..."

But at last there was a ray of sunshine. After all the wars, earthquakes, tsunamis and whatever the Earth's climate will have changed and Samaria will have become a land flowing with milk and honey. There the surviving 10% of humanity will go (standing room only?) to live happily ever afterwards under the benign rule of Charlie-boy and Di.

Unwisely, perhaps, I tried to argue. I pointed out all the absurdities and unnecessary complications of the scenerio. I asked just how this "very clever astronomer" knew what was going to happen? Did he own a Time Machine? Did he have precognitive dreams? Or what?

I got a reply, of sorts. Nostrodamus came into it, and the Book of Revelations - both red rags to a bull as far as I'm concerned. I still tried to argue but finally my patience was exhausted. I told my unwelcome visitor that Had work to do, and showed him the door.

I did not shake hands.

AFTERWORD.

Having finished the foregoing, but before posting it, I came across two more examples of End Of The World prophecy. The first was the news item about the astronomers in California who have calculated that a stellar object, with a family of planets, planetoids and comets, makes a close approach to our sun at intervals of several million years. The last such approach resulted in a collision of an asteroid with the Earth, as a result of which the dinosaurs become extinct. The next such approach is still a few million years in the future.

So, I thought, my nutty acquaintance's "very clever" friend mislaid a few noughts when he did his sums.

And then I was browsing through a pile of old magazines in the clubhouse. Among them was a trashy publication - I have very valid personal reasons for referring to it as such - which, among its many other sins, keeps a tame astrologer on the payroll.. Each week he makes short term predictions about people currently in the news and plays around with long term ones about the world in general.

Anyhow, he said that the years from 1983 to 1988 would be a disaster period. He said, too, that some NASA scientist, with time hanging heavy on his hands, had fed the prophecies of Nostrodamus into the main NASA computer. In my

opinion a classic case of GIGO - Garbage in and Garbage out. The scenario that he came up with was almost as bad as the one to which I was treated. An asteroid - not a hunk of sun-stuff - is going to fall into the Indian - not the Pacific - Ocean. After the resulting geophysical upheavals the Arabs, with Russian help, are going to invade and occupy all of Europe. There was no word of Charlie-boy and Di.

But the staff astrologer did not accept this forecast.

He says that the wandering asteroid is going to fall into the Pacific Ocean.

And now I'll throw in my own two bit's worth, irrefutable proof that not only are the world's governments Keeping Something from their people but that even the City of Sydney Council is doing the same. Around the Potts Point area there has been a proliferation of metal posts along the footpaths. It is generally supposed that these are to prevent motorists from parking on the sidewalk, although some say that when the oil wells run dry these are to be hitching posts for horses.

But I know the real reason.

After that asteroid falls into the ocean the mean sea level will rise considerably. Those metal posts are to be mooring bollards for the goldolas that will replace automobiles on our city streets.

And I didn't have to cast a horoscope, consult Nostrodamus or the Book of Revelations, or feed garbage into a computer to come up with that prophecy. I have no doubt, however, that if I had the time and patience to plough through the seer's doggerel I should find some quatrain which could be construed to forecast the flooding of Sydney.

But meanwhile I have no intention of trying to get a goldola-handling endorsement to my Master Mariner's Certificate of Competency.

- A. Bertram Chandler.

INTERVIEW: DAMIEN BRODERICK

BY D. JASON COOPER

At 38, Damien Broderick is one of Australia's better known science fiction writers, and is one of the few to have achieved some success in American markets. He has written three novels (Sorcerer's World, The Dreaming Dragons, and his latest, The Judas Mandala), edited one anthology (The Zeitgeist Machine), and one collection of his own short stories (A Man Returned).

Outspoken and provocative, he has been a journalist, an editor, an ESP researcher, and is now working on a mainstream novel with the support of a grant from the Australia Council.

Q: You were recently called one of Australia's leading science fiction writers. If you were to give a list of Australia's top ten, what would it be?

A: I don't think I'd be able to find ten. There are probably only five or six professional writers in this country who write science fiction. And even then, there are difficulties. Take Cherry Wilder; she lives in West Germany and was born in New Zealand, but most people including herself would identify her as an Australian because she lived in Sydney for a long time.

But for a list, I'd have it:

1. A. Bertram Chandler (author of fifty sf novels)
2. Lee Harding (Displaced Person, The Web of Time, etc.)
3. Cherry Wilder (The Luck of Brin's Five)
4. Damien Broderick
5. George Turner (Boloved Son, Vainqlory)
and maybe
6. Jack Wodhams (Looking for Blucher, Ryn, Future War)

Beyond that there are just people who have been published here and there. There's a fellow, Wynne Whiteford, who got some things published in the 50's, and has had a couple of things published lately - Breathing Space Only and Sapphire Road.

Of the lot, Lee Harding is possibly the best-known. But now he says he doesn't want to be known as an sf writer any more. He's even gone as far as to say Displaced Person is not a science fiction novel, as sf readers have considered

it to be, but a fantasy or psychological novel.

Q: What about people like Bruce Gillespie, how do they fit on your list? Bruce Gillespie edited SF Commentary and the book Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd.

A: He's a critic, not a creative writer. I wouldn't include him on the list of writers.

It's funny, too, but Australia has a reputation all out of proportion to numbers because of our critics -- including Bruce Gillespie, John Foyster, and Van Ikin.

But much of this criticism occurs in fanzines or small circulation magazines, so Australians as a whole don't realise we have this world-wide reputation. But here again, some of our best critics have gone overseas. For example, Peter Nichols, who edited the critical journal, Foundation, and the critical work, Explorations of the Marvellous, was originally an Australian. He's been in Britain for about fifteen years, now, though.

Q: If a top ten of Australian science fiction writers were being compiled ten years from now, how do you think it would look? Where do you think you'd be placed on it, and where do you hope to be?

A: I don't think I can reasonably answer that question as a writer. For one thing, I suspect that in ten years writers won't be writing much sf, but will be writing many things that are extensions of sf.

For example, my The Zeitgeist Machine had in it stories by Michael Wilding and Peter Carey which were obviously based on wide reading in sf, but also on Latin American writing. I see a fusion between this new Latin American writing, which concentrates on questions of reality, and science fiction. This fusion will be the trend things will go in sf -- there will be an end to galactic empires, but instead there will be distortions of reality for symbolic purposes.

Q: Do you see any connection between this and surrealism, which uses psychological changes in a character for symbolic purposes?

A: The 'New Wave' in science fiction, which had its peak in the 1960's, added surrealism to sf, but it didn't go anywhere with it. Science fiction plays on metaphor so constantly, it makes real life densely imaginative and intensely symbolic. Surrealism looks to the internal environment, while sf looks to the external environment. This, incidentally, makes sf more than dream images, as some people think it is.

A good example of the difference between sf and surrealism is Bladerunner. The reality is called into question, not through the person being uncertain about reality, but through the reality itself having an uncertain element in it. It's something people readily grasp, as surrealism isn't, even though the author, Philip K. Dick, was thought to be on the surrealist end of sf.

Q: You've mentioned Australia has a reputation for criticism, if not writing sf itself. How do you view the Australian sf publishing industry? How is it shaping up?

A: It hasn't improved much. Very little gets published by major publishers. An exception is my and Rory Barnes' novel, to be published by Queensland University Press.

It's a novel set in a galactic empire of the sort found in books like Asimov's Foundation. But we take the view that people in such an empire don't necessarily relish living in it. We take the view of young rebels, who are about as successful against the empire as anyone would be against such an edifice -- they fail.

The book is a metaphor for opposition to Vietnam or today's technology, but we've pushed it as far as it would go. We've developed today's technology to its limit, so we gave everyone immortality and instantaneous transport between planets without energy expenditure. And we ask whether it would be better to live forever if power was thereby consolidated forever in the hands of a small clique.

It could take an adventurous publishing house like UQP to publish it. It's not really a run-of-the-mill book. It doesn't even have a plot outside the string of battles in it.

As for local publishers, there's only Norstrilia and Void specialising in sf. Norstrilia publishes as and when it can get the money or grants from the Literature Board of the Australia Council. But Norstrilia's moving from the strict 'sf' field, and is seeing the interface between sf and the mainstream as producing better work. This is what they did in publishing Gerald Murnane's The Plains. And that book has received good reviews from the literati of this country.

Norstrilia is also publishing Lavington Pugh, which is a humorous novel about someone growing up in the 60's, who becomes disillusioned and eventually goes mad. The only thing that makes the novel sf is that the story is narrated by psychologists in 2001 who view his life by a projector that pulls images from the man's mind and puts them on a wall.

Void's efforts I don't regard too highly. They've published a fairly long range of books -- thirteen -- but still don't provide much of a selection. It's pretty well been a combination of the pretty rotten mixed in with the vaguely interesting.

I've only just decided that it was better he publish that than publish nothing. But, like Norstrilia, Void is on an amateur basis. Paul Collins and his friends pour in their own money, gain little of it back, and receive poor distribution.

Any writer worth his salt will work his way into the American market. You don't have to be unAustralian to do this, either. I got The Dreaming Dragons and The Judas Mandala published in the US, and they use Australian setting or characters. George Turner has been published both in America and Britain.

The Australian market is too small to make a living by. But equally, it's nice to see stuff reprinted here. My Dreaming Dragons was published in paperback in America and in hardback (Norstrilia) and paperback (Penguin) here.

Q: There seems to be a struggle in sf between those who seek action and those who seek a message. Which side would you see yourself being on?

A: I don't think there is a dichotomy between action and message. Action may tell a story, but it can also provide a basis for giving a message. Robert Heinlein is an example of this. He's been writing action plots for years, and in them he's been giving a message about a certain right-wing way to live.

Perhaps there is a dichotomy in sf now -- between the interior and the exterior, or the nature of character and... something. That a question I really can't answer.

For myself, I'm more inclined to favour fiction which requires effort to read. I'm less in favour of adventure and more to other concerns of character and content. But then again, the Americans have specialised in the fast-paced style of fiction writing, and I like that a lot.

I suppose whatever the two sides are, we need both. We couldn't exist on a diet of Henry James on Mars.

Q: Of the books you've written or edited, which is your favourite and why?

A: I'd have to say The Judas Mandala. That's a sort of time travel story but it has a complicated structure of a time loop patterned on the Yin-Yang. The Yin-Yang being two fish eating each others' tail.

I wrote it between 1967 and 1981, so I started it in my early twenties, when I was trying to write complicated material, and trying desperately to gain the freedom to use poetic writing like Samuel R. Delaney. But I found it too difficult to complete.

Several times I tried to get a publisher to take it, but they all said it was too complicated. I would put it away and then, later, rewrite it and try another publisher. In retrospect, I see I could write it up to a certain point, and then would have to wait until I could write more.

In 1981, Pocket books accepted it. I went to the USA for several weeks to work with the editor, to hammer the book into its final shape.

I like it best because it's a record of where I've been.

Q: What qualities does an sf writer, or aspirant writer, need in Australia today?

A: The principle thing is an inheritance from a rich aunt. Second is a capacity to go overseas at regular intervals because it's much easier to do things when you're in touch with the editors. This may seem self-evident, but I hadn't realised how important it is until I went over and the editors became real people to me and I became a real person to them.

Another thing you need is an agent. Posting things back and forth overseas takes too long and costs too much. In sf, fans often know each other throughout the world, so there is a chance someone overseas will act as a mail drop for you. If you can find someone who'll repost rejected manuscripts, this will save a lot of time. But it also depends on the good will and personal efficiency of someone else, and that can be a problem.

The most important thing, though, is that you have to come up with the goods in the first place. My current agent sought me out on the basis of some published stories. If you can get some things published, you can use those as your credentials.

I would agree with George Turner, though, and say you should be Australian and not try to imitate the American or British writers. Though in my case the templates were put in so far they over-rode anything else.

Q: Reviewers of The Dreaming Dragons have tended to note a certain fluidity of style, and The Judas Mandala shows this as well. Sorcerer's World, however, didn't show this same fluidity. Have you been working towards this style, or has it come with the type of material you are now handling?

A: I like playing with style. Sorcerer's World didn't work because I tried to use the style of people like Jack Vance - a certain detached lightness to the characters. No matter what the danger, they always treat it with a certain irreverence.

In The Dreaming Dragons I wanted to use a conventional narrative voice. I used it because that book has various states of consciousness in the characters through which the reader views events. To disguise this, I used the third person, present tense, so as not to alert the readers to the shifts of consciousness involved.

I think different voices create better textures in the stories. For example, in The Dreaming Dragons there's a section written as the diary of a

Russian scientist, so I naturally changed voices for that role.

The Judas Mandala does much the same thing. Every other chapter deals with what the main character couldn't know because it's still in the future, but I keep it in the present tense.

And even though she experiences other people's lives directly, I keep it written in the third person.

A: How do you compare this with mainstream uses of the same techniques?

A: Science fiction extends the mainstream techniques it uses, and the technique extend sf. The techniques are being used in ways their inventors never would have dreamed of, for purposes they wouldn't have put them to. But I believe many of the techniques are better suited to sf than mainstream writing.

Q: Is there any final comment you'd like to make on science fiction in Australia, or your position in it?

A: Just that I find it strange that people like Lee Harding and myself are being honoured by science fiction fans at just that point when we are leaving the field. I know I have ambiguous feelings about this when fifteen years ago I couldn't think of anything greater than being quest of honour at a science fiction convention.

I can only hope sf readers will follow people like Lee Harding and myself into new fields. If they don't, I can see nothing but stagnation and trouble for sf.

-----oo0oo-----

MICHAEL HAILSTONE

THE LEADEN AGE

Some time ago I had ideas of contributing a regular column to The Mentor, calling it perhaps something like "Hailstone's Anomalies". So far I've written three articles, which have appeared in Mentors 42, 43 and 44, on topics such as the dreaded greenhouse effect, perpetual motion and a conspiracy. I was going to write one on the ice-ages, inspired by Fred Hoyle's book Ice, but ran out of steam. Just lately I began to write another article, a cheering piece inspired by an article by John Bribbin in Analog, saying that we need not be unduly depressed, because there is reason to believe that nothing much might happen to the climate in the near future owing to changes in the atmosphere, somewhat vindicating the intuitive acceptance I expressed in "Of earthly and martian physics" in TM 42. However I found the going very hard; while I've had plenty of thoughts banging around in my head, (which could be a good sign,) I've found it very difficult putting them down on paper, trying to organise them into a coherent article, trying to get them together in a way that makes sense.

Why? Well, for a start, one thing I don't want to do here is bore you all with my personal troubles, but I need to tell you a little about them, because I have reason to believe that a lot of my trouble might be just a magnification of that unwittingly suffered by the whole society. In short, the recent trouble that has so sapped my creativity and energy, while perhaps attributable to recent circumstances in my life, is but a more extreme manifestation of a mysterious illness that has beset me for the last ten years. Just what it is I don't know; it is easy to diagnose it as chronic depression due to past (and present) losing battles with the world and so forth, but we are all too prone to fall into the trap of looking for single causes, that is, that an illness or phenomenon must be due to either one thing or something else, when in fact the real world is pretty complex, and there is more often than not a multitude of causes or contributing factors. And there are a number of possible causes of such complaints as mine. Five years ago I heard on ABC Radio about a thing called Royal Free disease apparently caused by a virus, while an early issue of Scientific Australian (October 1977, I think) had an article on some condition somewhat akin to diabetes, though not fatal. And from someone so humble as Arthur Jones, who wrote in his cycling column in the Canberra Times at the end of April 1983 musings on the effect

of heavy metals in the body.¹ Now, on hearing about Royal Free disease, I consulted a physician. My mother told me about a friend of hers who had done likewise on suffering the same symptoms, with the result that the doctor found a high concentration of lead in her blood. However the physician told me that all my tests turned up normal; the assays showed no unusual concentration of metals, heavy or otherwise. This seemed to suggest that my problem was psychosomatic, but this was only suggested, not at all proven.

There have been many theories on the cause of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Scholars love to trot out pet theories that some historical event was caused by some particular thing or other, depending on their particular discipline. Thus Rome fell because its society became decadent, fat and hedonistic, feeding the public with bread and circuses, or it fell owing to disease, or maybe somebody else will show one day that some change in the climate triggered its downfall. Not least among these theories is that the Romans, or at least their ruling class, went soft in the head owing to poisoning from drinking water carried in lead pipes.

I am not knocking any of these theories, only warning against the trap of thinking that it had to be one or another of these causes, when it was most likely a combination of all. Roman civilization provides an interesting comparison with our own, for of all the civilizations that have flowered over the last 3000 years or so, Rome seems the closest in spirit and lifestyle to our own. And I don't mean that as a compliment. (Well, according to Horselover Fat, the Empire never ended.) The lead poisoning is an especially appealing comparison. Of course we denizens of the twentieth century know lots of things those ignorant unscientific ancients didn't, like we know better than to run our drinking water in lead piping. How could those ancient Romans have been so ignorant and stupid? I've got a better question: With all our wonderful scientific knowledge, how the hell can we, without the excuse of ignorance, go on being so utterly stupid?

No, instead of using lead in our waterpipes, we go one step further and do something even worse, at least two things in fact. One of these has also to do with our water, but I shall deal with the other first, since it has to do with lead. No, we don't put lead into our water; instead we pour it into our air. Well, it is actually added to petrol, and our cars spew it into the air.

As you all know, tetraethyl lead is added to petrol to improve engine efficiency, to stop high-compression engines from knocking. Lead oxides would become deposited in the engines, were it not for the addition of the lead scavengers, ethylene dichloride and dibromide, which form gaseous lead halides, of which 70 to 75% are pumped out the exhaust. The average car pumps out 0.05 grams of lead for every mile travelled. This means that 4200 tons of lead are pumped out throughout Australia every year, 1000 tons in Sydney alone, and no doubt another thousand in Melbourne. Some of this stays in the air, to be breathed in; according to Paul Ehrlich, intake from breathing urban air is around 0.02 milligrams per day, of which 40% stays in the body.

Now lead of course is a cumulative poison; once absorbed, the body can't get rid of it. This is not strictly true; some is excreted in shit and piss, and maybe in the hair. But most important is that the fate of the lead depends on whether it is in organic or inorganic form. Inorganic or metallic lead (such as in the Romans' pipes) goes for inorganic centres like bone, but organic lead penetrates the blood-brain barrier, and this includes the lead in our exhausts.

The above facts and figures are taken from the July 1978 Scientific Australian, which however makes no mention of the schoolchildren who collapsed from lead poisoning in Sydney a few years ago. This made news in as eminent a journal

as New Scientist, in which I saw a letter from one of the pro-lead brigade in Australia (either Sydney or Melbourne) decrying the "emotional" reaction of those concerned about lead. Isn't that a wonderful word, emotional? Just the kind of cold hardheaded practical word to demolish your opponents. I mean, if you want to poison the world or blow it up, the way to deal with those who object is to discredit their arguments by calling them emotional. Mind you, this is literally true; most people who object to being poisoned or blown up or whatever do so because, mainly, they don't like being poisoned or blown up. I mean, what can be more emotional and irrational than that? I'm not especially keen on being crippled in the brain, so clearly my objection is emotional. (Mind you, I could think of an unemotional pragmatic argument too, but the leadlovers deal with such by turning a deaf ear whenever it suits them.) Furthermore, while some studies have been made of the effect of lead on children, very little if anything is known of the effect of organic lead on adults.

"High lead levels can cause headaches, sleeping problems and lack of energy." This is a quote which Arthur Jones quotes from an English cycling magazine, in his aforesaid article. He goes on to say that it seems that no such work has been carried out in this country.

And this leads us to the crux of the matter: What effect has lead already had on society as a whole? We can't all go on absorbing lead into our brains without being affected in some way. The concentrations of lead so far absorbed are small, as are its effects, but this is in fact doubly disturbing, because we don't know just how mentally impaired we are. It is not as if the hospitals were full of lead-poisoning victims. It is a very difficult thing to measure, for just what can one measure, and how can one make a fair comparison with the past, before we had organic lead to breathe? (To put it more technically, we have no reliable baseline.) One might argue back that such speculation is pointless in the absence of any knowledge of harm we may be suffering from lead. Okay, but I feel that there is evidence of this, albeit only vague circumstantial evidence, but I think the implications are too serious to ignore.

The evidence takes the form of something that I and others have observed about society over the last ten years or so. In short, there seems to have been a marked decline in the quality of life. People seem to have lost their spirit. There is some hard evidence, by the way: a survey carried out in Sydney revealed in 1979 that about a third of the population suffers from depression in varying degrees. This didn't make exactly worldshaking news at the time, but it strikes me as rather serious. Of course there's no evidence that lead is the cause; all I'm saying is that it could be one. Besides that I've noticed how folk have lost their sense of fun; nobody, or hardly anybody, whistles any more, although this was very common twenty years ago. Progressive thinkers have gotten bogged down in stupid mechanistic totalitarian ideologies. I remarked on this in a letter in TM 35, putting it down to our getting so steeped in doom and gloom, but is that all there really is to it? And then look at what has happened to science fiction. It has lost its former spontaneity; it might be very slick and technically professional, but it too has lost its sense of fun. It has degenerated, as Elton Elliott has pointed out in his column in Science Fiction Review, into a hybrid of third-rate fantasy and sword and sorcery. Science fiction, as I see it, has been cut down and gelded by imposing trendy fantasy values.

Most of us denizens of western civilization, and especially those of us of intellectual bent to be found in such pursuits as sf, have grown up in cities and therefore breathed lead-poisoned air for at least most of our lives. And furthermore, this has been getting worse all the time, especially over the last ten or twenty years. The lead has been steadily building up in our brains

at an ever quickening rate. We may not be actually sick, but our mental activity could have been impaired, indeed the whole body. It can be likened to a car engine running on only three or five cylinders. Is it any wonder?

There is at least one other likely cause, something we know even less about: fluoridation. Now for years one dared not even question the wisdom of fluoridation for fear of being branded some rabid rightwing nut believing in communist plots, or even some raving maniac like Colonel Jack Ripper, who is so crazy as to plunge the world into nuclear war. I even wonder whether this might not be a stereotype deliberately created automatically to discredit all objections to fluoridation. But there has been some rational scientific questioning of it lately, and it's my bet that it will turn out to be a ghastly mistake like thalidomide.

Some years ago, before there was much serious publicised misgiving about fluoridation, I found sympathy on this matter with (if I remember rightly) a staunch member of the Labor party, who told me that fluoride was used by the Stalin regime as a kind of tranquilizer in the water supply of its Siberian labour camps. This set me onto wondering whether this was responsible for the change I had noticed in Sydney since the sixties. Now, one thing this article is not about is conspiracy theories, but on the fluoride matter I feel I must be at least this harsh: The real reason for it is the aluminium industry's need to dump its waste, so, on the basis of some spurious dental research and some conveniently slanted statistics, together with a stereotype-myth about ratbags who believed in communist plots in the wake of the McCarthy era, the industry found it could go ahead and dump its waste in our water supply. On sober reflection, it does seem significant that the social rot began to set in within a couple of years of the beginning of fluoridation of Sydney's water supply in 1968.

ooo0ooo

Well, there has been a gap of several weeks between writing the foregoing and taking it up again here. The reason for this is that I thought it a good idea to read an article in the latest Simply Living (Vol.2 Number 1), before saying any more. Having read it now, I find the picture even more sinister than I thought, with even the hint of a conspiracy, though the author, a dentist named Geoffrey Smith, makes no mention of the aluminium industry. All I can do here is try to outline the most salient points.

Dr Smith pulls no punches on the issue. He says: "fluoridation is a hoax; and a potentially dangerous hoax. Its promotion has involved: scientific skulduggery; political and commercial chicanery on a grand scale; the deliberate destruction of the careers of dentists opposed to fluoridation; the vilification of eminent individuals; the distortion, censorship and suppression of damaging evidence and the fabrication of supportive data; and the existence of a secret society - Delta Sigma Delta - in dentistry, one of whose objectives is the unremitting promotion of fluoridation."

His words, not mine. It looks a lot worse than I thought.

"Fluoride" is more correctly known as sodium fluoride, but it's not called that, because this same chemical is used as rat poison. It is added to the water supply in a concentration of one part per million; this means that Sydney and Melbourne both use more than a ton of the stuff a day. It is therefore necessary to store large amounts of it near the water supply, thus exposing the population to the risk that terrorists, criminals or cranks could dump a lot of it in the water at once and poison everyone. Make no mistake: the operative word here is

poison, for that is what the stuff is.

"Proportional to its population, Australia is the most heavily fluoridated country in the world, with 70% of the population drinking treated water." No doubt about it eh? That's good old Oz for you, always ready to go overboard with every cranky idea cooked up by so-called "authorities", with no heed paid to the possible harm being done.

"In Victoria, an Act of Parliament compels all local authorities in the State to artificially fluoridate their community water supplies; failure to do so is an offence punishable with severe fines, and Clause four of the Act prevents any individual who might become ill from drinking fluoridated tap water, or using such water in a kidney home dialysis machine, from suing the water authority. Incidentally, all major hospitals throughout Australia now remove fluoride and other dangerous chemicals from water in dialysis machines."

That's the kind of thing that makes me, quite frankly, ashamed to be an Australian. Despite all our jingoistic bullshit about being "young and free", we just gutlessly and spinelessly sit back and let petty bureaucrats pass the most draconian laws like that. Maybe this is just a way left over from our convict beginnings. Besides, even without such totalitarian laws, I find it utterly disgusting that one should be forced to drink water doctored with some gunk or other that some group of so-called experts has decided, without our consent, to be best for us.

I remember those pro-fluoride plugs they used to run on television over twenty years ago; the story was that in other parts of the world, presumably Europe, the water contained natural fluoride, which our water for some reason lacked, so it was a good idea to add it artificially to our water, so that we could enjoy good teeth like those overseas. And we all believed that lie for years, though we probably all know how that they tried to bring in fluoride in Europe too, only it has since been rejected there, once it was realised that it is harmful. How did this big con-trick get pulled on us in the first place?

The story begins in 1882, when the secret dental society, Delta Sigma Delta, was founded at the University of Michigan in America. A Victorian Chapter of the society was established in 1927, and other Chapters soon followed in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.

Until the second world war the society was nonpolitical, then suddenly, in 1945, it had a major issue to promote: fluoridation. That year the first two experimental fluoridation projects were started in America, one at Newburgh, New York, the other at Grand Rapids, Michigan. The experiments were scheduled to run for ten years, after which the results were to be evaluated to see whether fluoridation worked and, most important, whether it could cause any harm. But instead in 1950, after only five years, the Surgeon General decreed that fluoridation was quite safe and highly effective in lessening tooth decay. This was before the permanent teeth that had developed under fluoridation had even formed!

The rest of the story is an incredible tale of the most shameless all-out campaign for fluoride and ruthless vilification of its opponents. It looks pretty clear now that the scriptwriter of Doctor Strangelove, like untold millions of others, swallowed the propaganda hook, line and sinker: only ratbags, cranks, flat-earthers and lunatics were against fluoridation.

Despite this however the great dream of worldwide fluoridation made little progress; indeed outside some pockets of the English-speaking world there was downright scepticism. Even in America opposition grew instead of dwindling. Slowly the fluoride bandwagon ground to a halt, when in 1959-60 it was almost overturned

for good by two eminent Australians. Professor Sir Arthur Amies, Dean of Melbourne's Dental School, and Dr Philip Sutton, a highly qualified dental scientist with a worldwide reputation, published a paper in the Medical Journal of Australia in February 1958, strongly criticising the methodology used in the first American trial . A year later Sutton published an expanded study in a book titled Fluoridation: errors and omissions in experimental Trials and printed by the Melbourne University Press. To many dentists and scientists around the world Amie's and Sutton's evidence and convincing and damning.

But what happened thereafter? The fluoride brigade hit back hard, firstly with the American Dental Association suddenly officially endorsing and approving the first fluoride toothpaste. Once fluoride was accepted in a toothpaste, the way was open for the unleashing of a whole range of other fluoride-containing products. Commercial television sold these products, and therewith fluoride, to the public. Dentists cashed in on what had become a bonanza, as fluoride became big business. The fluoride toothpaste market now reaps \$40 million a year in Australia and more than \$700 million a year in the United States. Meanwhile Sutton's work was suppressed in Australia; since 1960 generations of dental students have been instructed to ignore his studies, although his work is still recognized in 99% of countries round the globe as a truly outstanding contribution to science.

I could go on to tell of the findings of Dean Burk, who showed a correlation between artificial fluoridation and cancer, backed up by later findings on the possibly effect of fluoride on DNA, but surely I've said enough already. Smith seems to think that the fluoride hoax was perpetrated by a handful of his colleagues with the motive of furthering their careers and building thier reputations, although they never did any tests themselves. Instead they took everything told them by a group of Amercian dentists as gospel truth. Most countries heeded the warning bells about fluoridation, but not the good old land of Oz.

"She'll be right, mate."

Doesn't it make you proud to be an Aussie?"

For further details, those interested may consult: "Car exhausts: pumping lead into our environment", Scientific Australian, July, 1978.

"Fluoride: the frightening facts", Simply Living, Vol.2 number 1.

Another instalment of Dr Smith's article appears in the following number of Simply Living, documenting individual cases of fluoride poisoning. Fluoride has already killed.

- Michael Hailstone.

—oo0oo—

I GOT INFLUENCE

BY PETER BRODIE

3/1/85

QUARK SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE,
301 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 1PR.

Dear Mr. Ranklin:

You may be unaware that the market for 'correspondence' type stories burnt out years ago.

The mystical angle was interesting but the whole story was too close to the edge and we are not a fantasy oriented magazine, May I suggest a regular short next time? Though not acceptable, your work did show promise.

Yours

Sidney Greenfield

#

15/1/85

QUARK SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE,
301 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 1PR

Dear Mr. Ranklin:

I don't know what you're trying to prove by re-submitting THE MAGE, unless it's stubbornness. Admittedly, it did show some improvement in construction and the payoff was more feasible. But no, sorry. Once again, I suggest a short story?

Yours,

Sidney Greenfield

QUARK SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE,
301 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 1PR.

28/1/85

Dear Mr. Ranklin:

I was, to say the least, surprised to find that your MAGE story had come back to us again.

Practice makes perfect, they say, and I found to my surprise, many avenues in your piece that weren't apparent to me before.

The heroes duplicity and the transposition of the antagonist's involvement were far more realistic than before. While still not our type of story, you are obviously sincere in trying to improve your craft. Keep it up.

Yours

Sidney Greenfield

#

15/2/85

QUARK SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE,
301 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 1PR.

Dear Mr. Ranklin:

Getting to be great pen-aals, aren't we?

THE MAGE is definitely shaping up as an interesting piece. I'm quite amazed at both your show of intelligence in the re-writing and my lack of understanding of the basic truths inherent in the story.

I guess we can all learn. Almost there, don't give in now. But, how about changing the fantasy bit?

Yours

Sidney Greenfield

#

24/2/85

QUARK SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE,
301 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 1PR.

Dear Dean,

Well, I'll be buttered on both sides. When THE MAGE came in again I was stunned at the improvement in the whole. The dialogue between Mr. Crisp and Belamy was taut and believable. The beginning doesn't give away a thing and the ending comes as a great shock to the reader, who has been lulled into a false sense of security by your flowing prose.

Well done, Indeed! If only it weren't fantasy. Do you think you might see fit to change that? S.F. would benefit by the introduction of a new writer to the fold and I'm sure the readers would get as much of a kick out of it as I did.

Just a touch here and there and no one could define it as fantasy.

Hear from you soon

Sidney.

#

23/5/85

QUARK S.F. AND FANTASY MAGAZINE,
301 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 1PR.

Dear Dean:

Sorry for the delay, but as you see by the letterhead, we have changed our policy here at QUARK. After racing through your stunning MAGE story, marvelling at the serendip imparted by your protagonist, the inherent lack of necessity in the fifth letter from Mr. Crisp which led Beley to his final realization and undoing, I had to give in.

You have shown me what a blazing wonder great fantasy can be and I'm only sorry that I haven't published more of it in the past. But as you can see, all that has changed. Thank you for the chance to publish this marvellous piece, and thank you for opening my eyes to another dimension. Please Dean, more.

One final thing. I've sent THE MAGE over the Frank Velson at FUSION MAGAZINE in the States. I just wanted to show him what great talent is emerging on this side of the pond. Keep it up and the future is yours.

Thank you Dean

Sid

#

20/6/85

QUARK S.F. AND FANTASY MAGAZINE,
301 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 1PR.

Hi Dean:

Just a brief note about THE MAGE. Both Frank and I agree that you have a potential Hugo winner here. We've both submitted it for the short story award and Frank would like to republish it in FUSION, which as you know is predominately an S.F. mag. You came, you wrote, you conkered.

Just a little play on words to show the high esteem in which I hold you.

Now, what's next?

Anxiously

Sid

#

14/10/85

QUARK FANTASY MAGAZINE
301 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 1PR.

Dear Mr. Anders:

Your short, THE ROBBER, was fun, but we are not an S.F. magazine. You might try FUSION, Stateside. They still regularly publish good S.F. pieces.

yours

Dean Ranklin

Editor

—oo000—

JOHN J. ALDERSON:

THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

4. THE WOMAN-DOMINATED SOCIETY

(b) Where the Man is Treated with Honour,

UNDER STRESS

It is readily apparent that the type of society we have been discussing will come under stress when some of its essential features are attacked. There are two forms of attack as there must be in every society, the external and the internal. The usual form of external attack is simply an invasion by a foreign people with a different social system, but more subtly one which has also a different religion (or ideology) which is forced on the society. However, as religion forced on people are seldom very successful in the long run we may consider religion better as an internal attack because until sufficient of the native population are genuinely converted the acceptance of the community at large of the new religion is only a formality. This leaves an external attack as either completely overturning the law and custom of the society or displacing the society so entirely that they become refugees. What in these circumstances happens?

This society to be stressed must have its fundamental basis attacked. The fundamental basis of this society as we have seen lies in the land being vested in the women. From this flows the laws of inheritance which are through the female line. From this too flows the tendency of women to keep their family line "rich" in land and men by limiting the number of family heads to one daughter. As men are the main basis of the family wealth they are particularly prone to be the target of aggression, either in having all of the men the invader can catch killed, or castrated and made slaves, conscripted as soldiers and sent out of the country, or deprived of their political power, their industry and their honour. Thus the Greek men in New Testament times were stripped of their power by the Romans: consider how terrible the words of The Book of Acts are in the light of this:

"Now the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new." (17:21). Deprived of all political activity and unemployed they were harmless.

The Romans also made a point of conscripting vast numbers of the men in conquered countries and sending them to the other end of the world to fight. This stripped those countries not only of fighting men but of organisers of rebellion, industrialists and lawyers. The Australians in New Guinea and Papua in many places closed down the men's clubs to destroy the political clout of the men.

An attack by a foreign power is going to take one or the other of two forms if it is to be successful. Either the males of the country are pretty well supplanted by the invaders, particularly in the upper classes of the society, or the entire people are going to be dispossessed. The former case happened with

the Normans in Ireland, where as elsewhere the Normans won most of their battles in bed. But as English historians continually lamented the invaders became "more Irish than the Irish". Nor did anglicising of the country have any success at all until the Irish were totally dispossessed and the land given to new settlers, men and women. But as the native Irish were not completely exterminated the war has gone on, bloody and terrible, for getting onto four centuries, and despite modern Parliaments it appears to be Brehon law which prevails. I think that it becomes clear that the absolute extermination of a native race is virtually impossible and whilst some remain International Law is firm on the principle that in a conquered country the native law shall prevail. It is, I believe, merely a truism born of reality rather than the academic niceties of law. One could instance dozens of cases where occupation and oppression extending over centuries merely suppresses but cannot change the social fabric of a people. It is curious that recently the Greeks, in virtually the same words as Solon outlawed the payment of dowries inflicted upon them by previous invaders, in the latter case of course the Turks with a strange religion.

But what of the other alternative: the people completely dispossessed from their land? What must immediately strike the reader of Mead's Growing Up in New Guinea is that the Manus Islanders, though Melanesians, and though the type of woman-dominated society we are discussing, had no land. In fact they lived, apparently by the grace of their neighbours, in huts built on stilts in lagoons offshore. Recently, that is within several generations, they had been forced off the mainland completely. The women had no gardens and indeed apart from some offshore fishing and their bead-work were utterly dependent upon the men economically, and suffered accordingly. Fiercely puritanical, sex was restricted to one's spouse but love-play forbidden between them and allowed instead between cross-cousins whilst the men's economies revolved around their sisters, their wives being commercial rivals. The men's activities were circumscribed, they conducted high financial deals against future fishing ventures. Their clubs if they had any were of little importance, and singularly the communication with ghosts which was the source of power to most Melanesian men was vested in the women. To make matters worse for the women they had little or no access to herbs and so not only had no social position as healers but had no means of family limitation; not that the Manus birthrate was very high - the hardness of their lives saw to that, few men seeing their son's marriage. That is, they were dead before they were forty.

Yet, despite this, despite the loss of their land, the society is easily and readily seen as Melanesian and woman-dominated. In other words, once the idea that property belongs to the woman becomes part of the social practices of a society then those social practices prevail even when the women have lost their land. This is extremely important. We see too that the women have lost power and prestige in not being able to limit their daughters, though indeed, had they been able to it would almost certainly have meant the extermination of the people. We see too that social position is fragmented between sister, cross-cousin and wife, and of course mother, if still alive.

On the other hand they hold a fundamental and dread power in their ability to communicate with ghosts, but this was not exploited, being confined rather to the scandals of their relatives who had passed on. Which suggests that as politicians women have no initiative. The men, lacking the club, developed no religion and no political identity and no law, and not only no art but no appreciation of art. Had the women had gardens or the men had clubs the society may have advanced, but with neither it was perishing. But, notwithstanding, the type of society did not alter.

We may now pass on to what might be regarded as internal attacks on the social structure. I doubt if any internal stresses set up will be greater than

that caused by a new religion, or nowadays perhaps a secular ideology. We have previously discussed Egypt. Egypt was later invaded by the male-dominated Persians, the Greeks, the male-dominated Romans, Christianised, then subjected to and still occupied by the male-dominated Arabs... after the bulk of the people had become Christian. But the essential Egyptian does not seem to have changed and below the ruling caste, the lowest class of people, the original Egyptians seem to get along with the same social structure as ever they did.

Indeed, during the Christianising of the land, one unaccompanied by foreign violence and so affecting the roots of Egyptian society the deepest, we find that the religion of Isis and Horus, the "mother and child" became the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus, the "mother and child" and this view of Christianity has spread extensively outside of Egypt. Far from having been altered by Christianity **. The Religion of the Prophet, on the other hand, (although its devotees still occupy Egypt), has had almost all its permanent success in what are in any case male-dominated societies, but its character in other places becomes quite different. Thus among the Tuareg who are zealous Moslems, a man belongs to the tribe and caste of his mother, his children belong to his mother's tribe and family, and a man's heirs are his sister's sons. Here is an excellent example of conversion to Mohammedanism not in any way altering the social structure of the people.

It is fairly safe to say that Christianity has never altered a people's type of society, being by its very nature adverse to doing so, and Mohammedanism, though perhaps eager to do so has been largely, if not wholly, unsuccessful.

As inheritance is pretty essential to this type of society, what happens when a powerful "foreign" Government decides that things shall be different. Now this happened in England in the reign of Henry VIII. Previously a man's wife succeeded automatically to his estate on death, followed of course by her own children (not necessarily his). In order to perpetuate feudalism a law was passed limiting a man's heirs to those who bore his name. Immediately the English women began taking their husband's names upon marriage and becoming Mrs..., a custom not entirely unique or commonplace. Thus, so easily can a law be circumvented, and thus such laws are circumvented.

Attacks upon the payment of a dowry is usual. In essence it means that the wife's family shirks their responsibility towards the marriage and the bridegroom's family shoulders the lot. The whimsical farce of the bride-price paying for the pigs of the dowry is done away with and the bride-price remains without an equal contribution from the bride's family and the bride-price becomes an unashamed levy on the bridegroom's family, an admittance price to the bride's family by the bridegroom. Ironically by attacking the man it reinforces the mercenary nature of the marriage. Otherwise it alters nothing.

But the most subtle attacks on this form of society are made on the real basis of the woman's power, her menfolk. As mentioned above attacks have been made on New Guinea societies by closing down their men's clubs. The club becomes of course the focal point of attack. In some form or other the club is the seat of men's power and clubs are either suppressed or immobilised by the forceful admission of everybody, and in particular, women. These then become a mere social venue lacking political and commercial power and generally going downhill artistically and academically. For it must be realized that these clubs are also universities. In Melanesia they are also called "canoe-houses" and navigation is taught in them. Elsewhere, other things. In advanced societies clubs can become highly specialised and it is surprising what political clout even

** the essential social angle of the Egyptian religion affected Christianity greatly.

a Gun-Collector's Club can have. The time comes, as it has in some countries where by law women must be admitted to positions of responsibility in what are traditionally men's clubs with the resultant destruction of the ideas, ideals and principles of the club, which, if it continues to exist, degenerated to having a mere social function.

This is particularly so when clubs have become academies or religious institutions. In the one academic and in the other ethical standards plummet and creative thought ceases. So aptly put as where the vision ceases the people perish.

Other forms of attack on the men are financial and economic, but particularly social and psychological; all fundamentally taking the form of depriving the man of the honoured position he holds in society. The ultimate result, if the attack is successful is to deprive the society of its creative and driving force. Pursued to its bitter end the society will degenerate to the Women-Dominated Society where the men is held in despite, probably the lowest and most hopeless form of society, where, as Margaret Mead has pointed out, innovators are strung up by their heels.

Obviously such an attack would never come from the men who are mere pawns in the battle, nor from the matriarchs who might be considered their general. It must and does come from the "have-nots", those bitter, frustrated, childless women who have failed to become matriarchs and so obtained positions of power. It is essentially a form of vandalism where the "have-not" gets their thrill out of destroying, in such cases, a culture and civilization.

However this society has advanced and the only change that is possible is to go backwards. It cannot become anything else, regardless of what it done to it externally or internally.

- John J. Alderson.

The R. & R. Dept.



Diane Fox
PO Box 129,
Lakemba,
NSW 2195.

Steve Sneyd's The Ship of Gold was marvellous - an update of the old "Demon Lover" ballad. The bit about the claws and hooves was nicely grotesque and gruesome. A couple of places where the rhythm didn't run very smoothly, but the imagery compensated. And I liked the idea of a Black Hole as Hell - Black Holes seem to be death symbols and it is easy to see why.

John Alderson's series on Women Dominated Societies continues to fascinate. I wouldn't consider the New Guinea matrilinear society he describes as one where women hold much power. Doing most of the essential work is not holding power. Where men don't take much of a part in the raising of very young children, and there is no father/son inheritance system, any responsibility or power women may hold is the raising of young children (up to and including the right of "retrospective abortion") is of little significance to the fullgrown men. In fact, the men may be the ones who give the orders - "There's not enough food and the weaker duds are unlikely to survive anyway, so you'd better knock some of them over the head". Note also that girl babies are more likely to be culled off than boys.

To Roger Waddington - a lot of Australian SF has been published; if Ron wants a batch of mini-reviews I will be very pleased to supply. They would include Paul Collins Anthology, FRONTIER WORLDS, Wynne Whiteford's THOR'S HAMMER, Trevor Dohohue's SAVAGE TOMORROW, Russell Blackford's TEMPTING OF THE WITCH KING, and the recent Penguin publication A Bertram Chandler's KELLY COUNTRY. I also have Damien Broderick and Roy Barne's VALENCIES and M Banad Eldershaw's TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW recommended by Patrick White as not only the best Australian SF novel of all time but one of the best Australian novels of all time. I've got several other Australian SF novels I could write mini-reviews of too, including an old one called Mezzomerto which is downright strange and very readable.

[Any spelling mistakes in the above are translation ones from Diane's longhand to stencil. -- Ron.]

I have a copy of the Penguin edition of EPIC OF GILGAMESH, and I would like to let Mike Hailstone know that there is a fair bit in it about the Flood, nothing about spaceflight and UFOs as far as I can remember.

John Alderson
Havelock,
Vic 3465.

In THE MENTOR 47 Glen Crawford asks an interesting question and one I am not the best qualified to answer. However, I'll try and will bring to bear on the subject the aspects I am able to speak about by way of criticism and comment on the theory

he mentions.

Some scholars believe the Aborigine to be a fourth division of mankind (older anthropologists divided the human race into three sections in which they placed the Aborigine in the same as ourselves, the Caucasian). The reason stems, as far as I can see, from the belief that the Aborigine has been in this country some 40,000 years and thus too long to be a close relation. I don't wish to be unkind but I have had the sneaking feeling that there might be a sub-conscious desire to distance ourselves from the Aborigine. I might explain that the divisions of the human race are based on the hair. The Mongolian or typically Asiatic races have straight black hair with a diameter of .005 inches. The negroid races have a frizzy or crinkled hair, usually black, occasionally red. The Caucasian races have light wavy hair, brunettes approx. .0002, blondes .0015 diameter and red-heads even finer. The Aborigines are Caucasians under these definitions.

Now for my opinions. First, whilst man of some description may have been in Australia for 40,000 years and from my examination of archaeological findings I doubt this, there is no reason to believe they are the ancestors or even connected with the present day Aborigines. My reason for doubting this are based on linguistics and mythology. The local nation of Aborigines called themselves the Jajowerung - "the People who say ja when they say yes" and the werong means people or brother. This is but a dialect form of the Queensland "boong", meaning brother, and cognate with the Indonesian "bung". However half the tribes in the country and spread all over it have remnants of this root word in their tribal names, often degenerated to an "ng". I don't think this word could have remained part of the language for 40,000 years.

The mythological arguments against the long chronology is largely based on the song-maps. According to these the Aborigines landed on the S.W. coast and spread around the coastline either way and then into the centre. These song-maps are stories of the original explorers and refer to eminently perishable things such as trees and even longer abiding but still perishable water-holes. Admittedly the song-maps may be updated, but I cannot accept that human memory would preserve them in their present form for more than 5000 years.

Incidentally, the theory that the Aborigines were of a different racial group than ourselves runs into another difficulty with the Tasmanian natives who were definitely of a different racial type and who are usually believed to have preceded the mainland Aborigines. However, that baldly stated is the theory and my criticism of it.

On to THE MENTOR 48.

Apparently I trod on the political toes of Gail Neville and Joy Hibbert and I have no intention of bothering with their politics, which I daresay, like everybody else's politics, is based more on fancies than facts. Example: only extreme prejudice could have read into my article that I said women sapped men's energy. I was quoting the Melanesians who use the idea to bolster their clubs and keep down the birthrate. The women, after they have had a child, tend to encourage their men to attend to club affairs rather than have them home "making babies". I dare say men do "sap" women's energies, but none of this is revelant. If you want to pursue the question further, then consult the "Ages of the People" in the Commonwealth Yearbook and explain why down-trodden child-bearing women live longer than us men!

If Hibbert reads my articles more carefully she will see that I studiously avoided using the

terms "matriarchy" and "patriarchy" as much as possible, that is, they may occur in quotations. Throughout her long and largely silly letter she credits me with a wide range of ideas attributed by other anthropologists to other people. She has certainly a very limited knowledge of the literature of these peoples.

I find her statement that "Isis conceived her son by reasonably inatural means", hilarious. Horus was conceived by means of necrophilia!

I was quite definite, I thought, in saying that patrarchy did not take over in Egypt and that the social status quo remains with the brother working the farm instead of a neighbour. Really! Similarly with words like "chaste" and so forth. They are used, as much as the fallibility of my authorities allowed, to be these of the society under examination. Unfortunately the loc is so shot through with politics that it is evident the writer hasn't and cannot distinguish between what I said, what my authorities said, and what the people themselves may have said. A good example of this is the nonsense that I condoned rape, "suggesting that old men should be allowed to rape at will, by believing a piece of mythology to the effect that they are incapable." What utter nonsense. The case concerned a tribal elder who touched a woman with a sacred object and demanded the right to have sex with her as a penalty. This is a clear violation of tribal law and I can't understand why she did not report the matter directly to the rest of the elders who would have promptly dealt with the matter... It involves sacrilege as well as rape. The man was quite rightly convicted. But it would not have happened had the Aboriginal Law not been lessened by contact with white man. When someone says, "I imagine the case was brought because a woman wished to assert her 'right' to say 'no' - a right that Alderson clearly objects to", I begin to wonder just how low people can sink.

Julie Vaux Loc on my Portfolio: YOU!! (ancient Comorri naughty words).
14 Zara St., Printing those drawings when I told you not to!! And without
Willoughby, TELLING your readers that I gave you the original pencil sketches
NSW 2068 so you could decide which one you wanted a B & W version of for
 a cover drawing. I told you not to!

 /Sorry, Julie, but they looked
so good I couldn't resist putting them in a portfolio. - Ron./

Eric Lindsay I think it about time that someone explained to the
6 Hillcrest Ave., contributors to fanzines why the editor has the last word.
Faulconbridge, I suspect that all too few people realise just how expensive
NSW 2776 it is to publish a fanzine these days. While some costs
 are lower relative to wages, the cost of postage is a real
killer.

Re the story in TM 48. The start of paragraph 3 on page 4 is a bit jarring
"...water's edge, he rested for a moment and drank in the scene." I thought he
was drinking the ocean at first.

It is a pity there are so many tales of crime
in Sydney. I certainly don't like the idea of the good Captain Chandler being
a victim, even if it does get yet another article from him. I suspect that I
would be likewise intolerant if every mugged.

It seems to me that there are two
major differences in copy costs between mimeos and copiers. Mimeos can work with
any paper, and with cheap ink. Even dry copiers rely upon what appear to be
relatively expensive toners. I noticed some under \$1000 dry copiers recently,

but upon enquiring, found the per copy cost was enormous, because replacing the toner implied replacing an entire unit at some \$100 or so. Perhaps more important is the service life. A mimeo is likely to be running well after 10 or more years - mine is well over 10 years old - whereas the service life of a copier is generally (even by salesmen) considered more like 5 years.

Nor do I consider it essential that children be taught metric measurements. After all, they will be using calculators for all maths relatively soon, and since these calculators are increasing in complexity, there will soon be no difficulty in coping with any form of measuring system as input (you want the distance a car can travel, in milliparsecs, given its miles per litre, the cost of gas per gallon, and the amount of money you have to spend in Thai Phats - with a proper calculator, that would be no problem).

I have to agree with you on the merits of the scientific method, and the lack of merit to nonsense like tarot, astrology and the like. Everyone seems to want a simple world, and it just isn't to be had.

Sue Bursztynski
45 Hartington St.,
Elsternwick,
Vic 3185

In #47, I was fascinated by the "filksong". I take it the song is based on "The Demon Lover"? It actually fits the tune quite nicely (I know it as "House Carpenter", sung by Pentangle) except for one or two verses, which don't scan. I love the idea and most of the words are beautiful - but the piece tends to be spoiled by modernisms, e.g. "like a mouthful of bad beer". Okay, I know it's supposed to be an updated version, but it simply doesn't work, because most of the song is a good pastiche of the folksong lines. It seems a shame to spoil an otherwise good effort with jarring lines. I'd suggest a slight rewrite would help. I remember liking the other poems as well, but as I said, I don't have the zine in front of me. Enjoyed Gail Neville's little bit of comedy too. Her versatility never ceases to amaze me.

Michael Hailstone
PO Box 193,
Woden,
ACT 2606

I guess that it goes without saying that I was tickled by Julie Vaux's remark on the English language in Solid Zen. She says it all; I don't think there's anything I can add. Though I find the first two sentences in that self-same paragraph confusing; it took me a long time to figure out what was going on. The writing was a bit unclear, I think.

Gail

Neville's story was more to my liking than the last, but I felt let down at the end. For one thing, I couldn't believe that only one person could be running the whole bureaucracy, nor that she would have no knowledge of the outside world. Nor that a rebellion could break out as easily. The power of oppressors depends on the oppressed oppressing themselves and each other.

Ortlieb also shows the typical confusion between the judeo-christian God (with a capital G), which is the title for the god the ancient Jews knew as Yahweh (Jehovah), and the Moslems call Allah, who forgives sins and sends the unrepentant to Hell and so on, and the vague abstraction he calls the "creative force in the universe" which the Greek philosophers (such as Plato) called and Indian mystics call "god". Though I must own that the distinction between the two tends to be rather fuzzy. The feminists are entitled to pull all the logs they like about God's gender, as long as they don't get too serious about it. I must also confess that I feel my remarks in TM 46 are a bit naive; I'm sure there was a lot more to the human

condition than that.

Forfooth, Peter Kells maketh a good Point. I've always felt myself, my deep interest in science notwithstanding, that the universe is basically irrational, and it's never ceased to amaze me that science works as well as it does. Einstein said that the only miracle is that there are no miracles.. I think he was partly right, in that a universe of immutable laws is truly a miracle, for there is no logical reason why it should be so, nor is there any proof thereof. The assumption that the same laws and principles apply throughout all time and space is no more than that: an assumption.

Another gripe: Ron, I wish you wouldn't meddle with my punctuation, however bad you might find it, for you end up changing the sense of what I'm trying to say. For example, what sense is one supposed to make of "I should have known, better,..."? In an earlier letter you put a comma after "Of course", changing the whole tone and thrust of the sentence. And you're always changing "as" to "so" and vice versa. You've done it on page x (I've see you're back to numberless pages again!) of TM 47. I don't expect perfect copy, but it is annoying to see one's words appearing in a form expressing a meaning other than the original. I'll spare you further examples, except to note on the same page that it's interesting to note that John Alderson didn't wilt when he made his admission about Anglo-Saxon. Can't say it cheers me. Yes, I know, I have a lot of trouble with typing, but I'm pretty sure that the aforesaid mistakes are yours, not mine.

Actually I think most of the changes are unconscious -- when I, typing, can't understand it, my subconscious changed it automatically. Of course, when someone else is proffreading, they don't pick it up, as they are only reading the stencil. -- Ron.

One last point: Sue's review of Night of the Living Dead by John Russo brought to mind a manuscript I received from an Albert Russo, a short story with a similar theme: that is, dead human bodies inhabited by alien spirits, though the latter is nowhere as horrifying as the book. I wonder whether there's any connection. It does seem a remarkable coincidence to have two authors with the same surname (an unusual surname at that) writing on the same theme (albeit by no means an unusual theme.)

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Av.,
Hagerstown,
Maryland, 21740,
USA.

I can't imagine why the Penguin editor would object to running the foreword to Kelly Country as it appears in The Mentor. It's not unduly long, as book prefaces go. If the editor felt perhaps that it gave away too much information on the story, the only other objection I can imagine anyone making to it, jacket blurbs frequently betray just as much about a book's contents. It's good to have the complete preface preserved in fanzine form, at least, and maybe someday it can be matched up with the novel in some future edition of the book. The preface makes the book sound interesting, although I fear that most of us North Americans are too ignorant of Australian history to appreciate the novel as well as Down Underers will enjoy it.

Julie Vaux has a remarkable imagination and excellent amounts of patience. Not many fanzine writers would have lavished so much time and trouble over two pages of speculation. I hope I'm not blundering when I remember her as the artist who added such a painstaking gloss to a collection of her extra terrestrials a couple of years back; this illustrationless essay-story is quite in the tradition of her previous inventiveness, if I haven't confused her with another fan artist-writer.

Memo to the Department was amusing and well enough written to seem almost like a parable.

In common with many other fanzine stories, it could benefit from lengthening to some extent, in order to give us a better idea of what this particular society is like before events start moving to the big climax.

The Ship of Gold seems to be an effort to mate some of Steve Sneyd's poetic habits to the folk song traditions with a science fiction theme. The style switches back and forth from plain, everyday description to a high-faluting phrasing and this disturbs me to some extent when I read the poem. But much the same holds good for some genuine folk songs and maybe Steve did it that way deliberately.

Has any fan fund based on competition ever published specific criteria which voters should keep in mind when making their choices? I can't remember any such rules. So I imagine most fans are governed by various considerations when they vote: how good a fan ambassador this or that nominee would be, how much the voter would like to see a particular candidate visit his own nation, the probability that a candidate couldn't be travelling overseas without the financial help provided by the fund, the desirability of rewarding the candidate for services performed to fandom, and perhaps two or three other matters. In other words, most things we do in the real world have multiple motivations, not just one. So I doubt if many TAFF or DUFF or other fund votes are based on just one simple motivation, like the "charity" or "reward" theories that are occasionally linked with the funds.

Buck Coulson
2677W-500N
Hartford City,
In 47348,
USA.

I'm glad to hear that Chandler's Kelly novel has been published. I'll see about picking up a copy from Ken Slater. I would disagree with him on some of the future history, but, what the hell, it's his book and since it's an alternate world he has as good a right to say what happened as I do. (Better, since it's his world.)

I think maybe Alderson's major problem is that he's never learned to distinguish between a fact and a theory. Some of what he quotes are facts, certainly. Some aren't. (In this article, I will assume that his material on Melanesian cults is factual. But his casual equation of them with Osiris, Assyria, and so on is theory. Possibly a correct theory, but still a long way from a fact, even when pronounced so by Alderson. Or maybe he just can't believe that anyone could disagree with his conclusions, or the conclusions of whoever gathered the facts.)

Sneyd's spacegoing version of "House Carpenter" was interesting; I wouldn't be surprised to hear it being sung one of these days.

Well, to note Adrienne Losin's letter, fandom seems to be an urban phenomenon everywhere - which is one reason I live in the middle of nowhere. I don't want daily or even weekly face-to-face contact with any fans who happen to live in the same city with me; if I lived in a city I'd have a worse reputation as a curmudgeon than I do now, because I simply wouldn't put up with large numbers of fans at close range. I prefer to choose my friends on the basis of compatibility rather than propinquity. However, it's occasionally a nice surprise to find an oasis on the desert of mundanity.

The problem with magnetic perpetual motion is that there is no such thing as a perpetual magnet. Eventually they stop magnetizing. Of course, electro-magnets keep operating as long as they receive power, but that's not perpetual motion, it's an electromagnetic motor. (Did someone say the Earth was a perpetual magnet? How do you know?)

Harry Andruschak
PO Box 606,
La Canada-Flintridge,
Ca. 91011,
USA.

Received The Mentor 47. Today is 7 April, 1984,
and I have completed my 21st day of sobriety.

I must admit that my jaw dropped at your list of Best SF of the Year. Is 1983 the first year that such books as The City and the Stars was first published in your country? Another thing I notice was that I have not read most of the books you list. This is my own fault. As you may have heard, 1983 will be the year when my alcoholism of 20 years finally went out of control (if I ever had any) and almost lost me my job at JPL, all my friends, all my family, and all my health. I am now recovering, but I have a long way to go, and many amends to make up. It is funny to be typing a loc to you sober... the first I have ever done so. Note that typing and spelling have not improved, however.

I must disagree with Chandler that steam ever had much of a chance to drive airships or motor vehicles in a useful way. It was tried many times. The technical history of the last half of the 19th century is full of stories of the attempts to make the external combustion engine work on airships and land vehicles. In fact, it was the advent of the internal combustion engine that made it really workable. The power to mass ratio was much better, and diesels powered the first really workable airships of Count Zeppelin.

But I can understand Chandler's wish to include airships in his alternate world novel. There is something thrilling about the sight of so much mass just floating thru the air. Majestic, dignified, stately... like the old transatlantic liners. Every time I see a film clip of the old airships I choke up. Who wouldn't? But even if steam-powered airships could be perfected, I still doubt their utility. Never mind the hydrogen problem and HINDENBERG. Most airships crashed due to weather. Sure, there were a few notable successes. GRAF ZEPPELIN, R-100, and so on. But most just crashed when they encountered adverse weather conditions. As such, they would not have the all weather capability of airplanes.

And one other point ... was GETTYSBURG really the turning point of the War Between the States? I don't think so. Even if Lee had won the battle, he still had no real hope of taking Washington DC with its army and forts still intact. His supply lines were stretched out thru hostile territory. And just where could he go on to, anyway? No, the real turning point, if you must have a single turning point, (do you, really) would be the battle of VICKSBURG. Cutting the Confederacy in half, and separating it from the food of the western states helped out the blockade. Opening the Mississippi to Union forces helped the blockade.

And there was the blockade.

In truth, the South was in a no-win situation. They really had no hope of winning the war. The best they could hope for was a draw. They might just have got it, except for President Lincoln. By making the War a war of freeing the slaves, he did two things.

1. Great Britain, and the rest of Europe, were tied down to neutrality because it would be hard for them to support slavery. The populace would not stand for it.

2. It gave the North a "Cause", almost religious in nature. No amount of propaganda about States Rights and Economics or anything else could change that fact.

A. Bertram Chandler
PO Box 980,
Potts Point,
NSW 2011

I'm sorry to hear than THE MENTOR may be going quarterly. For quite a long while I have regarded it as my safety valve, for the blowing off of steam. The enclosure - What's In A Name? - is an example of this. I just had to get it all down on paper while it was fresh in my memory.

I don't mind admitting that I rather like being an arrogant bastard - especially when things develop into a fight which I stand a good chance of winning. Too, regarding Saturday's unpleasanties, there was a strong element of revenge insofar as I was concerned. My hatred for Pillar-Of-The-Establishment-"Christian"-Schoolmasters goes back quite some years - fifty six, to be precise.

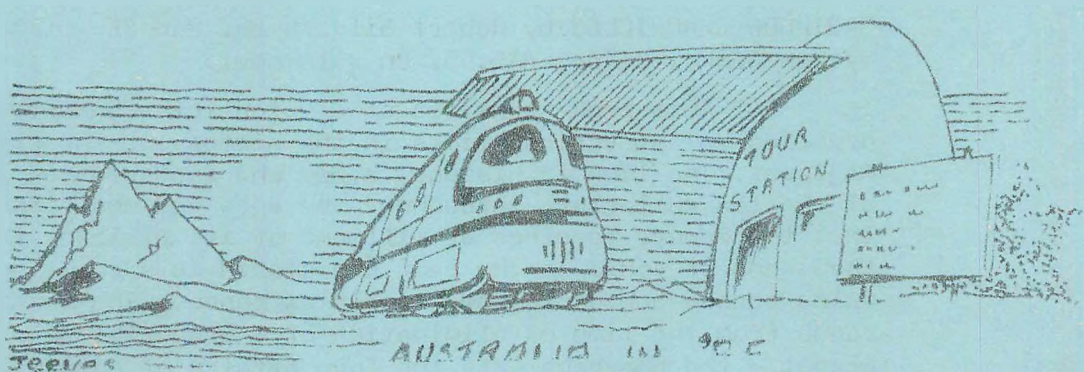
Mind you, if it hadn't been for the machinations of that sanctimonious bastard my career would have been altogether different. Almost certainly I should never have gone to sea and never, in the fullness of time, become an Australian. Possibly I may have become a writer - but there wouldn't have been any Grimes.

So now you know who to blame for that never-ending Rim Worlds series.

That very definite deviation point in my life probably accounts for my fascination with the various Ifs Of History. Talking of Ifs Of History - DAW Books have bought KELLY COUNTRY. I've done a special foreword for Don Wollheim, also an afterword. In return he has promised to re-insert the Battle of Kiel sequence and to give me a much better (it could hardly be worse) cover than Penguin did. It should be published early in 1985.

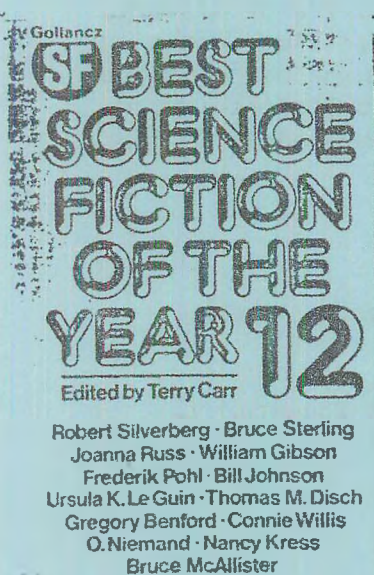
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Hmm, April has almost rolled past and this issue is nearly overdue, according to the Post Office. So I had better wrap it up.

We Also Heard From - Colin Gubb, Russ Grey, and Boris Zavgorodny.



ON MY SELECTION -

CURRENT S. F. BOOK RELEASES



THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR 12 edited by Terry Carr. Gollancz H/C, dist in Aust by Hutchinson. 250pp A\$23.95. On sale now.

These stories are from the year 1982, and show that good sf is not dead. This is a very good collection of stories here. The full list is as follows: THE POPE OF THE CHIMPS by R Silverberg; SWARM by Bruce Sterling; SOULS by Joanna Russ; BURNING CHROME by William Gibson; FARMER ON THE DOLE by F. Pohl; MEET ME AT APOGEE by W Johnson; SUR by U K Le Guin; UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR by T Disch; RELATIVISTIC EFFECTS by G Bedford; FIREWATCH by C Willis; THE WOOLING OF SLOWBOAT SADIE by O. Niemand; WITH THE ORIGINAL CAST by N. Kress and WHEN THE FATHERS GO by B McAllister.

It is interesting to see that the newcomers, eg Bruce Sterling give a better performance than some of the older writers, such as Le Guin this time around.

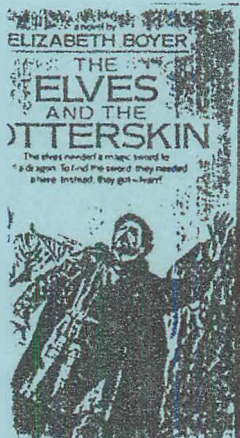
Recommended.

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MAJIPOOR CHRONICLES by Robert Silverberg. Pan SF, dist in Aust by Pan Books. 317pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This book consists of of ten interconnected novellas set at various times in the history of the planet Majipoor. The link is Hissune, a boy who is making an inventory of the tax collectors throughout the ages and who finds that the memory readings of millions of its citizens from thousands of years in the past are stored in a room. He gains access and picks some nearly at random. The stories range from the time of elimination of the aborigines of the planet - the Ghayrogs - to the love affairs of both male and female humans with aliens.

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THE ELVES AND THE OTTERSKIN by Elizabeth Boyer. Del Rey, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. 207pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

Elizabeth Boyer is one fantasy author I know I will like when I see other novels of hers. They are always well written and interesting throughout.

This is the usual quest situation -- in this case the elves are said to have killed the son of a powerful chief when he was in his otter form, and skinning him, gave the skin, through circuituous means, back to that chief. He captured them and said that only if the magic otterskin could be covered with gold would he release them. The novel tells the adventures of the elves as they try to obtain that gold, from finding the sword that will kill the dragon guarding it, to actually killing said dragon.

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THE SOURCE OF MAGIC by Piers Anthony. Del Rey, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. 326pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

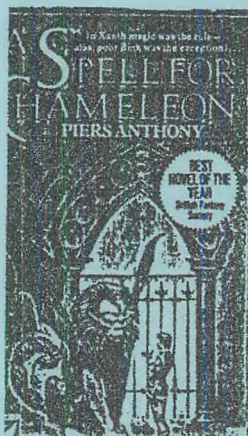
This is a fantasy novel which is in a series that is becoming well known -- Xanth. It is on a peninsula off the coast of Mundania. Its king is one Trent, and the hero is a certain mortal named Bink, who, in this novel is given the task of finding the source of Xanth's magic. He sets out on this journey with Chester, a centaur and Crombie, a soldier who had been transformed into a griffin. In their journey they are beset by numerous strange events, and it becomes obvious that one person is out to defeat them in their quest.

Anthony writes smoothly and humorously in this adventure -- and makes a smooth read for an afternoon.

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A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON by Piers Anthony. Del Rey, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. 344pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is the first novel in the "Xanth" series, and it won the Best Novel of the Year by the British Fantasy Society.

We meet Bink, who at 25 still had no magic powers (everyone else had at least one spell he/she could cast). However several things pointed to the fact that he did have magic -- the Good Magician Humfrey and Beauregard the genie and the magic wall chart also indicated this. Living was becoming a nightmare and when Bink found himself in exile from Xanth he had to find just what magic he did have, as fast as he could, otherwise he and Fanchon were doomed when the Evil Magician JTrent captured them.

Not bad fantasy.

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MERLIN'S GODSON by H. Warner Munn. Del Rey, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. 311pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

'Camelot was gone and Arthur lay in the sleep of the forever undead. Only a small band of loyal men were left, guided now by the magical wisdom of Merlin. United, they braved uncharted seas toward the mysterious Lands of the West. With them they carried the Thirteen Magic Treasures of Britain and the power of Merlin's Ring.

'Ahead of them lay unknown lands that offered lush wonders and ecstasies beyond their dreams and savage creatures that drive them into horrors beyond any nightmare.

Well written fantasy.

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MERLIN'S RING by H. Warner Munn. Del Rey, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. 366pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

'Throughout runs the thread of the love story of Corenice and Gwalchmai - separated time and again by the adventures that take Gwalchmai from Atlantis to the Norse-land, from the elf-world to pre-history, from Arthur's Court to the Far East, from Cathay to the land of Irish mythology, from Medieval Rome to the burning of the Maid of Orleans.

'The story of Gwalchmai, godson to Merlin, and Corenice, an immortal woman of Atlantis - and of a love that spanned centuries of high adventure - comes dramatically to life.

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THE RIGHT STUFF by Tom Wolfe. Bantam Books, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 367pp. A\$ On sale now.

A movie has been made out of this book and it is pulling in the people and the \$\$\$. According to the publishing details, this book was first published in 1979 and was serialised all over the place in the US. It is now 1984 and a movie has been made and the book is selling like hotcakes. Is all this hype in 1984 justified?

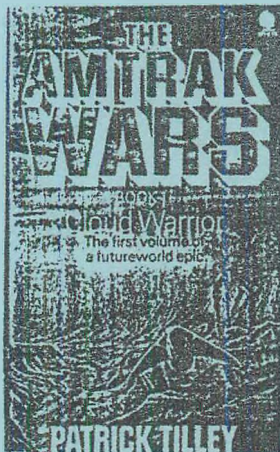
This book is about, as just about everyone knows who has seen the publicity or the movie, the seven Mercury astronauts and the people who surrounded them - their wives and girlfriends and the men themselves. It is extremely well written and very gripping. I don't think you could put it down once you started reading it.

The depth of the novel is enough to show the views behind the official attitude that made these men what they were, or brought out and expanded something that otherwise would not have been apparent. *Recommended*.

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THE AMTRAK WARS by Patrick Tilley. Sphere books, dist in Aust by Sphere Books. 311pp. A\$. On sale now.

When first I saw the title of this novel I thought it had something to do with trains. Well it does, but not the type usually associated with Amtrak.

This is volume 1 of THE AMTRAK WARS, and is subtitled Cloud Warrior. The action takes place a thousand years after an atomic war. The remnants of the conflict are scattered over an obliterated United States, with the Amtrak Federation representing a group which saw the war coming and dug in to survive it. It was only now, though the radiation was still lethal, that the "waggon trains" were attempting to subdue the surface dwelling Mutes.

SF adventure with cowboy overtones.

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THE WAR HOUND AND THE WORLD'S PAIN by Michael Moorcock. New English Library Pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 198pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

This is one of Moorcock's more 'serious' fantasies -- in that Elric had some slight sense of satire. War Hound does not. Set in the middle ages, in a Germany which is that is a ruined balllefield and the minions of Lucifer are trying to expand their operations.

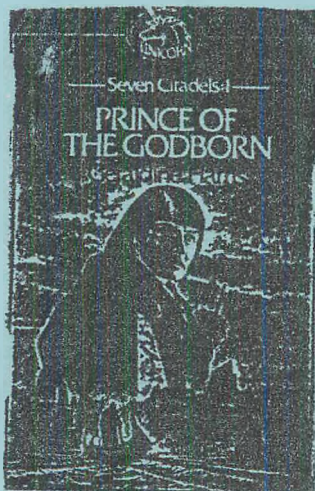
Moorcock uses a more open style this time and the novel is all the better for it. He also uses more straightforward english to express himself.

If you are a Moorcock or fantasy fan I think you will like this novel.

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THE PRINCE OF THE GODBORN by Geraldine Harris. Unicorn Books, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 186pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

The background of this series of fantasy novels is particularly well set out. This is part I of the Seven Citadels series. It is that type of fantasy that could be sf if some of the mystical elements were excised.

The quest in this volume -- and it is a quest novel -- concerns the search of Kerish-lo-Toan and his half-brother Forolikin as they search the known world for seven sorcerers, each of whom had a key that will unlock the path to the foretold saviour of the planet. They journey through the country they know and soon are in lands that are told of by other travellers.

Particularly well-told fantasy.

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WE by Yevgeny Zamyatin. Avon Books, dis in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 232pp. A\$ On sale now.

WE is the grandfather of all the well known sf dictatorships -- including BRAVE NEW WORLD and 1984. Reading it the reader can see where these latter books got some of their ideas and persuasion. Actually, since it was first published in English in 1924 (it was first written in 1920/1 in the Soviet Union), this translation is 1972, and is, apparently, well done.

The writing style has a faint echo of the 20s, but the story is universal. It tells of how a worker, bred for obedience and properly worshipping the Benefactor, falls in love with another Party member and, because of a pending revolution, this love affair though doomed, blossoms, though in the end, as in 1984, the State wins. *Recommended*.

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I have been experiencing a little bit of trouble with the electro-stenciller -- one of the valves went -- so from now on in this review section -- until I get the valve replaced -- there won't be any cover reproductions.

THE ADVERSARY by Julian May. Pan, dist in Aust by Pan books. 463pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is volume four of the Saga of the Exiles. The story continues the events in the Pliocene as the North American children attempt to contact Aiken Drum in an effort to persuade him to build a time gate back to the Galactic Milieu. The Firvulag are rising, attacking the outposts of humans and Tanu. Marc Remillard leans to d-jump and begins to build up his strength to enable him to teleport his entire crew to a new planet so as to enable him to continue his experiments in Mental Man.

All these events come together in the Grand Tourney, when the time gate is finished, the Firvulag attempt to rise and Remillard makes his strike against his children and Aiken Drum.

First class sf -- *Recommended*.

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STAR TREK SHORT STORIES by William Rotsler. Sparrow Books, dist in Aust by Hodder and Stoughton. 159pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

Most of the STAR TREK books that come out consist of novels. There has been the odd selection of stories from the semi-prozine fanzine, but not many books of short stories from one author. Rotsler has broken this mould with this volume of six short stories from STAR TREK 11.

If you divide six into 159 you get just under 30 pages per story, so they make for short reading exercises for morning or afternoon teas, or those short bus journeys.

The stories are: THE BLAZE OF GLORY; UNDER TWIN MOONS; WILD CARD; THE SECRET EMPIRE; INTELLIGENCE TEST and TO WHEREEVER. Some of those titles sound like some of the old flick serials -- and the last is, of course, from Kirk's last words in STAR TREK: TMP. STAR TREK fans should like these.

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BLAKE'S 7 - THE PROGRAMME GUIDE -- Terry Nation. W.H. Allen, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. H/C. 192pp. A\$16.95. Illustrated. On sale now.

This is one of the best books to illustrate the TV show BLAKE'S 7 to come along. It lists the 52 episodes broadcast and gives a plot synopsis of each. At the back it gives details of the producers, and actors, and has articles by them. At the very end it gives the run-down of the state of the characters at the end of the series, when they all have, apparently, been killed by the evil Federation. And what could happen afterward.

This is another sf TV series that has captured the imagination of the TV viewing youth and there exists fan clubs over the UK and in Aust. In the USA there are also fan clubs - even though BLAKE'S 7 has not been aired on any US station nationally.

Most of the US sf TV shows are about pure blooded American Boy types - but BLAKE'S 7 is about the adventures of criminals. and yet it has caught on.

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COSMOS by Carl Sagan. Futura Books, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 413pp (incl. index). A\$7.95. On sale now.

This, again, is the book of the TV series - in this case the COSMOS TV series, said to be one of the most watched scientific series for the ordinary man (whoever he/she may be).

The book follows the TV series fairly well - the chapters are: THE SHORES OF THE COSMIC OCEAN; ONE VOICE IN THE COSMIC FUGUE; THE HARMONY OF WORLDS; HEAVEN AND HELL; BLUES FOR A RED PLANET; TRAVELLERS' TALES; THE BACKBONE OF NIGHT; TRAVELS IN SPACE AND TIME; THE LIVES OF THE STARS; THE EDGE OF FOREVER; THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY; ENCYCLOPAEDIA GALACTICA: and WHO SPEAKS FOR EARTH?

This is a thick book and would make a good present for someone about twelve who is becoming interested in science at school. It gives a good background for the beginning of the scientific method and the pitfalls.

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THE SEREN CENACLES by Warren Norwood. Bantam Books, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 244pp. A\$4.50. On sale now.

When one has a closer look at the header of the front page of this novel you see: "A chilling novel of alien terror by WARREN NORWOOD Author of THE WINDHOVER TAPES and Ralph Mylius. Ahem.

This story hinges around the mining of a certain ore which the Galaxy uses for food (apparently it is a certain type of carbon). The ore is usually obtained by turning the pocket inside out by mind-power. However a series of accidents while personnel are attempting to do this on some newly discovered ore pockets on a mining world sets off a train of events which results in some horrifying news for the rest of the galaxy.

Norwood, when he is trying, is not a bad writer. This novel took a bit of settling into - especially at the beginning, when the reader is trying to figure out exactly what the miners are doing and how.

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TITUS ALONE by Mervyn Peake. Penguin Books, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. 263pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Peake was a sick and dying man when he wrote the last book of the trilogy, and it shows. TITUS ALONE is still an excellent book and worth reading, but it has nowhere near the power, brooding primness, and bizarre richness of incident of the other two.

Titus has left Gormenghast to make his way in the world. But if the castle's inhabitants seem odd, the people in the outside world are downright incomprehensible, and often unproportionally vicious. All the vices of the 20th Century are on display - it is a world with Big Brother watching you, but not doing a very good job of it. Peake's experiences in WWII (he met survivors of concentration camps and made several portraits of them) seems to have inspired the darker mood of this book. There's an attempted brainwashing/black mass towards the end of the book which would have been far more horrendous if Peake had lived to expand it. - Diane Fox.

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MICRO COMPUTERS by Ian Reinecke. Penguin Books, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. 205pp (incl. index). A\$6.95. On sale now.

If you are one of those fans who are wondering what all the who-har is with all those other fans branching out into computers and loosing themselves in the electronic chip world, then this book will give the background in easy to read english and is not too hard to understand.

Reinecke is an Australian so what he talks about is relevant here. The chapters are headed: Behind the Boom; Success Stories; The Chip Pioneers; How They Work; What's to Buy; Sell, Sell Sell; Traps for the Unwary; Read All About It, Programming the Machine; Hooked on Software; Using your Computer; Computers and Kids; Computers and Literacy; Now it's 1984.

Over all not a bad intro to the subject.

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STARS, PLANETS & GALAXIES by Sune Engelbrektson. Bantam Science, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 157pp.(incl. index). A\$4.95. On sale now

This is a book for any fan's library. It is basically a simple guide to the planets and stars and galaxies and sets the information out in simple language. It is filled with black-and-white and coloured photos of the objects and includes star maps of the constellations and includes charts and diagrams.

The chapters are headed: THE VISIBLE SKY ~ The Meaning of Astronomy; The Sun; the Stars; the Moon; the Planets; the Milky Way; other Stellar Systems; THROUGH THE TELESCOPE ~ Telescopes; the Structure of the Sun; the Face of the Moon; the Solar System; Stars and their Evolution; a Universe of Galaxies; SATELLITE EXPLORATION ~ Earth Orbiters; Exploration of the Moon; Planetary Probes; Men in Space.

All in all this is a good basis book for youngsters interested in science and astronomy.

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STAR GATE by Pauline Gedge. Penguin Books, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. 341pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is a fantasy, but not the usual type of quest. It is more a fantasy in the old tradition, of gods, good versus evil at the beginning of the universe, and the position of mortals in the scheme of things. It is a refreshing read after all the usual S & S guff.

The main characters are Sun Lords, created at the dawn of the universe by the Worldmaker under the tuition of the Lawmaker (who only appears in the last few pages). However, the Worldmaker becomes corrupt and, before the novel starts, has destroyed and taken over nearly all of the five hundred worlds, leaving them pieces of death and evil and their sentient suns gutted. STARGATE is the tale of the end of the reign of the Sunlords and the manner of their fall.

Good fresh fantasy.

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KEEPERS OF THE SECRETS by Philip Jose Farmer. Sphere Pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 152pp. A\$4.50. On sale now.

This novel is one in the continuing series of Doc Caliban in his fight against the Nine immortals who have great power in the world. The beginning starts off with Doc and his companion's assault on the castle of the mad goblin, Iwaldi, whom Doc has picked to be the first to kill. During their adventures in the castle, they come across two Englishmen - the incredibly beautiful Barbara Villiers and Carlos Cobbs, who feature again further on in the story.

Doc helps them to escape and, after further adventures, the final showdown takes place at Stonehenge where the Nine are having a burial.

This is more an adventure story of the 30s style than an sf story, though it does have some sf trimmings (immortality and ingenious devices).

Not a deep book - but not bad for passing an enjoyable few hours of non-thinking.

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FUTURETRACK 5 by Robert Westall. Kestrel H/C, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. 253pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

When I read the blurbs on the jacket of this book I thought it was a children's book, about schoolboys and their adventures in a future Britain. It is written by a schoolteacher in Cheshire.

The novel is set in the 21st Century, and the atmosphere is of the British TV series, 1990. The action opens at the passing out parade of Henry Kitson as he leaves his former school to begin his adult life. All depends on the mark he obtained in his last exam - those that fail become Unnem - the outcasts of society. If he passed he could become an Est. When the results were posted, and the blood has been cleared away, he found he was not in either list. His name was at the bottom - unclassified. When he saw the Headmaster he found the truth - he had got 100% and his days were numbered. He was to join the Techs, the 3,000 who ran Britain. It was while he was in the Tech stronghold he learned the meaning of it all....

Good solid sf extrapolation and an interesting creation.

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TIK-TOK by John Sladek. Gollancz H/C, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 184pp. A\$20.95. On sale now.

It looks as though Sladek is giving the Robots a good going over. This is a Gallancz hardcover, though its cover is white, rather than the famous yellow.

The book follows the career of Tik-Tok (named after the robot in Oz), and it gives his past life in a series of flashbacks. He had had an eventful career, before earning his fortune (and fall) in painting. Some of his masters included the famous - the man who built the pyramid which changed the climate of the State and created a drought; the descendants of the man who created the 50 mile wide land aircraft carrier and the fast-food owner with the goatee who fed his clients armadillo meat and caused an upsurge of 'dillo fever'.

Sladek is good in his satires, but at times he comes close to the edge of banality. This novel keeps on this side of it - and gives some good laughs.

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ORBITSVILLE DEPARTURE by Bob Shaw. Gollancz H/C, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 166pp A\$20.95. On sale now.

This is the sequel to ORBITSVILLE (which I haven't read) but it is not necessary to have read the latter to enjoy the former. Orbitville is a ring-world, discovered two centuries before the time of this novel. Most of the population of earth have migrated to the wonder of Orbitville - with its area of a billion earths - and only a skeleton population remains on earth.

Garry Dallen works for the government in a law-enforcement capacity. When his wife and child are brain wiped, he vows revenge and sets out to find who did the deed and punish them. Along the way he comes across some strange happenings, and is at the right spot to have the final say in the history of humankind. The mystery of Orbitville is explained and, in the end, things turn out as best they could.

I liked this novel, with its rapid pace and its mind-stretching, but down-to-earth insights.

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MIDAS WORLD by Frederik Pohl. Gollancz H/C, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 276pp. A\$20.95. On sale now.

This, on the other hand, is a novel cobbled together from novellas. Being by Pohl this is done with craftsmanship, but there are still discrete parts discernable. Some of them have been published elsewhere recently (such as The Farmer On the Dole and The Lord of the Skies) but when read together the total world scene is more apparent.

The premise the novel is built around is of cheap power in the way of hydrogen fusion, and the development of artificial intelligence, firstly in machines joined to a central computer, then independent robots with wills of their own, who, in the end achieve the vote and the oarch.

Pohl has made his name with satires - The Space Merchants and Search the Sky. Of late he has written Gateway and Beyond the Blue Event Horizon. I wonder for which he will be remembered thirty years from now?

Midas World could join the former two. I think that the coming shortage of resources is changing the spirit of consumerism.... but we'll see.

THE STEPS OF THE SUN by Walter Tevis. Gollancz H/C, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 251pp. A\$20.95. On sale now.

Tevis is the author of The Man Who Fell To Earth and Mockingbird. He is a mainstream writer who is using the sf field and cliches to put his ideas and stories across -- and it shows. This novel, for instance, concerns the life and fortunes of Ben Belson, a millionaire, who decides to rough it a bit and go exploring in one of the last starships. Unfortunately space-flight, because of the scarcity of uranium, is forbidden. However, he manages to stock up on some of the elusive fuel and sets out. On one planet he finds tonnes of 'safe' uranium (it is only radio-active in a magnetic field...) and on another a bed of ~~happy~~ grass and a cureall headache powder. In between the sf episodes we have flashbacks to his earlier life and what happens when he gets back to earth with his uranium cargo. All this part is nearly 'mundane' writing -- seems the poor fellow is impotent, except with his wife. However, his stay on the grass-dominated planet cures him of this, and he manages to be raped by a Chinese soldier.

It'll probably win the Ditmar next year.

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BRONWYN'S BANE by Elizabeth Scarborough. Bantam Pb, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. 286pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

It is not often you come across truly humorous fantasy. This work has as its main characters, children, but while one is reading it this is not obtrusive.

The Bronwyn of the title is a princess who was cursed at birth that she would never tell the truth. Naturally her parents did not think much of this -- they thought it might be an obstacle to her ascending the throne. However a war came up, as it usually does, and Bronwyn was sent off to visit her neice, Carole. After many adventures, and meeting up with a gypsy boy who turned out to be the heir to the country Bronwyn's country was currently fighting, an congress and a princess in the form of a swan they end up in a country overrun by monsters, because the King had killed off the magicians in his and the neighbouring countries because he could not have what he wanted.

Eventually, of course, things worked out ok and they lived happy ever after, with the curse being lifted, after some machinations.

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DOCTOR WHO: SNAKEDANCE by Terrance Dicks. W.H. Allen H/C, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 124pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This story is one of the few followed-up potential sequels. Apart from continuing characters (we meet the Daleks and Davros again and again, for example) it was rarely done. Here we meet the "Mara" again -- the Snake cult introduced in KINDA. Tegan is still, deep down, under their influence on a world where the cult is considered extinct. Of course the Doctor copes -- not only with disbelief and cultural blocks but the ever-present, slumbering Mara as well.

This one is better than the first story and is told in Dick's quick style with the usual assumption that you know all the characters and what happened before in KINDA. -- Susan Clarke.

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SANDKINGS by George R.R. Martin. Orbit Pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 238pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is a collection of short stories by one of the better writers of sf. The stories are: THE WAY OF CROSS AND DRAGON; BITTERBLOOMS; IN THE HOUSE OF THE WORM; FAST-FRIEND; THE STONE CITY; STARLADY and SANDKINGS. One of the better known tales from this collection is THE STONE CITY.

Martin has not published all that many stories, but those she has had published are all first rate. The first story is about fanaticism and faith, the second is more a fantasy/fairy story of the Olde type. The third is a straight adventure with mysteries still unexplained at the end. FAST-FRIEND is about the end of friendship, THE STONE CITY about twists of space-time, STARLADY is about a different sort of crossroads to that of THE STONE CITY; and SANDKINGS is a crawling horror.

Recommended.

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DOCTOR WHO - ENLIGHTENMENT by Barbara Clegg. W H Allen H/C, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 127pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

This novel is from one of the scripts of one of the more unusual Time Lord serials. The cover shows three earth sailing ships with a glowing object of what appears to be glass shining with myriad lights in the background. This is from the episode with the clipper of space and that weird race through space.

The story starts out with the White Guardian warning the Doctor to beware of danger and attempts to give them the co-ordinates of the danger point. From then on it gets more weird.

This isn't as good as some of the other DOCTOR WHO novels that have come out recently - but if you are a completist DR WHO fan you will probably want it.

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OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

GRANADA (Dist Wm Collins): ECLIPSING BINARIES - Amith & Goldin.

SPHERE (" Wm Colliss): INVASION EARTH - Harrison.
MARY DEXTER, MARY SINISTER - Rootes.

PENGUIN: THE PRINCE IN WAITING TRILOGY - Christopher
DR WHO - THE MAKING OF A TV SERIES - Road.

HUTCHINSON: DR WHO AND THE DOMINATORS

HODDER & STOUGHTON:

PSION - Vinge.

HADEN OF ANCIENT OPHA - Farmer.

FLIGHT TO OPAR - Farmer.

THE PRIDE OF CHANUR - Cherryh.

THE MAN WHO JAPED - Dick.

THE SIMULACRA - Dick.

THE GOLDEN MAN - Dick.

THE DARK CRYSTAL - Smith.

A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON - Anthony.

SOURCE OF MAGIC - Anthony.

MAY RELEASES:

DOUBLEDAY: LANDO CALRISSIAN & THE STARCAVE OF THONBOKA -- Smith.
HODDER : EMPIRE OF THE EAST -- Sabarhagen.
THE DARK -- James Herbert.
THE GREEN BRAIN -- Herbert.
HUTCHINSON: SUPERLUMINAL -- McIntyre.
RINGWORLD -- Niven.

JUNE RELEASES:

HUTCHINSON: THE DRAGON IN THE SEA -- Herbert.
HERETICS OF DUNE -- Herbert.
HODDER: SPACE -- Ardley.
SAARBURST -- Pohl.
THE DESCENT OF ANANSI -- Niven & Barnes.
THE MAGIC GOES AWAY -- Niven.

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++ GRANADA has released the Pb edition of FOUNDATIONS EDGE by Asimov at \$5.95 for those who missed, or couldn't afford, the H/C.

++ Two other items of interest; Granada is publishing THE REST OF THE ROBOTS by Asimov in May in H/C.

++ Fontana is releasing, through William Collins, with a current release date, the fantasy AND BROTHERS ALL, written by a young Queenslander, Linda Macken.

Hopefully these will both be reviewed, in depth, next issue.

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For those who have come in late, the note *Recommended* means I feel that if you are starting, or have a library of science fiction or fantasy these new titles are worth buying to join that length of shelving. Not that the others aren't worth reading...

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And that is it for this issue. The next issue will be out in July, for THE MENTOR. What with rising rates and shortage of cash, plus an increasing load on my free time, I have found that I just cannot, at the present time, keep up with the bi-monthly schedule. Maybe next year...

So, I'll see you next issue, (except for those who haven't given a show of interest...)

-- Ron.

Everytime I try to close off an issue I either get another release list from a distributor, or a list is received just after I finish an issue. The following are releases from Transworld Publishers for the noted months:

CURRENT RELEASES: MORETA - McCaffrey.
THE SHATTERED STARS - McEnroe.
DAMIANG by MacAvoy.
SPACE - Michener.
TIME MACHINE Series -- Bischoff etc.

MAY RELEASES: A QUIET OF STONE - Leigh.

JUNE RELEASES: BELGARIAD 2 : QUEEN OF SORCERY - Eddings.
MOCKINGBIRD - Tevis.
WINDHOVER TAPES: PLANET OF FLOWERS - Norwood.

I also received notice that in May, the three TWILIGHT ZONE Pbs will be selling at half price at \$1.75. These books were reviewed a couple of issues back. The three books are: STORIES FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE, MORE STORIES FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE and NEW STORIES FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE.

If you are a Twilight Zone fan - this is your opportunity.

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Correction to the previous page: The Asivov book, to be released by Granada is, of course, not THE REST OF THE ROBOTS, but is THE ROBOTS OF DAWN.

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