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RON'S ROOST

PICK THE MEDIA FAN.

THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN.

I am typing this up in the middle of SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS on tv. It isn't bad satire. The martians look like giant human bugs (they are all in green, including their skins).

You may have noticed that I have broken my own rule that said I would concentrate on printing Australian writers and artists. Lately the Australian contributors have dropped a little in quantity, and then Boris and later Igor wrote offered articles on Sf fandom and science fiction in the USSR. It was an offer I couldn't resist. Western fans haven't seen much coming out of the USSR, other than that which filters through Europe and is printed in fanzines which usually aren't in English.

I have been doing a bit of work around the backyard lately. The garage (where we have the offset) is almost impossible to work in in hot weather, so Susan and I decided to make it into a library cum printshop/office. To start this off we bought a 10'8" x 10'8" galvanised garden shed and plan to set this up behind the garage. We bought the shed to put the boxed junk we have in the garage into, otherwise we would not have enough room in the garage for our planned work area. We hope to use half of the shed as a kid's room, and will move the kid's toys and table and chairs into it when we get the slab down. The ground slopes at a slight angle

from the back fence towards the front of our block, and I only had to dig out a couple of barrow loads of earth to get it level. I am making the slab 11' x 11' to leave an overlap of 2" per side. One of the problems is that, because the slab is around at the back of the garage, it is a little hard to get the mini-concrete truck to it. I hope to solve this by having it drive up the lane which runs alongside the park and which ends at the back fence. Which is about five feet from where I have dug the foundations. All being well I will only have to pull a few palings off the fence and have the truck stick its snout through to pour the concrete directly into the foundations.

At the moment Rosie Peck and I are attempting to rivet the thing together. The instructions that came with it are almost intelligible - it is like a giant jigsaw. Luckily we have a flat piece of ground behind the house and we use this to lay the pieces out and rivet them. Unfortunately the steel frame for it is fairly thin and when we pick up the completed side frames, a couple of times it has bent *slightly*.

When we get the junk out of the garage, we'll put up a carport for the car and insulate and put panelling on the garage walls and ceiling. Then we'll move up the various typers, desks, uncrate the books and magazines from the house and put them onto shelves at last. Hopefully I'll be able to waterproof the garage also (every so often we get a flood across the floor from the park at the back, which the Council has not drained properly) and it'll be great. Especially since I will be moving the air-conditioner up there.

I looked through the cupboards of the house the other day - about half of all the cupboards have things in them that could be moved to a renovated garage. Things like books, the stockpiled fanzines, the various suitcases and the mounds of books - sf and mainstream and educational, fans and other electrical wares. Why, Susan may even be able to open some of the kitchen cupboards without the tupperware falling out, or the saucepans clattering onto the floor.

Another of the things that I have to do in the next three weeks (during which I am on holidays), are four fanzines I have to offset. Two are ours - THE CHRONICLES and THE MENTOR. The two others are the local Star-trek clubzine, DATA, which runs about 50 pages and 250 copies; the other is a new multi-media zine which is going to run 200 pages and about 300 copies (the latter will take about two full days printing).

I love these 'holidays' that you have to go back to work to catch up on on your rest.

- Ron.

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ЧЕРЕЗ ДРУЖБУ К ЗВЁЗДАМ

In the previous issue was the first column from several Soviet sf fans about fandom in that country. Because of circumstances (the main one being the time lag to get replies to queries - airmail takes about a month to get a reply back) the section dealing with an introduction by Igor was printed on the understanding that the article was complete in itself. It was only after a letter was received from Igor shortly after the last issue had been posted saying that the former 'article' was only a sketch for what he proposed, that I knew of this. Thus hereunder you will find the article he was actually working on. The form of the article is taken from talks Igor gives at various organisations about SF; the translation from Russian to English is by himself, helped along with some tidying up of phrases by the editor.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SOVIET S. F. MOVEMENT .

- a brief survey -

by Igor Toloconnicov

Soviet SF has a long tradition, but the most lasting impact has been by two writers of the 20s: A.N.Tolstoy and A.Belayev. They are the godfathers of Soviet "hardcover" SF. There is even an SF award named after Tolstoy's novel AELITA.

I should mention A.Grin (1880-1932) first. L. London explored souls in a real world as did A. Grin. However Grin was an author of romantic fantasy, an example of which is when somebody told a little girl a tale and she believed that she would marry a man from a ship with scarlet sails. Years passed, she grew up and one day ... This is about a love which doesn't tolerate shallow feelings (THE SCARLET SAILS, 1921). A. Grin's novels and novelettes were carried through to our own time helped by his deep conviction that man may be better than he seems. THE WAVE RUNNER (1928) is a poetic work about man's stand before the unpredictability of Fate. It features a carnival, a kaleidoscope of faces, a lot of laughs everywhere, intrigue and the sea. "A wonderful, uncritical writer - especially in our national literature" - writes L. Leonov. The pure Grin characters combined with a popular scientific byline (such as V.Obruchev's PLUTONIA (1924), who used the old idea of a hollow earth for splendid narrative about the paleontological past) were helping Sfs speedy development.

A.N. Tolstoy (1883 - 1945) doesn't belong to SF. He's a great realistic writer but he had two SF novels which became immediate hits. In AELITA (1923) he set an action on Mars: the civil war was over in Russia, and Engineer Loss had built a rocket and together with Gushev, a volunteer, flew it to Mars where they found ancient ruins and discovered the secret of its inhabitants - they were descendents of Africans. Later Loss and Gushev met the martians and found themselves embroiled in events which were transforming martian society. It's somewhat like Wells' WHEN

THE SLEEPER WAKES but it has a sad love theme too. GUSEV (Aelita) is an image of broad generalisation rising to national dimensions. "If a foreigner wants to understand which people made our revolution, he must be given this book to begin with." - writes K. Chucovsky. ENGINEER GARIN'S HYPERBALOID (1927) could be termed a mainstream novel. The antihero Garin ("...you there in Russia are a militant materialised idea. I hate consciously and religiously any ideals...I oppose mankind" - Ch.58), invents a predecessor of the blaster and proceeds to pump gold from the depths of the earth. His plan was to destabilise the world's economies and become world dictator. The machinations of both Garin and big business are shown graphically. He reaches his goal, but does not hold it long. The bankrupt dictator ends up on a desert island with his mistress.

A. Belayev (1884-1942) was a professional SF writer. He could be called a Soviet Jules Verne - "The best SF works must be acknowledged as that which introduces a fruitful, new idea into the world and creates a new inventor, a new scientist. An example is AMPHIBIC-MAN (1928) - "The first fish among people and the first man among fish, Ihtianr feels his solitude acutely, but if others infiltrated the ocean after him, life there would change." As Belayev wrote in PROFESSOR DOUEL'S HEAD (1925 - 1937): "The story was bold for the times in which it was written, though I could be reproached as unscientific. Since then the situation has changed. Surgery has reached remarkable heights and so I decided to rework my story into a novel." THE SEC STAR (1936) featured an orbital station and its economic gains; an embodiment of E. Tsiolcovsky's ideas. A JUMP INTO VACUUM (1933) concerns fugitives from Venus. His well known work, ARIEL (1941) is a companion for Grin's THE SHINING WORLD (1924). It tells the story of a man who can fly; however society considers him a toy (Asimov, in BELIEF, put his man under scientific study). Belayev was highly thought of by Wells, I may add.

Another author was V. Obrutchev (PLUTONIA (1924, in which he used the old idea of a hollow Earth for describing our paleonthological past) supplimented the picture of hard SF's beginnings. Other authors include A. Adamov (THE SECRET OF TWO OCEANS), Yi. Dolgushin (MIRACLE GENERATOR), A. Kasantsev (THE BURNIGH ISLAND (1941)).

The different branches of the genre (utopian, psychological, technological, etc.), with a few exceptions, are reduced to the following: The scene is set in familiar surroundings (the characters are contemporaries, as a matter of fact) and pocial conflicts are widespread. Thus Soviet SF pursued more practical goals, took more realistic approaches than the US Golden Age which indulged itself, in a way, with flights of imagination. There was a difference of opinions (THE NEAR FUTURE, SELF-CONTAINED SF) too, out of which the idea of the man/society interaction was born as a major SF subject. It is kind of involved, but basically it's like this: A classic play, OPTIMISTIC TRAGEDY by V.S. Vishnevsky, deals basically with the death of the chief character. This shows a division in the perception of man's value. The most dramatic works are egocentric and a world can collapse with one death. Here it is quite the contrary. The world continues, thanks to the hero who dies for others. Thence Soviet literature and SF pay attention to the man as a focus of social relations. It can be noted that after Vishnovsky the classical tragedy genre disappeared.

Then World War II broke out. This war and the subsequent restoration has taken all the strength of the Soviet people. Thus SF clubs only began to appear in the 60s and 70s. Soviet SF took a major step with I. Yefremov's (1907 - 1972) ANDROMEDA (1957). The heroes in the novel are examined against the conditions of some perfect society - Yefremov describes the 23rd century. A creative work is a mode of life to live for. He propogates the knowledge of man's best qualities (it is also in his historical books), his faith in the mind of man. Here again the foremost idea is of a person's happiness. Yefremov's characters are somewhat schematic but they are pictures of ideals (which is a partial excuse), so there are not any external conflicts to be moved by. However, there is this: "I propose that

the Council exonerate Mven Mass as having acted from the highest motives but forbid him to occupy any post in the governing bodies of the planet. I should also be removed from my position as President of the Council and sent to make good the damage done by my unfortunate selection - I should help build the new satellite" - Gnom Orme cast a glance round the hall and saw the sincere regret expressed on many faces. The people of the Great Circle Era, however, did not try to persuade one another but respected other people's decision and trusted to their correctness." (Ch. 12).

Unlike the first period, the later SF more actively probes the future and aesthetics of future men. Simultaneously it partakes an education purpose. This coincides with the clubs' functions. There is a trend to work with school youth; most clubs are accompanied by children's ones and there are youth sections everywhere. With a school reform, it will acquire a new spurt. The process is two-sided, as the saying goes: to teach is to learn.

The problem with such moral education is put forth by the brothers Strugatsky - "What we'll have become is dependant on people ... Formerly, the main thing was to give a man the freedom to choose a profession. But today, the main thing is to show him what he needs to become to be really happy." STAGERS (special students) Ch.7 (1962). Another example was when a young girl met through her life examples of bureaucracy and indifference. I don't remember details, but she eventually suicided because she was sincere. (LITERATURNAYA GAZETA circa 1981).

A and B. Strugatsky, along with I.Yefremov, laid the perspectives for Soviet SF. Their models unfold scenes from the future (MIDAFTERNOON: XXII CENTURY (1962), a look into problems of humanism (ITS SO DIFFICULT TO BE GOD (1964), shown the unhuman essence of bureaucracy (A SNAIL ON A SLOPE (1966)).

A new generation of writers has emerged in the last few years. They are more psychological writers, with an eye for nuances.

Throughout both periods there were well known foreign authors available: Asimov, Le Guin, Priest, Clarke, Carsac, Lem, etc. These foreign authors fill a gap in the general picture. Soviet SF is antropocentric. The main object is man/society and their relations with an imaginable world. So BEMs are out, because of Russian and Soviet literature's strong realistic influence. And foreign authors were perceived in many cases as interesting exercises rather than a wholesome picture.

Science fiction has become a necessary part of everyday life. The main thing it does is to help the mind develop abstract qualities such as imagination, intuition, etc. Practically speaking we are developing every moment we make a choice (see the article FOUR KINDS OF THINKING by J. Robinson). But in literature we come up with something more - we come up with another way of thinking. In this sense, SF not only shows commonplace events in a new light, it points out alternatives and predicts paradises or disasters. It is a whole branch of art where a leading role is played by scientific thought, which can be easily prepared. Because of this, SF becomes a means in itself for creative work. This point is illustrated by numerous centres throughout the Union. Another part is what we call the cultural drive - a thirst for new, wide horizons.

There are now more than 100 clubs. Different hobbies determine the versatile club's activities. In principle SF clubs ought to be a source of daring experiment. They have all the potential for it.

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FANDOM IN THE U.S.S.R.

- AN INTRODUCTION -

by Bor. Bagalyakz

There are now more than one hundred SF fan clubs operating in the USSR. In the booklet listing SF clubs and their addresses that was prepared by the Sverdlovsk 'Radiant' Fan Club in April 1984, a figure of 147 is indicated. However the number of fan clubs is constantly growing as news arrives about more clubs being created.

SF fan clubs have been set up in schools and other institutes, in factories and plants, in libraries and booklover's societies, in Youth palaces and committees of the Young Communist League, in the editorial boards of newspapers and creative unions, in departments of culture and even in cinema houses. The geography of SF fan clubs is extensive and spreads from Kaliningrad in the west, to Vladivostok and Sakhalin in the east, from Murmansk and Dixon Island in the north, to Dushanbe in the south. Sf fan clubs spring up virtually everywhere that there are Sf-minded people. Many factors contributed to the appearance of these clubs, some of the major ones include the following.

The flourishing of Soviet science fiction in the sixties brought a growth in the number of Sf fans who were not content with merely reading it. The Sf fans brought up on the books of I. Yefremov, the brothers Strugatsky, S. Lem, I. Varshavski, C. Larionova, A. Gromova, G. Altov, A. Dneprov, E. Voiskunski and I. Lunodianov and others became accustomed to serious talk with other readers, as well as to consideration of the major problems of the day. Each new book by these authors brought immediate discussion and exchange of opinions.

The short supply of such books in the seventies was heavily felt. Many new Sf authors did not even begin to compare with those who made the Sf scene of the sixties. In terms of literary sophistication the writing was better, but it was not often that the reader obtained anything new about man or the world he lived in. Those who were fascinated by the Sf of the sixties were now grown up - many had started writing Sf and found they needed the response of people who had been brought up along similar literary lines.

What are Soviet SF fan clubs like? They are above all, associations of like-minded people who know and appreciate Sf. Although the clubs have on their books people of various ages, occupations and tastes, each could find therein his heart's desire. If one were to wonder how the average Sf club works, the following, (from data collected by the fan clubs) would be an accurate picture.

One of the principal doings in the fan clubs are talks on the best samples of sf. The members of the club prepare lectures and arrange quizzes which they hold at various places in their city. This results in the inflow of new members. Work carried on in the fan clubs is divided into Sections. For instance the Literary/Artistic Section incorporates people who write and paint sf. The members of this particular Section arrange exhibitions of sf pictures, prepare club news for

the newspapers and publish literary anthologies. (According to legislation now in force in the Soviet Union the right to publish is monopolised by the State. This accounts for the absence of fanzines in the fan clubs. The need for such magazines is more or less supplied by the club's material published in local, regional and national newspapers.) Some fan clubs issue literary anthologies containing the writings and drawings of the members of the club, but they only print only about 4 to 8 copies and are designed to meet the specific needs of the club. The significance of such sections in the clubs is obvious - now more often than not one comes across the names of members of the Sf clubs in Sf periodicals and other publications. It is curious to note that the permanent exhibition held under the auspices of the Central Committee of the Allunion Leninist Young Communist League entitled TIME-SPACE-MAN consists for the most part of pictures by amateur artists, many of who, though not being the members of the fan clubs, maintain constant contact with them. One of the main tasks of this Section is to find and help new talent and to recommend the better works for publication. The members of these Sections who know foreign languages are encouraged to translate examples of the best of the world's sf.

Contacts Section exists in all the clubs and is responsible for communications between the fan clubs. It may be confidently asserted that 90% of all the news from the sf scene available to any particular club can be traced to this Section. As a matter of fact the more intensively the club works, the broader and more fruitful are its contacts with "reasonable beings". Exchange of literary publications, of the latest sf books, of interesting lectures and bibliographies and of other fan clubs' materials is made possible through the efforts of the Contacts Section.

The majority of clubs have a Bibliography Section. The quality of some bibliographies prepared by the members of the clubs is sometimes so good that these are printed in sf anthologies and specialized magazines and serve as reference tools for sf authors and critics.

Archives Section stores all the material related to the activities of the club. It usually incorporates the club's library, which is composed mainly of gifts from the members. One of the interesting forms of work carried on by this Section is the keeping of the minutes of the meetings. And if one puts one's heart into the job, as is the case with the Rostov 'Attraction' SF fan club, then these records make no less fascinating reading than some science fiction proper.

Juvenile Sections are operating in most major fan clubs in this country. Concern about the rising generation and how the young employ their leisure time is a distinguishing feature of fan clubs' activities in the eighties.

The above, we believe, can serve as an illustration of what the Soviet Sf fan club is like, and the way it operates. In this article we shall write of the most interesting clubs in the Soviet Union. However, before doing this we would like to say a few words about the fan movement in the USSR, the more so because we came across a number of inaccuracies and dated information in foreign articles.

The appearance of the first sf fan clubs occurred in the sixties. As was noted above, those were the days when Soviet Sf flourished and a number of men of letters came to the fore whose productions now represent the best there is in Soviet sf. Owing to some reason or other those fan clubs soon ceased to exist. The only survivors from the time of the first wave of sf fan clubs include the Sartov Sf fan club operating under the auspices of the University, the Bryansk 'Argonaut' Sf fan club and a student's Sf fan club at the University of Kharkov. This is what one of the participants involved in the 'first wave' of the fan clubs, a citizen of Sverdlovsk, Igor Khalymbadja (background: geologist by occupation, member of the 'Radiant' SF fan club, deputy head of the Sverdlovsk 'Rainbow Seminar' of young Sf authors operating under the aegis of the URAL STALKER magazine, author of more than

50 short stories published in newspapers, bibliographer and proprietor of the biggest collection of Sf in the USSR - his library contains 99% of all SF published in Russian) tells us: In the sixties there originated for the first time a club movement among the Sf fen that crystalised into several fan clubs in the major cities of this country. Such clubs were set up in Moscow, Kharkov, Kiev, Baku, Leningrad and so on. In Kharkov, for instance, a meeting of the club used to draw hundreds of Sf fans. There the fans met with Ukrainian SF authors such as V. Vladko and N. Dahskiev. The club had had the privilege of entertaining the Polish SF author Stanislaw Lem. The Sf fan club at the University of Moscow (headed at that time by Vl. Gakov, then a student, who is now widely known to the fen as the leading expert in Anglo-Saxon Sf) together with the Baku SF fan club (headed at that time by the Sf author G. Altov) conducted a most interesting poll amongst the Sf fen, the results of which had been published in the year-book of the YOUNG GUARD Publishers, entitled SF-66.

In 1966 a club appeared in Sverdlovsk, where the Sf fen got together in the Hersen Library. The fan club took the name of one of Lem's characters, Ion the Quiet. Vitaly Bugrev, who is now the editor of the MY FRIEND SF department in the URAL STALKER magazine, was elected president. Sf problems and the latest production were the matters of discussion in that club. A number of meetings with such SF writers as G. Altov and S. Slenynin took place. The first issue of the club's calendar was prepared but... gradually the membership of the club dwindled and the club dissolved.

Evidently the clubs supported by the juvenile newspapers in Kazan and Astrakhan lasted longer than the others. The Sf pages regularly appearing in these newspapers helped collaboration between fan and newspaper staff who united in one creative effort. But even these clubs went. The present-day SF fan clubs have been created along new organisational and idealogical lines.

In the seventies there began to spring up the clubs belonging to the 'Second Wave', such as 'Fant' in Khabarovsk, 'Probation' in Tbilisi, 'Attraction' in Rostov-on-Don, 'Ritey' in Perm and some others, the activities of which paved the way for the 'Third Wave' - the clubs of the eighties.

The pattern of activities of the 'Second' and 'Third waves' differs substantially from that of the 'First wave'. The mere involvement with fellows who professed the same interest in Sf was not enough. The fen of the seventies began circulating the best examples of Sf among the public-at-large through press, radio and TV. The clubs were disinclined to confine their activities to any particular city or area. They persistently tried to play the field, looking for fellow fen in every corner of this country and abroad, contacting Sf writers, translators and critics. The first links established by correspondence led to a desire to meet with and actually see those who were congenial to them, to share both good and bad luck. But even these bilateral contacts failed to satisfy the craving for fellowship. It should be added that in every club there were leaders who knew more about Sf than anyone else, and it was these who strove to reach out to comrades-in-arms.

The first major undertaking between the Sf fan clubs was a seminar in Perm, organised by the 'Ritey' Sf fan club. It took place in October 1981, and was attended by representatives from Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Rostov, Khabarovsk, Kalingrad and Nefteyugansk.

The annual award of the USSR Writers' Union's and the URALS STALKER magazines's 'Aelita' Prize was another occasion for the fen to get together. This prize is awarded to those men of letters whose productions top the bestseller list in the Sf field. This event is noted for its tumultous proceedings. Abundance of new acquaintances and continuation of old friendships, cataracts of information and avalanches of questions and answers, collision of contradictory opinions and impact of new impressions - all these were hard to take at once. Needless to say firm

decisions did not always crown the long-winded discussions and consensus of opinion sometimes seemed more distant than the remotest star, but informal contact between fan clubs gave rise to quite a number of mutual understandings, such as the effort to publish the complete bibliography of Sf and critical material, the all-club 'Great Circle' award and so on. Certainly the immensity of the Soviet Union and the ever increasing number of fan clubs impeded the adoption of a unanimous stand in matters of controversy and the coordination of activities of various clubs. These difficulties have not been completely surmounted as yet. Be that as it may, all Soviet Sf fan clubs are distinguished by their earnest wish to identify themselves with the ideals of this country. They spare no effort to help their members develop the communist world outlook, to master the ideological heritage of marxist-leninist classics, to put into practice the most challenging ideas of Sf and to develop harmoniously their capacities. The Sf fan clubs in the USSR openly declare the commitment of that Sf which they propagate in the cause of peace, with the belief in the bright future mankind and the cooperation of all the people of good will on our planet. This is exemplified by the fact that the representatives of 37 fan clubs attended the Sverdlovsk reunion in April, 1983 unanimously adopted and signed the "Appeal to the USSR Sf Fan", the idea of which originated of its own accord.

We express the hope that this article will be of interest to fen everywhere and will enable better understanding between Sf fen.

- Boris Bagalyakz.

{The above pseudonym is made up of the first letter in the surnames of persons whose material was drawn upon while preparing this article, parts of which have been previously published in the USSR. - the editor.}



A 1983 meeting of the Volgograd Sf Club, with members A. Ponana and B. Zavgorodni assisting, with another member showing how to keep a stiff upper lip.

THE GREAT CIRCLE - THE USSR FANDOM AWARD

Related by Boris Zavgorodny

Two happy events took place in April 1982 for the fans of this country: the award of the Aelita Writer's Prize on the 23rd to the 24th of April in Sverdlovsk, which was followed by the meeting of fans and the fan clubs' reunion in Rostov-on-the-Don sponsored by the Gravity Fan Club, marking the 75th anniversary of the birth of the Soviet SF writer I.A. Yefremov.

On first learning of this I had mixed feelings of joy and annoyance. I was glad because this meeting had come true at last (our club started in November, 1981 and when I established contact with the other active clubs in the Soviet Union I learned that the first meeting of fans had occurred in October in Perm). I was annoyed because these two events clashed and I was eager to be present at both of them. I remember being full of the most fantastic schemes as to how I was to manage to get to both. In principle there was nothing impossible to this, but the Aeroflot flight schedule was so designed that my dreams were unrealistic. It took a lot of planning to work out the most suitable solution, and the decision was made: "I'll fly to Sverdlovsk to attend the Aelita meeting, while three others will go to Rostov".

So Sverdlovsk was the place - there I would meet many of those whom I had gotten to know by correspondence. I won't tell you about this now, this can be the subject of another report. However, the results of both these meetings exceeded my expectations - the decision was the same!

And small wonder, too. The burning issue facing this country's fandom was being discussed at these meetings; the issue talked about in dozens of letters and over numerous phone calls. It all centred on the Reader's Prize. The general consensus was such a prize was a must. The existing system of club prizes which, by the way, started to expand with each newly formed club instituting its own prize as a matter of course, could only lead to deflation of the idea of fan prizes as such. Indeed, can you imagine 30 to 40 fan clubs, each having its own prizes? And then came the Brothers Strugatsky's new creation. There would be no doubt whatever that each and every one of the fan clubs would consider it a privilege to award its particular prize to these authors. And so the ill-fated awardees, having filled all their shelves and niches with these prizes, would have to look about in blank despair and rack their brains as to how to dispose of the other prizes which keep rolling in. This would certainly not be their idea of prize-winning.

All were unanimous in their opinion that such a prize was essential, but there was a lot of debate as to what it should look like. However, the same agreement was reached at both meetings.

It was decided to award the SF Prize of 1981 according to three categories (by this time everybody was supposed to have acquainted himself with all the latest creations):

1. Novel - Novelette
2. Novelette - Story
3. SF Contribution

I came back to Volgograd from Sverdlovsk where there had been uproarious debate till all hours, to find that the people in Rostov had been more matter-of-fact and to the point - they had decreed that the conduct of the first vote concerning the award should be entrusted to our fan club. Frankly speaking, the news filled me with both pride and shock. It was flattering to win the fan's confidence and more so because our club was still in its babyhood, having attained only the first six months of its existence. However the responsibility was also there, and the nagging fear that we might fail to cope. A faint heart never won the fair lady, they say, so I rolled up my sleeves and went to work.

Letters restating the conditions of the vote were sent to all parts of the Soviet Union. The Rostov fan club undertook to prepare the annual SF bibliographies (which job they are doing very well indeed), whilst the Perm Refrey club took upon itself to manufacture the prizes.

All the clubs were sent voting forms, but not many of them were prompt to send the results back in the month, as stipulated. The year of 1981 drew to its end with the results of voting still coming in.

Eventually, in January 1982, when it became a crime to procrastinate any longer, (the result had to be printed and distributed) a list of results was drawn up and the winners were identified.

Twenty two fan clubs took part in the 1981 voting which came up with the following winners:

- B. Krapivin, the Sverdlovsk writer, with a novelette entitled THE CHILDREN OF THE BLUE FLAMINGO.

- A. Bushkov, from the Abakan Gongury Fan Club, with a short novelette entitled THE UNINVITED VARANGIANS.

The SF Contribution Prize was handed to the hospitable host of the Sverdlovsk sessions, the editor of the SF department of the URAL STALKER magazine, V.I. Bugrov.

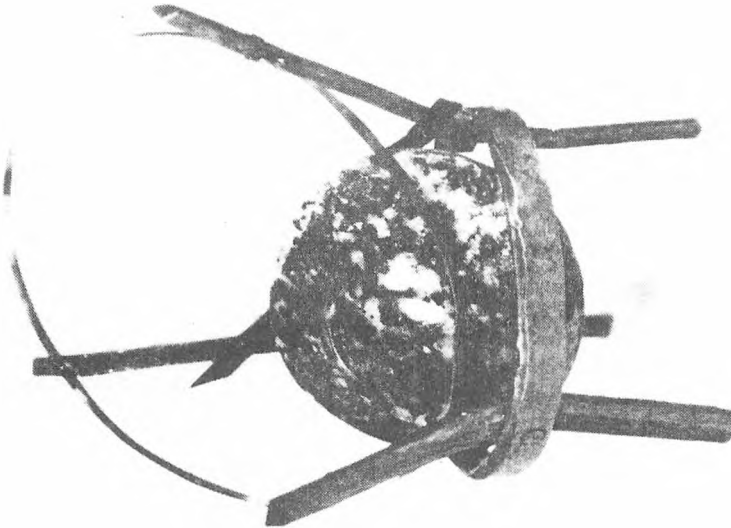
On the 21st to 24th April 1983 in Sverdlovsk, during the course of the fans' session at the Aelita Fan Club, the 'Great Circle' winners were given diplomas and prizes in the form of unique greenish three-sided solids with a spiral welded into one side, the said spiral symbolising the Great Circle. One would be hard put to remember exactly who it was that first struck upon the title but the latter was snapped up by everybody so that it entered the fan vocabulary to stay. Is there anyone to whom ANDROMEDA, the title of one of Yefremov's SF novels, does not ring a bell? Is there anyone to whom the idea of the Great Circle bridging the gap between the worlds of the Universe is unfamiliar? Incidentally, the first, and unfortunately the last, issue of the Sengilei 'Zodiac' Fan Club fanzine was likewise entitled.

The next year's voting was also the responsibility of our club. This time thirty two fan clubs chose to participate in the '1982 Science Fiction' Ballot. Then again the participants took their time voting, though all the clubs got the reminders that the deadline was the 31st of December and that the club failing to meet the date will be excluded from voting. The whole thing was not devoid of some odd moments. While some of the clubs did not even bother to reply, the Gorlov 'Contact' Fan Club sent in a declaration stating that the club was not going to take part in the voting because the prize as it was does not make a great deal of difference to them. Well, it was a clear case of each to his own. Even this negative answer, however, was much more refreshing than the dead silence on the part of those ones who received our invitation but failed to respond.

The fan clubs' meeting in Sverdlovsk in 1983 was attended by a record number of representatives from 37 fan clubs, who came out in favour of modifying some of the provisions concerning voting. From now on the voting shall be carried out in each of these five categories:

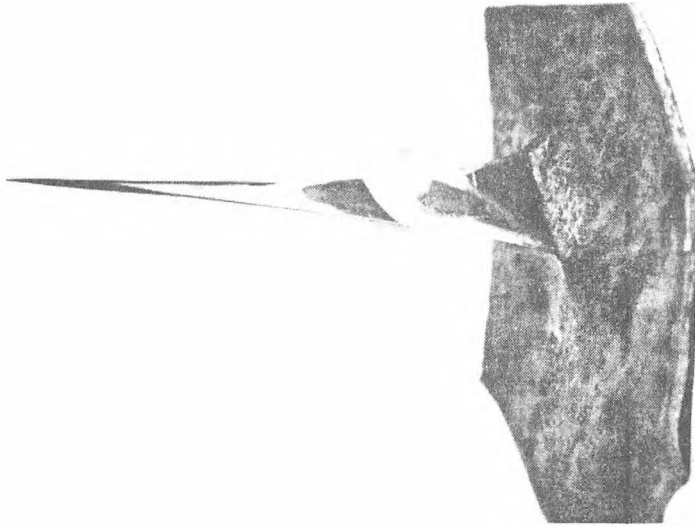


M. Veller, Tallin
'STRAIN'



* The GREAT CIRCLE Awards - 1982 *

V. Skefner, Leningrad
'ASTROLABE'



Vi. Gakov, Moscow
'START'

1. Novel - Novelette
2. Short Novelette - Long Story
3. Short Story
4. SF Contribution
5. Contribution for Advancement of the SF Fan Club Movement

In the Novel-Novelette category, the prize was awarded to the novel by Vadim Shefner entitled THE DEBTOR'S HOVEL.

In the Short Novelette - Story category, the prize was given to the story by Michael Veller (the former chairman of the Tallinn 'Stalker' Fan Club) entitled THE PURSE.

In the SF Contribution category the winner was V.I. Gakov, the young Moscow SF critic surely known to the western reader for his articles on Soviet SF.

This time the prizes had been made by the members of the Irkutsk '4510' Fan Club (all the three prizes had a different shape from those of 1981), while diplomas were produced by the Minsk 'Ziolkovsky' Fan Club.

Apart from the main prize-winners the following persons were given diplomas:

- V. Golovachyov, the SF writer, the chairman of the Dnepropetrovsk Fan Club, for a novel entitled THE FOSSIL.
- G. Melnikov, the member of the Volgograd 'Wind of Time' Fan Club, for a story entitled THE WOLF HOLE.
- P. Amnuel, the SF writer, the chairman of the Baky 'Zodiac' Fan Club, for his being the most popular author.
- B. Klyueva, the SF and Brothers Strugatsky editor, for his twenty-five year service in the cause of Soviet SF,
- D. Bilenkin, Moscow SF writer, in honour of his 50th anniversary,
- M. Pukhov, the SF writer and editor of the SF department of YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY magazine, and through him the editorial board of the magazine, for its concern about the SF fan clubs,
- A. Lukashin, the chairman of the 'Refey' Fan Club, and through him the 'Refey' Fan Club for paving the way for the reunion of SF fans.



Our club has been responsible for the annual awards in the SF scene for three years running. Though the activity of some clubs in this respect leaves much to be desired (by June, 1984 only 17 fan clubs had cast their votes) we are confident that collating the results will be no trouble at all. So we are looking forward to seeing the 31st of December, 1984.

B. Zavgorodny

Chairman of the Volgograd

'Wind of Time' SF Fan Club.

V I S I T O R

BY PETER BRODIE

Ftxl turned back to the twinkling console, fidgety and muttering. His three purple eyes gleamed his irritation. "Bloody thing... had to jam just now... junky damn scout ships..." He surveyed the screens. Earth loomed vividly in one of them. Ftxl punched in the co-ordinates and his ship swung towards the blue orb. "Should have stayed in line when they asked for volunteers!"

He punched more keys. A side screen lit up with the dismal facts on GR-113. "Class four... semi-barbaric... hostile to change and the unknown..." he stopped reading and slumped in his saddle, or as much as he could with comfort, as the ship entered Earth's atmosphere.

Ftxl's ship slithered towards the east coast of North America. Dropped lower. One place was as good as another to him. As long as it was land. By now, every radar scanner in that part of the country was featuring Ftxl's galvanic arrival and phones were running hot.

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It was 10 a.m. E.S.T. as his ship slowed and dropped again, enough for the denizens of Washington to catch a glimpse of it passing overhead. It had no sound but its brightness played havoc with the eyes of anyone who stared at it too long.

Ftxl coded the ship towards a clear space, green, verdant, uninviting, rimmed with the primitive's huts, and started vertical descent. All screens showed a large crowd assembling. Thousands of creatures jostling, straining to see, shielding their eyes, being held back by others in blue outfits.

One creature in particular stood out. It was away from the crowd, surrounded by many of a similar type. *Important personage? Sage? Shaman? Leader?... Guards, yes? Weapons in evidence, too. Many types. Phah, Nothings, Ignore.* Ftxl took one final glance at the scenes then rose as his ship landed in the middle of it all.

From where the President stood, Ftxl's glowing craft reminded him very much of an old film he'd seen once. His stomach flip-flopped and then a hatch on top of the ship slid back. The entire crowd hushed.

Ftxl rode the ascent beam with relief. *At last.* He emerged. The natives gave off an all too familiar odour, fear and fascination. Their auras looked a bit scrambled, too. *Class four, yes.*

All watched in silence as the five legged creature stomped briskly to the edge of its ship, did something to its uniform and relieved itself over the side. Some vomited.

Ftxl turned from adjusting his uniform, looked directly at the ashen-faced leader/shaman. He gave a cheery wave with his middle arm and what would pass for a smile. *Friend. Friend. No harm. Ech, bloody wogs.* He re-entered the ship, assumed lift-off position and thumped the keys. The saucer lifted in radiance and beauty, climbing straight up. It disappeared rapidly.

Y E T

By Peter Brodie

Cathy replaced the Ming vase she'd been examining with the gravity field extensor back on its pedestal in the sealed display container. She locked the control back in place then hurried off as the rest of the children had already turned the corner and their giggles and whispers were fading.

The museum has been specially closed for the children and her shoes echoed along still halls filled with shafted light as she ran to join her friends.

She caught up with them at the Progress Through Power display. Lecturer was pointing along its length.

"Note, children, how at each stage of man's evolution, both biological and mechanical, his all-encompassing drives and fears led him to destroy or enslave those who opposed him or were different to him. 'Might is right', as was said." He paused, looked at the hushed children. "There were, of course, dissenters at all these times but they always lost out to the general noise."

Eight year old Billy raised his hand. "Sir, surely there was more to man than push and shove? What about his galactic exploration?" Billy was the genius.

Lecturer looked at him. "What about it?" Billy didn't answer, just looked at Lecturer in a funny way then down at his feet.

"Come on, children," Lecturer waved them on, "there's a lot you haven't seen yet."

: : :

Cathy wished they'd seen more but Lecturer was a busy person and it was time he was finished here. Maybe next time.

He lined the children up, each to his or her name-plated tube. At a signal all the children stepped backwards, the tubes flowed shut. Cathy's last thought before she stopped wasn't even rebellious. They'd seen to that. And other things.

Lecturer shielded his three eyes from the sudden glare that upped then downed in the tubes. He glanced along the row to the adult section. They weren't his responsibility. Someone else would exercise them. Every couple of years. As long as the human could stay in freeze without deteriorating. Surely someone would come up with a workable stasis system one day, he mused. Make his work easier. He left the Floor of Humanity.

Walking down the exit ramp of the Museum of Antique Races he had a thought. *I wonder what the next 'conquerors of the galaxy' will look like?* His mouths grinned then didn't, as he looked up at the rapidly expanding sun.

- Peter Brodie.

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JOHN J. ALDERSON:

THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

THE MALE DOMINATED SOCIETY II - THE ARABS

To the Arab, Eve is the mother of all hayy, the hayy being a group of female kinship¹ and more importantly the kinship group which shared blood-feud². Many hayy have as an eponym a female, either a woman or a goddess³ and occasionally a genie⁴. When a woman married she retains her tribal kinship⁵. It is significant too that after all these years that the use of the "tent" in a marriage remains, the bride being presented with a tent⁶, and the term for consummating a marriage is "he built a tent over his wife". As in Jacob's case, each wife has a tent of her own and raised her children herself⁷. Jacob was later called Israel or Rachael's Man and his children were called Israelites or children of Rachael's Man. Similar things happened to the Arabs.

Traditionally the Arabs are descended from Abraham through Ishmael the son of Hagar the Egyptian. Hagar took for Ishmael a wife out of Egypt⁸. However, not all Ishmaelites are apparently descended from Abraham for it was to the Ishmaelites that Jacob's brothers sold him⁹ and they did not recognise their kinsman. The truth is that we have a very complex people in the Arabs and to this day they have two quite differing cultures, the nomadic Bedawin who owns nothing but livestock and counts "trees and grazing" as "God's creation" and belonging to no man¹⁰; and the city-dwelling Arab who have quite different views. There are thus fundamental differences in law and customs, and to make this even more complex there are different tribes with their own idea of things and furthermore not all Arabs are Moslems, for there are Christian Arabs and probably Jewish Arabs, whilst Moslem Arabs have a number of widely differing sects. The Arabs still have a large colonial empire, perhaps the largest remaining, so widely differing people call themselves "Arab", just as widely differing people call themselves British. The Bedawin use the word "arab" to denote people¹¹. As far as possible, though, we'll confine our researches to the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula.

Even within Arabia there are at least two different races¹² and Burton thought there were three¹³. The tribal Arabs often differ markedly from Islamic law in their marriage, inheritance and divorce customs. To sum up, we have at least two different races, who are split between nomadic Bedawin and the city Arab, some Christian, some Moslem and some still clinging to the customs of their ancient gods, and a varied slave population.

The Arabs of Mohammed's time had a pantheon and 365 idols, each tribe probably having their own god. Vaguely supreme amongst these was Allah ta'alah, the God most high, but Allah had no priesthood and so little standing. Allat was worshipped, being the female form of Allah. Suwa'h was worshipped in the form of a woman, Hubal in the form of a man and said to have represented the heavens, YaghuTH in the form of a lion, Ya'uq in the form of a horse, Nasr in the shape of an eagle, whilst El 'Huzza was Venus and worshipped under the form of an acacia tree¹⁴. Most important of all was the Kaaba, which according to Arab legend fell from the planet Venus. It is a meteorite¹⁵. Mohammed was successful in suppressing the idols though

El 'Huzza even today still enjoys considerable veneration amongst the Arabs¹⁶. Mecca was a holy city and this could not be altered, nor could the veneration of the Kaaba be suppressed, being part of the ancient Semmite worship of stones. So the Prophet incorporated both within his own system and the pilgrimage to Mecca has, through the ages, been a great unifying force with the Arabs¹⁷.

Strictly speaking, the Kaaba is the building into which the "black stone" has been incorporated. The building is extremely ancient and has been rebuilt many times. It is said to have been built by Adam, repaired by Seth and again by Abraham and Ishmael and is supposed that images representing these latter two with diving arrows in their hands were housed in the Kaaba. The stone is regarded as an image of Saturn. As a shrine the Kaaba was venerated far and wide and with Mohammed's reform, a Hindu poet wrote:

"Behold the marvels of my idol-temple, O Moslem!
That when its idols are destroyed, it becomes Allah's House."¹⁸

Mohammed's followers swept away the idols and the supremacy of Allah was achieved: There is no God but God.

In England a man "marries", whilst a woman "is married", but amongst the Arabs there is no distinction¹⁹. The woman retains her maiden name²⁰ but frequently when the son achieves fame the parents become known as the mother or father of so-and-so. Burton relates that a man may not even be told his wife's name for some reason or other²¹. Amongst the Bedawin the sons are named after the mothers²², and indeed all tribal unities are feminine²³. However, a girl is not consulted about her marriage; indeed it is apparently a point of honour to surprise her. Whilst marriage within the hayy may not call for much consultation, marriage outside the hayy is a matter for the men of the hayy, as this becomes a political matter and means the contact of strangers with the hayy in a society where social and political ties are very important, particularly so in the light of the blood-feud which involves the whole hayy automatically. With a woman (that is, a girl who has been married) the matter is quite different.

Contrary to Western beliefs, Bedawin girls are not raised in seclusion, and the prospective bridegrooms know enough how the girl looks, and presumably their character for this to be a factor in the bride-price. Thomas, having asked the bride-price of one girl, was told "Three camels... why, the daughter of 'Ali brought her father three, and who can compare 'Ali's daughter with mine? All know she is worth it, but no-one has offered me more than two, so I will not agree and she is content to stay with me."²⁴

That man's simple words say enough to show that most of the things said on the subject are nonsense. The father himself owned fifteen camels and as the girl was his sole heir she would eventually get them. The girl herself already possessed at least one camel earning money for her. With this tribe the bride-price went to the father (Qara tribe). With the Bait Kathir tribe in the mountains, the bride price varied between twenty and three hundred dollars, according to her "family, face and fortune", half going to the father, the other being divided between other near relatives. In one case Thomas met with, the bride-price was two hundred dollars, the father getting half, brother thirty dollars, mother twenty, sister nothing, paternal uncle twenty, maternal uncle ten, paternal aunt five, maternal aunt four, paternal grandfather four, and paternal grandmother three (with four dollars unaccounted for). In Oman the bridegroom pays half the marriage-price in advance to the father, and the rest after marriage by installments. It is supposed to go to the bride for her jewels and personal adornments. A widow or divorced woman gets all the marriage price.²⁵ They also have a say in whom they are to marry. In most of these cases the bride-price seems to be compensation for the loss of the girl.

These societies are polygamous inasmuch as most members therein can expect to have several spouses. In the main the men have one wife, divorcing her if they wish to marry another. This is seldom done if the wife has borne children. In the event of marrying another woman, (usually a younger girl) the older woman customarily receives a gift equal to the new bride's bride-price. Woman thus acquires property and are encouraged to do so. This property is held distinct from that of the man.

"Divorce is supremely easy for a man, as throughout all Arabia. He has only to tire of his wife and say so in the usual formula and she must go home to her father, with a parting gift of half a cow. Divorce by the woman is also easy, though financially more onerous, for she must return half the marriage-price if she were given it in the first place. The high rate of divorce stems from the early marriages which mostly occur before the girl is of child-bearing age (which is usually about seventeen) and a certain hastiness in the character of the people. In fact, marriage seems more an initiation ceremony. Nor is there a lack of love and affection. Indeed the search for a lost wife is a favourite theme in THE ARABIAN NIGHTS, of which HASSAN OF BASSORAH²⁷ is the finest example. In the same story the friendship of a young girl for Hasan is one of the finest of its kind. Finally, the Arabs are renowned for their love-poetry.

Amongst the Bedawin tribes the inheritance laws are interesting. In the Qara Mountains they are bound up with the cult of death sacrifice. On a man's death, half his cattle are sacrificed, wealth here being usually in cows. Creditors may claim up to one tenth of the estate, the rest is divided between wives, sons and daughters. The wives take one tenth of a small estate and usually five cows in a large one. The rest goes to sons and daughters. If there are no sons and one or three daughters, they get all this part of the estate and none passes to the male heirs. If there are two daughters then it does.²⁸

Amongst the Bait Kathir not more than one third of the estate may go to the creditors. Of the remaining two thirds, a quarter goes to the wife who has borne children and one eighth to the wife who has not, and the remainder in the usual proportion of a double share for the sons²⁹. If there is no son and less than three daughters the brother of the deceased is entitled to only a daughter's share and if there are more than three daughters then they take the whole and the male relatives get none.³⁰ The restriction on the claims of debtors against an estate is an innovation our own society could well copy.



Amongst the tribesmen there is virtually no right of bequest, and under Islamic Law it is strictly limited. Thus the Koran: "If a man or a woman make a distant relation their heir, and he or she have a brother or sister, each of these two shall have one sixth; but if there are more than this, then they shall be sharers in a third, after payment of the bequests he shall have bequeathed, and begets, without loss to anyone."³¹

It is significant that if an Arab marries a slave (belonging to a third party) as he may, the children of that union belong to the third party; they are slaves and the father has to purchase them to obtain their freedom.³² In modern times women are immune in times of war, but it was not always so, though they did not become slaves, but wives. They were saleable, but by the time of the Prophet they were no longer so if they were pregnant. This was simply marriage by capture.³³ Much has been written to the effect that women were property, but the facts do not seem to bear this out, particularly in the light of the fact that women always retain their kinship; that is, they do not become part of their husband's hays, and they have and retain the profit from their work and property and this is sacrosanct.

Birth control, or rather contraception, has to have the sanction of both parties³⁴ amongst city Arabs, but the idea is abhorant to the tribesmen. Illegitimacy is, however, almost unknown.^{35,36} There is an amusing and somewhat ribald story concerning one Bu Zaid, a hero of the great but extinct tribe of Bani Hillal. Bu Zaid had a wife, but did not allow himself complete coition with her and as a result suspected that the two sons she bore were not his, and as they did not look like him the tribe thought so too, so they came privily to Bu Zaid's sister and said the tribe must have a son from the loins of Bu Zaid. Whereupon one night she went secretly to her brother's bed and he, not knowing her in the darkness, lay with her. When he was about to withdraw prematurely as was his habit, she jabbed him with a bodkin and as a result bore his son who became known as 'Aziz bin Khala ('Aziz, son of his uncle').³⁷

I have no information as to whether the sister was half-sister or full sister to Bu Zaid. W. Robertson Smith makes a valid point in saying, "Where there is kinship only through women, bars to marriage can of course arise only on this side; and it is not seldom found that, after fatherhood has begun to be recognised, a relic of the old law of kinship subsists in the law of prohibited degrees, which still continue to depend on mother-kinship."³⁸ According to Strabo the Arabs practiced polyandry, a family of brothers having a common wife.³⁹ Mohammed with his reforms made both father's and mother's line on an equal footing.⁴⁰

To sum up our notes on these southern Bedawin tribes: They have a male god, but this is the result of the coming of Islam. The woman on marriage retains her maiden name and kin. A man's heirs are primarily his sons and daughters but the system of inheritance is a relic of the time when everything belonged to the hays. A bride-price is paid and a dowry. Incest once only applied to the uterine line, but Islamic reform extended it to both lines. Marriages are fragile until there are children, and usually monogamous but with the coming of Islam, polygyny has replaced polyandry. Adultery, since the coming of Islam, is severely punished, but previously it apparently was not. However, Islamic law makes its proving very difficult. Finally, their wealth is largely in cows (or camels) and money (of their own) is virtually unknown. Interest is forbidden by law.

It may be of interest now to turn to Islamic law and briefly examine it.

Mohammed laid down definite rules in the IVth Sura (entitled WOMEN) (This in Rodwell's chronological rearrangement is C), for the redistribution of wealth through marriage and inheritance. The Sura begins with the treatment of orphans, apparently in response to the situation which arose when so many heads of families fell at the battle of Ohod. The property of orphans was to be used with discretion,

whilst the rich were not to touch it at all. They were to give dowries to the girls.⁴¹ The Prophet then passes to the division of the estate.

"... give the male the portion of two females; and if they be females more than two, then they shall have two thirds of that which their father hath left: but if she be an only daughter, she shall have the half; and the father and mother of the deceased shall each of them have a sixth part of what he hath left, if he have a child; but if he have no child, and his parents be his heirs, then his mother shall have the third: and if he have brethren, his mother shall have the sixth, after paying the bequests he shall have bequeathed, and his debts. As to your fathers, or your children, ye know not which of them is the most advantageous to you...

"Half of what your wives leave shall be yours, if they have no issue; but if they have issue, then a fourth part of what they leave shall be yours, after paying the bequests they shall bequeath, and debts.

"And your wives shall have a fourth part of what ye leave, if ye have no issue; but if ye have issue, then they shall have an eighth part of what ye leave, after paying the bequests ye shall bequeath, and debts.⁴²

This part of the Sura is wound up with the promise of heavenly delights for those who obey the law and a "place in the fire to abide therein for ever" for those who rebel. It was thus important.

A woman guilty of whoredom had to be found so by four witnesses to the fact. In the beginning they were buried alive, but later married women were stoned and unmarried ones were banished for a year and given a hundred stripes.⁴³ Burton comments that as the four witnesses have to see the act this "practically prevents conviction".⁴⁴

Prohibited women were outlined as follows...

"Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your aunts, both on the father and the mother's side, and your nieces on the brother and sister's side, and your foster mothers, and your foster sisters, and the mother of your wives, and your step-daughters who are your wards, born of your wives to whom you have gone in: but if you have not gone into them it shall be no sin in you to marry them: and the wives of your sons who proceed out of your loins: and ye shall not have two sisters..."⁴⁵

In verse 39 Mohammed makes an interesting provision...

"And if ye fear a breach between man and wife, then send a judge chosen from his family, and a judge chosen from her family: if they are desirous of agreement, God will affect a reconciliation between them; verily, God is knowing, apprised of all!"⁴⁶. This was about 1300 years ahead of the law in Australia!

Finally some other interesting sidelights from literary sources.

In the story OTBAH AND RAYYA, a man is asked for his daughter in marriage. He replies, "O my brethren, she whom you demand is owner of herself, and I will go into her and tell her." Now, the father is angry because it has come to his ears that his daughter and the man who wants to marry her have had previous converse and, because of that, he says he will refuse to allow her to marry him. But the girl demands that the offer shall not be uncivilly rejected and says, "Make the dowry heavy to them and they will desist." So the young man's party has the dowry demanded of them, "I require for her a thousand bracelets of red gold and five thousand dirhams of coinage of Hajar, and a hundred pieces of woollen cloth and striped stuffs of Al-Yaman and five bladders of ambergris." This dowry is found.

After the marriage the father equipped the girl with thirty camel-loads of things of price.⁴⁷

It seems fairly obvious that the girl was engaging in "gold-digging". One can see also why the girl mentioned above by Thomas was content to dwell with her father until the right bride-price was raised; she gained by it. The phrase that a girl is "owner of herself" occurs in other tales, for example 'Ardashir and Hayat Al-Nufus', where the king says, "For my part I make no objection, and nothing can be more pleasurable to me; but the girl is of full age and reason and her affair is in her own hand."⁴⁸ Nor are these isolated examples of the girl being consulted. Hayat Al-Nufus was a real man-hater by the way, and refused many offers of marriage.

Even slave-girls had their persons respected. To quote Burton on the subject, "They may also refuse their favours, and a master who took possession of their person by brute force would be blamed by his friends, men and women. Even the most despotic of despots, Fath Ali Shah of Persia, put up with refusal from his slave-girls and did not, as would the mean-minded, marry them to the grooms or cooks of the palace."⁴⁹ For a non-Moslem to even suggest union with a slave-girl (who was a Moslem) was a most heinous offence.⁵⁰ Preventing a girl from going to the Hammam bath was deemed sufficient cruelty for a girl to demand she be sold.⁵¹

A slave-girl can only be sold with her own consent⁵² and to whom she approves. In the story of 'Ali Shar and Zummurud' the slave-girl Zummurud the Curtain-maker is sold at auction, but only to the buyer of her approval, and indeed she so approved of one buyer that she slipped him the purchase money. Her earnings are her own, somewhat of a contrast with the male slaves mentioned by Thomas, who have nothing but a few personal belongings.⁵³

Burton also comments on the freedom of the Arab women, to wit, "Moslem women have this advantage over their Western sisterhood: they can always leave the house of father or husband and, without asking permission, pay a week or ten days' visit to their friends. But they are not expected to meet their lovers."⁵⁴ A system of honour seems to prevail. Quite a few stories in the ARABIAN NIGHTS turn on this liberty with an abductor getting ten days start over the father or husband.

Commenting on a reference to the 38th verse of Sura 4 of the Koran, Burton says of the superiority of man to woman, "The advantages are bodily strength, understanding and the high privilege of Holy War. Thus far, and thus far only, woman amongst Moslems is 'lesser man'."⁵⁵ All my own researches confirm this assessment of the position of women in Arabia.

One can hardly close this section better than with a quotation on conjugal love from a nurse in the story ARDASHIR AND HAYAT AL-NUFUS, referred to above.

"...O my lady, is there aught in the world more tenderly solicitous than the male for female, among all the creatures which Almighty Allah hath created. And especially 'tis thus with man; for he starveth himself to feed his wife, stripped himself to clothe her, angereth his family to please her and disobeyeth and denieth his parents to endow her. She knoweth his secrets and concealet them and she cannot endure from him a single hour. And he be absent from her one night, her eyes sleep not, nor is there a dearer to her than he: she loveth him more than her parents and they lie down to sleep in each other's arms, with his hand under her neck, even as saith the poet,

'I made my wrist her pillow and I lay with her in litter;
And I said to Night "Be long!" while the full moon showeth glitter:
Ah me it was a night, Allah never made its like;
Whose first was sweetest sweet and whose last bitt' rest bitter!'

Then he kisseth her and she kisseth him; and I have heard of a certain King that, when his wife fell sick and died, he buried himself alive with her, submitting himself to death, for the love of her and the strait companionship that was between them. Moreover, a certain King sickened and died, and when they were about to bury him, his wife said to her people: Let me bury myself alive with him; else will I slay myself and my blood shall be upon your heads. So, when they saw she would not be turned from this thing, they left her, and she cast herself into the grave with her dead husband, of the greatest of her love and tenderness for him."⁵⁶

We leave it there for now. I must confess that despite the universal acceptance of the Arabs as a male-dominated society, I have my misgivings. The idea, so frequently advanced, that Mohammed only partially reformed the social system, seems very much apparent. In particular I have my misgivings about the Bedawin. Their clan system is too rigid, the women are too economically independent and work taboos too apparent for a male-dominated society. As each party of a marriage retain their own kin it appears more as though we have here a non-dominated society with male descent. And whilst this in retrospect seems quite reasonable for a desert society, it means firstly, that most observers have been wrong about this society and secondly, that non-dominated societies may be more common than realised.

NOTES.

1. Robertson Smith, W. KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN EARLY ARABIA. Boston, p.208.
2. Ibid, p.26.
3. Ibid, p.29.
4. Thomas, B. ARABIA FELIX, London 1938, p.269.
5. Robertson Smith, Ibid, p.76.
6. Ibid, p.198.
7. GENESIS 31:33.
8. Ibid, 21:21.
9. Ibid, 37:28.
10. Thomas, Ibid, p.94.
11. Ibid, p.22.
12. Ibid, p.22.
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- John J. Alderson.

-----oooOooo-----

Study finds parental link to illiteracy

MELBOURNE: More than one million Australians are estimated to have literacy problems, according to the Australian Council for Adult Literacy.

A council study has found that the loss of a father or the lack of parental approval for children is a leading cause of illiteracy in adulthood.

Dr Audrey Grant, a lecturer in education at La Trobe University, told the council's annual conference at the weekend that nearly all the 40 people in the case studies lost their father or had fathers "who denigrated them or never gave encouragement or approval".

"Children with traumatic family backgrounds became preoccupied with their problems and stopped learning at school," she said. "They just blocked everything off." Schooling became a humiliating experience and many people grew up with a childlike dependence on their mothers, who did all the reading and writing for them, she said.

"This was a group of people who were intelligent enough to read and write but had never learned. To become literate many must change their relationships with the people closest to them and alter their patterns of dependency," Dr Grant said.

The co-author of the study, Ms Helen Gribble, who is also co-ordinator of the adult literacy program at the Council of Adult Education, said illiterate adults were often in constant fear of being found out.

"It means not being able to read street signs, use public transport, find out telephone numbers from a directory, fill out bank forms, write your address, or read instructions on medicine bottles," she said. "One student said it was like being a foreigner in your own land — he could not go into town alone."

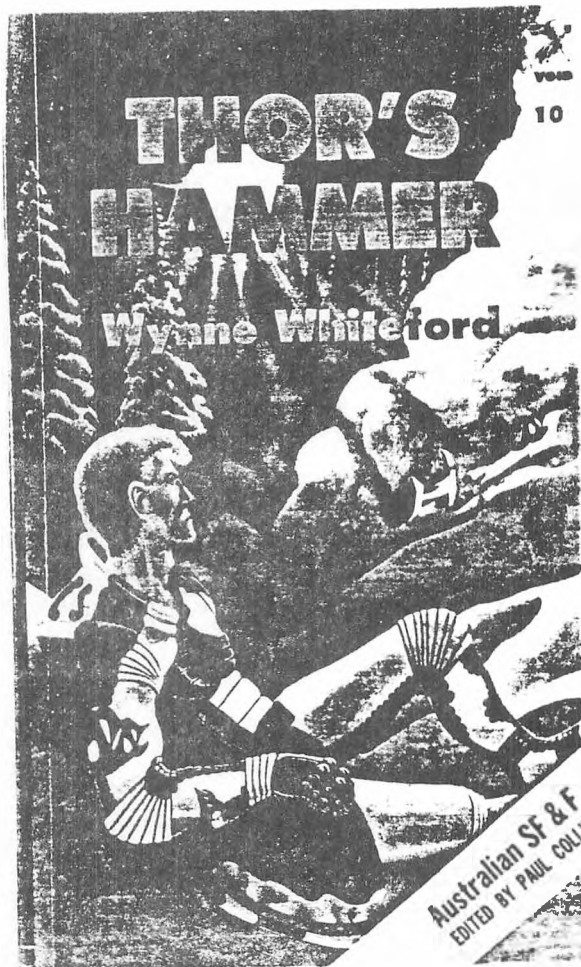
Ms Gribble said many people managed to hide their illiteracy from their spouses, but the problem almost ruined some marriages.

MY DEN

- *DIANE FOX*

THOR'S HAMMER by Wynne Whiteford. Cory & Collins. (C) 1983. Cover by Rowena Cory. Paperback, A\$3.95.

I looked forward to reading this book, Wynne Whiteford's third novel. He is a consistently competent and readable author, whose fiction is rich in ideas. He develops his themes from novel to novel, and they have the feel of continuity of a series, though the characters in each are quite different and the settings are mutually exclusive - as different as the environmentally wrecked Earth in *BREATHING SPACE ONLY*, the stagnating company-dominated world of *SAPPHIRE ROAD*, and the somewhat utopian, space-colonizing future of this novel.



The plot of *THOR'S HAMMER* is straightforward, part detective novel and part adventure. The central character is Kingston Hannan, a troubleshooter for Astrogold, an Earth-based asteroid mining company. He has been sent out to the Astrogold district office on the asteroid Ceres to find why the brilliant, but apparently somewhat unstable branch manager Anton Slade has gone missing. Slade has developed the technology to move quite large asteroids out of their orbits, and this might be used to cause an asteroid to crash onto the Earth, bringing about horrendous climatic changes - apparently the extinction of the dinosaurs was caused by asteroid strike.

The earlier part of the book is basically an SF detective story, as King gathers information about the reclusive and enigmatic Slade. He meets many unusual people, one of whom is Gail Busuttill, a former friend of Slade. She had had extra brain tissue and a computer grafted onto her body to increase her IQ. Gail didn't seem to me to be much more intelligent than the other characters in the book - I suspect that the 'wolf-boy' syndrome might be the cause of this. King finds her strikingly attractive although someone grotesque by normal standards - she had a

bald, enlarged head, no external ears, a short thick neck, and a small hump on her upper back for the computer housing.

Two more unusual characters are the asteroid mining team, Des Marston and Yetta Ferris. Marston's legs were amputated in a childhood accident, and he was left to grow up in a space colony when his family returned to Earth. Yetta is a dwarf, whose anti-technological religious fanatic father denied her medical treatment which could

have enabled her to grow to normal size. Both would seem to have good reason to be embittered, and there is even a hint dropped that Yetta might wish to be revenged on her family. However, in the cramped and weightless conditions of a spaceship, Marston's and Yetta's handicaps become advantages - they are successful and have achieved some status.

Slade turns out to be a megalomaniac determined to destroy Earth's 'decadent' civilization. Interestingly, he acts as a mouthpiece for Whiteford's comments about the 'New Worlds' being more technologically and socially inventive than the 'Old' - that colonies are the area of the most vital expansion, mentally as well as physically. In the mouth of a ruthless psychopath, the darker aspects of this idea become revealed: Slade sees the Earth as something out-of-date, fit only to be junked, with nothing to offer the independent space colonies. Whiteford is a most thoughtful man, and likes to consider every aspect, moral as well as social, of his concepts. I found Slade's plan frighteningly plausible - after space travel becomes commonplace, people living on planets - 'gravity wells' - would be at a frightening military disadvantage. No Death Stars or similiar superweapons would be needed!

Whiteford's SF is very much of the technological variety, and his descriptions of future societies emphasize the cultural changes wrought by advances in technology. The main emotional focus in his three novels is on the adaptability of the human mind and body in complex future environments, and on the value of human diversity. The most interesting part of THOR'S HAMMER to me was the description of the space colony Piazzzi City, and its inhabitants. These people, with their balloon-like fat bodies and stick-like legs, are grotesque to Earthling eyes yet are perfectly suited to survive in their low gravity environment, a striking illustration of Beauty as Functionality, or Adaptation.

Whiteford's style is very plain, and he portrays his characters in an understated way. They are not unemotional, nor are they lacking in depth. However, they are mostly sane and sensible types, the sort who would be useful in an emergency, or who would make good friends and workmates. They are mostly quiet and thoughtful people of action, whose problems come mostly from the outside. His villains seem mostly to be of the petty sort; thoughtless, stupidly aggressive or greedy. I think that is why Anton Slade never became quite real - Wynne Whiteford is possibly too rational himself to be able to get inside the skin of an irrational yet highly intelligent being, and created his chief villain as a plot device rather than an individual. It is his only failure of characterisation.

The other characters are strongly memorable - especailly Yetta and Marston. I also liked the quiet depiction of King's relationship with Gail - especially the thought that intelligent women are the best lovers. (The opposite idea has been floating around for far too long.)

An entertaining and thought-provoking book.

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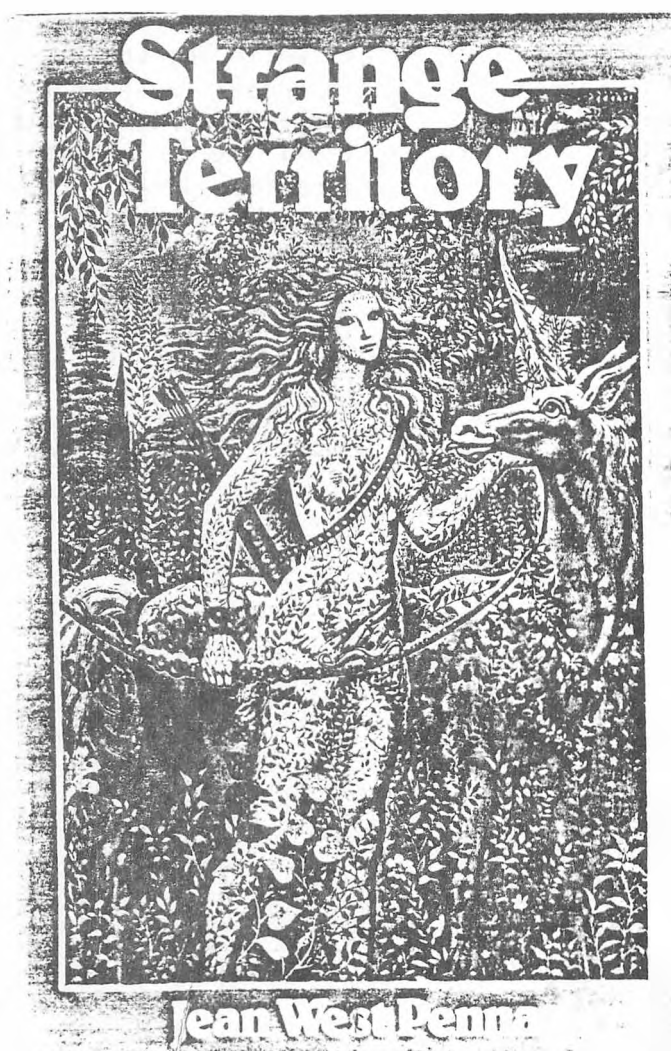
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STRANGE TERRITORY by Jean West Penna, Walrus Books, (c) 1983, cover by Wolfgang Grasse, trade paperback, \$5.95 Australian.

This book has a beautiful and eye-catching cover, showing amidst lush and delicate vegetation a bright blue, obviously male and phallic unicorn and a flower-wreathed slender virgin armed like the Huntress Goddess with richly jeweled bow and arrows. The cover suggests the book is a slightly mystical, 'wafty' fantasy. The blurb on the back indicates that it deals with the adventures of the survivors of a crashed spaceship, stranded on a lush alien planet. This is also some indication of the characters and background cultures of the four survivors: the rather naive narrator Fram, a crew member; the psychopathic officer Altorr; the spoiled, empty-headed aristocrat, Lady Clytha, prepared all her life for a brilliant

marriage that would bring more wealth to her planet; her shrewd maid Elney. When I first saw this book I found the blurb disjointed and felt it clashed or jarred with the cover illustration, and this put me off getting the book. Later I read a brief, favourable review, and decided to buy it after all.

I'm glad I did, though the author's style at first was not reassuring. There was an impression that she hadn't read much recent SF - this was purely due to Fram's referring to familiar things by slightly altered names, and to an absence of certain stylistic tricks that are part of the SFnal subculture, and which are so familiar to SF readers that they are not noticed. The prose is straightforward, unpretentious and attractive, and soon draws the reader in. It also gives an impression of rather old-fashioned naivety, which is very apt, for Fram's personality is that of a confirmed quiche-eater.



He doesn't fit in the very technology-minded, ambition-driven, impatient future Earth, although his interest in the past and in odd by-ways of learning has made him a far more useful person than more macho types. Altorr, the handsome, reckless, technologically-competent, swaggering Sub-Sipestro (equivalent I think to Second Mate) seems at first glance to be a more typical hero type, but promptly reveals himself as a villain - his lust for the upper-class virgin, Lady Clytha, leads him to deliberately crash the ship! His arrogance and aggressiveness, whatever their value in impressing his fellow humans, are a handicap in coping with wild nature, and he survives only by the (somewhat misplaced) kindness of Fram, for which he shows not only ingratitude but resentment, and violence.

Lady Clytha turns out to be not the heroine but something of a nuisance, not only unable to look after herself but unwilling to try - she is very much a victim of her conditioning and training, which is basically to be a combination of high status sex-object and ornament and a fragile fainting blossom who must be protected from the harshness of life. She is utterly shattered by her

experiences: rape and dishonour by the crazed Altorr and exile in the wilderness and finding out she is pregnant is nearly the last straw.

Elney is forever fussing over and pampering her silly mistress, to the intense irritation of Fram, yet she emerges as the most sensible and stable character in the book. Her bitterness against the male sexism and vanity which have lead the Sparians, Clytha's race, to basically sell off their upper-class women to the highest bidders and breed and train them for this purpose, is well depicted. She's drawn to Fram because the whole idea of picking a woman to enhance his ego or status by her uselessness ('conspicuous consumption') is quite incomprehensible to him - he prefers competent women, such as Elney!

One of the great strengths of the book is the depiction of the alien flora and

fauna - the blurb mentions that "The vegetation will intrigue you and the fauna repel you." I certainly wasn't repelled by the animal life, though some of it was quite nasty - dangerous creatures, while not pleasant to encounter in reality, are a good addition to any adventure tale. Fram was basically trained as a space-going farmer, specializing in edible fungus - his talent for coaxing plants into growth turns out to be most handy, and he discovers the uses of the local plants.

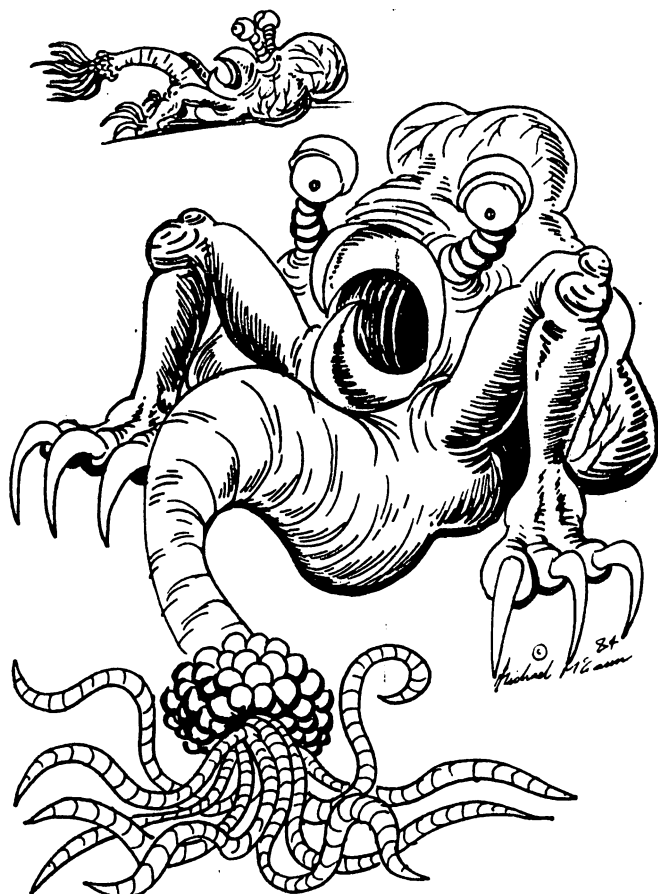
The planet also has sentient inhabitants - gentle, curious turtle-like crea-tures, quite devoid of technology but surprisingly capable of defending themselves. The humans never quite understand these 'Watchers' and vice versa. Even a simple attempt by the humans to share their technological know-how with the 'Watchers', the gift of a woven basket, turns out to be the cause of misfortune. Yet the aliens are pleasant company and useful friends.

This book is full of inventive and imaginative richness, and its comments on the disasterousness of stereotyping women's and men's roles, while somewhat heavily put across, are sensibly and intelligently expressed. Penna's ideas are shown by the actions and experiences of her characters, for she is a storyteller with a natural knack of a good tale. The cover, though it has apparently nothing to do with the characters or incidents of STRANGE TERRITORY, strongly expresses elements in the story, and has a wistful gentle melancholy that, despite the occasional grim incident, is the most noticeable mood of this unusual and interesting book.

PUBLISHER'S ADDRESS: Cory & Collins,
PO Box 66,
St. Kilda 3182,
Australia.

- Diane Fox.

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MARK ORTLIEB, GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Vic 3000.

Of the fiction in THE MENTOR 51, Gail Neville's was worth reading. The other two pieces struck me as derivative and superficial, but Gail certainly knows how to put a story together. I hope that she is aiming at a professional market.

With all due respect to Michael Hailstone, there is no such thing as a historical fact. Anything to do with history involves interpretation, and interpretations vary according to one's personal biases and opinions. The same applies to most cancer research, since scientists engaged in cancer research still aren't sure what 'causes' cancer. That fluorides may affect DNA doesn't really surprise me. A lot of chemicals do affect DNA. However, to say that fluoride affects DNA (in an unspecified way) and then state from this that other research indicating a link between fluoride and cancer is proved isn't really on, unless Dean Burk's research shows a mechanism. If Michael wants me to believe that then he should at least cite the Burk research paper that proves it. (I tend to be rather suspicious of scientific papers published in magazines like SIMPLY LIVING. If the scientific evidence is as devastating as Michael claims, then why haven't the papers been published in the scientific journals?) ((Oops, I forget There is a conspiracy between scientists isn't there...))

Minor factual correction, SOS THE ROPE appeared in F&SF and not in IF.

I can't really agree that the SUPERGIRL currently incarnated has much to do with the SUPERGIRL I remember from the comics. Indeed that's what annoys me about a lot of the Superman film stuff. It deliberately ignores a lot of the established Superman mythology as established in the comics. The Fortress of Solitude for instance, as shown in the film, is silly. Even with super powers, I can't see Superman being really comfortable there.

ANDY ANDRUSCHAK, PO Box 606, La Canada-Flintridge, Ca 91011, USA.

I am not sure if I should bother taking THE MENTOR 49 seriously. First we have A. Bertram Chandler talking about people attracted to nut cults. Then we get Hailstoe talking about fluoridation. I expect talk of secret societies like 'Delta Sigma Delta' in flying saucer magazines. I am not sure how to handle it in a fanzine. This Tuesday I am getting teeth capped and given the usual six-month checkup by Dr. Tedie Hudson. I am quite sure she knows what she is doing. I find it rather hard to believe she is in a plot to kill off the human race by poisoning everybody with fluoride.

I guess the bottom line is which studies you wish to believe. For every study that supports fluoridation, somebody can always find flaws. That is how the tobacco industry works. For every study that supports the increasing evidence that smoking kills, a well paid scientist can find some flaw or another that, with lots

of fast talking, can be used to try and flim-flam the public. As a recovering alcoholic, I face this problem a lot of times. A lot of fake studies are trying to support the idea that alcoholics can be taught to drink socially again. This flies in the face of years of evidence that this is not possible. And I still hear at AA meetings of some poor smuck who believed the stories about alcoholics learning to drink socially and tried it. A few even live to come back to AA and admit it was wrong.

After fluoride, what will future issues of THE MENTOR explore? Are we to get a re-run of the Dean Machine? Perhaps we can go into psi research... now there is an area more packed with fraud and deceit than flying saucers. You should be able to fill pages of your fanzine with talks about conspiracies and secret societies. And Velekovsky, so don't forget him.

(Actually TM covered the re-run of the Dean Machine and flying saucers back in the early 1970s. As to psi and related phenomena - see the photo in the column on Soviet sf. - Ron.)

JOHN J. ALDERSON, Havelock, Vic 3465.

Because I was contradicted I bought myself a book, Flood's ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE DREAMTIME, and I find the author confirms every statement I made, except where the good lady was wrong.

Seriously though, it would be the best introduction to the subject available. Right, there was never a land bridge between Asia and Australasia and the gap was never less than 50km (page 32). One cannot talk of 'waves' of invasions when the 'invaders' came here astride a floating log, and the last group in dug-out canoes, brought the dingo. There were perhaps two invasions, or perhaps a trickle (page 74, 143, 199). The languages all belong to the one family with the exception of the Djingili of the Barkly Tablelands and the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands (pages 196, 197). The Tasmanians are now believed to have been of the same kin as the mainlanders, their kinkly hair being a local mutation.

The reason I dismissed the four divisions of the human race in favour of the older three is because I believed that sub-dividing the Aborigines from the Caucasian (Indo-European really) was a matter of racism, but then I must concede that the latter was a group defined (in reality) as those not belonging to the Negroid or Asian and is largely based on hair characteristics.

I daresay that Richard Faulder should get half marks for noticing that my research suggests that the models, used by older anthropologists, are partly wrong, though he misses the obvious conclusion that I am saying they are partly wrong. Instead he prefers to consider me lacking in nous. His remarks on domination and power show his blinkered approach; he doesn't want to see. And I certainly did not say that our society's god was masculine. I know well that it is money, and if he had read my previous articles he would know what societies put such stress on money. If money has any rival for worship in this country then it is the TV set (which Ellison called the 'glass teat') and which has reminded others of a vulva on insignificant legs.

Alas, again I am accused of a "dislike of women". This time by Diane Fox, who quotes my account of Margaret Mead's study of the Manus Islanders most incorrectly. I did not "ignore the obvious" and I am fully aware of the spiritual malaise of the society and used it as the basis of the claim that it was under stress. And I did not say or infer that the Manus women were stupid. May I quote here ALDERSON'S FIRST LAW REGARDING PRETENSION: Any theory which relies for its validity on others being sillier than oneself is self-evidently wrong. So don't accuse me of such nonsense.

Again to Julie Vaux. I did not and do not use patriarchal for the same reason that I did not use 'matriarchal'. Both words are not really in favour amongst modern anthropologists. I left the characteristic of a male-dominated society calling their homeland a 'fatherland' because, if they do, it is only a minor and secondary characteristic. Most of them own cattle and some only own cattle, not the land. Eg the early Hebrews did not own the Negeb, only their flocks and herds. Some

of her guidelines are fair enough, but before going onto that does she seriously think, that after dealing with six different societies for women-dominated societies that I would only use one male-dominated? I admit that male-dominated societies are quite scarce. Also, due to waiting for material I used the Jewish society first, whereas it should conclude the section. As much as I could I have used at least one 'primitive' society per section and at least one 'advanced' society. Male-dominated societies are a bit of a headache. The obvious Indian society is actually a vast number of societies, each caste forming a separate society, and they vary enormously.

That "the leading god will be male" is of course correct, but recollect I have to start with the old model and here it is in need of correction. I know that - it is one of the points I will finally be making. "Women on marriage commonly take the male's name". Well! In the reign of Henry VIII the Commons passed a law insisting that the heirs to a man's estate bear his name. Before then, as now, on marriage the man made a vow "with all my worldly goods I thee endow" to the wife, who then, as now, immediately became his heir. The women of England promptly began calling themselves Mrs Joe Blow. Did that Act of Parliament make England a male-dominated society? Actually that guideline would virtually restrict male-dominated societies to the English. Sorry dear, we'll have to scrub that one.



The rest are much as the older models except for the societies being feudal or merchantile with caste and class laws. Feudal means a system where the Crown owns all the land etc and lets it out to underlings for a fee, and they in their turn to others for a fee etc. Nothing could be further from say, the Hebrew system or the Arab, whilst it is akin to the woman-dominated Egyptians. It was handy for an invader to declare all lands the property of the king (eg the Normans or in Australia) but this is a means to legitimise robbery, not the product of a social system. As for merchantile: alas the prominent male-dominated societies take a second place to the woman-dominated societies. The Romans had such a bad method of figuring that they left trade to their slaves, while the Melanesians are pre-eminently the world's traders. Caste is a phenomon of India though if Julie means the four Rigvedic varna (colour) or classes, I

am afraid they are present in most peoples who reach the stage of a king and army and are thus not a characteristic of male-dominated societies. Class, or peck-order, is very much a part of woman-dominated societies, is known in non-dominated societies and I daresay male-dominated societies are not free from its vanity either. I do not concede that even most monotheistic societies develop from polytheistic ones, but then that is the old model I disagree with. Similarly with a

man's heirs. After going to some length to illustrate that apparently in early Hebrew times primogeniture did not apply I get accused of being wrong and have three ways inheritance works pointed out. Julie, there are several score of ways inheritance can work. Despite Julie's arguments, it remains certain that in many cases the Jewish heir was the youngest son, and such a case as Solomon for example.. only two older brothers were ever implicated in any sort of rebellion, leaving many others eligible. The real model is that a man's sons will be his heirs, with daughters being an exception, and a wife being provided for by some means. As mankind seems to love variety there are probably cases where the uncle's sons were the man's heirs, but always the property would stay in the man's family. A tanist heir would not, as Julie suggests, alienate the property because by such an adoption the tanist heir would become part of the family. As to all the things I should have done, well, I haven't finished yet.

Finally, on a different matter - cannibalism. To deny that cannibals did exist is really flying in the face of evidence. I believe that there are ex-cannibals in the Papua-New Guinea Parliament and who are quite willing to talk of their unregenerate past. I do not like the slur that early white anthropologists and explorers were so biggoted that they were ready to attribute to "obviously sub-human savages" any behaviour they considered disgusting. I have read too much of their works to accept that rubbish. Such racism came in late in the piece. It is, however, a human trait that tribes when asked about cannibalism denied (probably with honesty) that they were cannibals but said that their neighbours were (political propaganda). Herodotus said much the same thing about the Grecian neighbours (probably with some truth) and I doubt if the Greeks were then far removed from cannibalism. A distinction must be made between acts partaken of, or condoned by, a society and similar acts done by renegades of a society. Thus, though the English do not condone either human sacrifice or cannibalism, both are done by practitioners of black magic. In Australia human sacrifice takes place, but I have not heard of cannibalism... amongst whites, by the way. Aboriginal folklore, like say German folklore, has a lot to say about such individual perversions, but their societies do not and did not condone such practices.

BORIS ZAVGORODNY, 100000, Болград-00, главпочтамт, по вх требованя,
Завгороднему Борису Александровичу.

In future I am going to send off my articles typewritten. When I can manage to buy a Latin typewriter then my letters will be more legible. And when I acquire the right amount of English then I believe my correspondence, including that to you, will be more intensive. By now I have sent off about a hundred letters to the western fans, but the answers so far have come only from Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark. Quite recently I received a letter from Brian Aldiss, which was a real delight for me. At the same time some of the letters returned unanswered - evidently the addresses were not sufficiently exact.

On the fan scene there is nothing new. Recently I have been to Astrakhan trying to get a job. I quit my last job because the work hours restricted my trips to other fan clubs. Unfortunately I didn't find anything suitable for me there, but I did pay a visit to the local fan club, Labyrinth. It was rewarding. Later I looked around the city and got some glimpses of the Old Kremlin where a zarevitch was supposedly murdered at the time of Ivan the Terrible.

{From a later letter:} I failed to find the sort of job that would suit me down to the ground - the sort of job that would take the minimum of my time and provide the maximum of money with the least effort. I must confess that work in my life is of secondary importance. My life is centred more and more around SF. From the time I first started work (I was 15) I have had more than 50 jobs, but have not acquired a permanent profession. I have held such jobs as a fitter and turner, builder, have loaded cargo, slung hash at hashhouses, done some work in explosives, gone to the North as a lumberjack (in order to earn some big money), but did not stay there for long, and came back home.

{Well, that experience is a good background for a writer. - Ron.}

DAMIEN BRODERICK, 10 Marks St., Brunswick, Vic 3056.

Thanks for The Mentors 50 and 51. It's a pity you still haven't sent me a copy of the issue containing Cooper's purported interview, because I don't have on hand the copy I borrowed from Bruce Gillespie; this makes it a little difficult to respond in detail to Cooper's absurd comments. And I'm not sure what your own reaction was to my remarks in 50, since most of your reply at the top of p.44 seems to have vanished into your word processor, leaving only an enigmatic half sentence.

{Unfortunately I don't have any copies of TM 50 left; the print run was too close to the mailing total. My comments to you were much as I wrote. - Ron.}

The main point which your attentive readers will have noticed is that he nowhere answers the points of substance I raised to prove how badly he had interfered with my original words. He "affirms" that what he sent you was an "accurate rendition of the substance of that interview", an affirmation rendered farcial by his refusal to explain the gaps between what he attributes to me as my views and what I know perfectly well to be my views.

There's a quite simply way to settle the issue. All he had to do is provide an impartial auditor (Gillespie, say) with the tape of our conversation. If he's reused the tape in the meantime, his word-for-word first draft transcription of the tape would serve, though not really satisfactorily. (Why? because I doubt that someone as sloppy as D. Jason would ever have typed up a word-perfect transcript; if I'm wrong I'll be delighted to apologise - and look closely at the transcript.)

He admits to censoring out at least one question and answer. I assert that he cut out more than that, for I recall chiding him more than once for his maladroit choice of questions.

He says most mysteriously that he "double cliched a statement" (unless, Ron, this is one of your amazing and frequent typos); and agrees -- while glossing over its significance -- that he "put titles by authors' names". Of course this very intrusion is what caused Gillespie (among others, no doubt) to suppose that my actual string of randomly uttered names of the well-known was in fact a carefully-researched and pre-meditated ranking by worth of Australian sf authors.

{The "double cliched a statement" was from a handwritten note. It could have been "double checked"... - Ron.}

But there's little point in going on with this, because Cooper is clearly a dill. Look at his first paragraph. "He says I pestered him for an interview." Cooper exerts himself to the point of frothing over this supposed fact. Of course, as anyone can see, I simply never made this claim. I did speak of appreciating why Harlan Ellison screams lawyer at "boors and creeps" who "insist on ambushing" him. Even D.Jason must realise that "ambush" cannot possibly connote "pestering". If he has trouble grasping this point, he might ask his local recruiting officer to explain it.

What's more, he explains in a hurt way that he did not disparage Bruce Gillespie. No, you ninny, and at no point did I say you did. What you did do was make it look as if I disparaged Bruce, an event far more likely to wound a discerning fan.

As I say, other than these revealing and rather astonishing evidences that even in his rebuttals D.Jason hasn't got the wit to read what's in front of him, there's no teeny attempt in his righteous "affirmation" to explain the fuck-ups I mentioned in my first scream of rage.

How could I have told him that Bert (sadly dead in the midst of this unseemly dispute) was on top of my list of Aussie sf writers, when (with all due respect) I deemed Bert by and large a competent turner of routine adventure stories, and a rather dreary one when he attempted anything more ambitious? I suppose I'd put Turner at the top of such a list, if I had agreed to do such a foolish thing, for Turner as we all know is a superior chandler in the sf store.

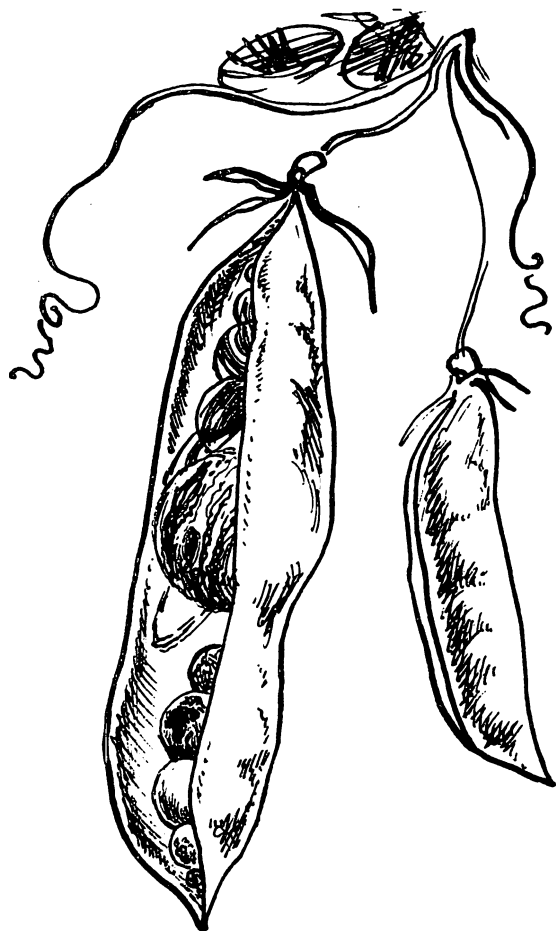
Then, of course, there was that great howler about the "string of battles" in VALENCIES. Not a word from D. Jason on this ridiculous claim -- just his sanctimonious and unsupported "affirmation" of honesty and cleanliness. Golly, it was such a relief to find that D. Jason was not after all a professional journalist but just something else.

IGOR TOLOCONNILOU, c/- Poste Restante, Volgograd, USSR.

The Chandler Grumblings is good - that's a sea captain for you, always observing. As to the metric system, as you may know, we dispensed with our old system long ago. And you know what? it is still around. Now, though it has lost its distinctive meaning, it merely puts a poetic stress to speech.

MEMO TO THE DEPARTMENT by Neville is a good laugh. Other stories did not fare as well. BELOVED ALIEN is written in a much exploited manner (I don't deny the plausability of the story) and ICE COLD IN PADDO is a flop. I wonder what exactly the characters' occupations are, and if they are guarding a food supply - why the ending? And where does the scavenger get to? Though Gail bases her story realistically, she mixes (like Alderson) different facts. The men in the boat were indeed desperate when cut off suddenly from their usual supplies. But in this story, the characters have lived approximately ten years in a changed world and ought therefore to have found some other means of survival without reverting to such practices.

SOLID ZEN by Julie Vaux (with the question of intertwining words and philosophy) is also good, as also the portfolio of artwork in TM 48. Quite a combination - the story and art!



Neville, Hibbert, Hanna - they did a consistent criticism on J. Alderson's work. I can only add that Alderson makes a methodological error when he confirms his set of definitions of matriarchy with examples from world history and then applies it to a non-existent society (which exists only in his mind's eye, I would say) instead of a real one. Well, as I see it, Alderson has decided to show if such traits are found in societies, such traits are valid ones. But is there any doubt as to the origin of them? I don't think so; there are only two kinds - male and female - after all, and both influence a society. What is he trying to prove in any case? That men are dominated by women now? Or long ago? Or will in fact be one day?

As to a matriarchy, the plain truth is that primitive beliefs will be dominant on a primitive level, i.e. matriarchy as the most simply conception of society. By the way, women had the honour of introducing an art into a society. Consider this.

However, I'm conscious of the fact that these are only fragments published, so I would reserve my judgement and would like to refer those who wish to read further to the excellent works of W. Turner (THE FOREST OF SYMBOLS, Ithica, 1967; THE DRUMS OF AFFLICTION, Oxford, 1968; SCHISM AND CONFORMITY IN AN AFRICAN SOCIETY, Manchester, 1957) which explores primitive beliefs and uncovers some of them in our present society. (Russian ones aren't generally known, I presume).

All in all I agree with Waddington that this rubic stimulates our own thinking. Waddington also writes (TM 48) that we must note the fact that fandom is spreading. I add to this that there is a danger of it becoming a closed group, on either side. Let us beware of this.

I liked the artwork, but can not say much on the subject except there is a preponderance of women! Emancipation?

DIANE FOX, P.O. Box 1194, North Sydney, N.S.W. 2060

Peter Brodie's BUCK in The Mentor #50 was a startler, all right. The first page seemed to be a cutesy animal story, but I soon realised that it was S.F. - or rather, dystopian fantasy. The ending had a nasty sting in its tail. I imagine the fate of the two sadistic 'hunters' would be a fiendishly nasty one.

Liked Mike McGann's sardonic comment on wargaming as a new heresy in fandom, about to Take Over by Armed Military Coup.

Interesting comments from Steve Sneyd on cannibalism. Apparently there's a disease spread by cannibalism - there's one tribe in an isolated area in New Guinea whose members eat dead friends and enemies, and consequently many of the tribe die of the disease. Shortage of animal or vegetable protein would also be another cause of cannibalism - many cannibal tribes lived in places where there were few large animals suitable for food, and they hadn't many crops that provided protein-rich foods as a substitute. Or else their methods of hunting weren't efficient. They'd have plenty of food but have a specific craving for meat.

Another reason for cannibalism might become important in the future - absorbing information from the victims nervous system, as in the flatworm experiments. There's a good deal about this in Gene Wolfe's BOOK OF THE NEW SUN series. The brain would have to be eaten, preferably as fresh as possible.

Marc Ortlieb's question "Why haven't the dentists banded together to outlaw sugar" is easily answered. One, the sugar industry is a good deal larger and more powerful than the dental industry. Two, dentists would certainly not seriously wish to see sugar banned as they'd lose 90 percent of their customers and clients, etc.! Good heavens no!

GROWING UP ABSURD sounds interesting. One point - if society offers no 'challenges' to lively and intelligent youths because it is over-organised, then of course there would be a genuine challenge - change the society! I'd consider this risky enough and difficult enough to please and excite the most courageous.

An all-female society isn't particularly desirable, because women are also human beings i.e. greedy, devious, selfish, just the same as men are. The only difference would be that if any crimes, atrocities or stupidities were committed in an all-female society, women would have to accept the blame themselves rather than be able to reassure themselves that only men would act in such a useless and unpleasant way. (Probably there would be a lot less direct crime and violence, but there would certainly be some.)

{I don't know. In an all female society there might be the same amount of direct crime and violence, as the ratio of people who are stronger than others would be the same. Of course it may be some time before factors become conducive to such a society, both morally and technically. - Ron.}

On to The Mentor #51.

Kerrie Hanlon's front and back cover are somewhat erotic and suggestive. I liked the rather freudian symbolism of the title of the front cover. I also enjoyed the suggestion on the back cover of pleasant ways for the survivors of a space disaster to fill their time while waiting to be rescued!

Alan Stewart's PASSTIME was fun. Yes, a society with (apparently) immortality would soon become drearily hidebound and conservative, I'd expect. I liked the neat surprise ending, it was built up to but wasn't telegraphed.

Soviet SF article - interesting! But the translation was less than satisfactory. WATCHMAN TO MY BROTHER sounds like a good novel. I hope it is translated soon. Russian SF seems to be strictly SF, rather than SF/fantasy as some western SF is. (Shouldn't the title of the book translate as MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?)

(I don't think so. If you read the titles of some of the sf novels in the article by Arthur C. Clarke in 1984 - SPRING you will note that titles that a phrases in English are not translated that way in titles. The fans do their won translations. - Ron.)

The ending of the article seemed abrupt and I expected to see it continued on the next page.

{The reason for that was that the last review just fitted on the page, and there was not enough room for Boris's name. - Ron.}

Peter Brodie's clone story QUALITY was rather witty although slight; Steve Sneyd's astronomical poem was most beautiful and strange. I'd like more information about this particular star too!

Gail Neville's THE CLOUD SHIPS - reminded me a little of STAR TREK THE MOTION PICTURE - the space ship is infested with carbon-based life forms! Were Rama and Gauda gods, or godlike aliens given such names in order to emphasize their awesomeness?

I liked Esther Mace's portfolio. The sandworm looked a bit like a giant shark. (ie a Jaws).

You misprinted my letter, making part of paragraph two somewhat incoherent.

Richard Faulder's letter was strange - he seems to be criticising John Alderson for being pro-feminist or something similiar. That's like calling Hitler a Zionist. Yes, women do tend to live slightly longer than men. This is a biological advantage and has nothing to do with culture. (There are more widows than widowers because men prefer wives who are younger than themselves but this is getting a little away from the subject). In that past, men usually lived longer than women because women were much more likely to die or be permanently damaged during childbirth. Now that women have fewer children and under medically improved conditions, the slight superiority of the female constitution is more noticable. (Women were thought of as the Weaker Sex in the olden days because of the perils of reproduction.)

I might add for Richard's benefit that ours is not the only society that reveres wealth above spiritual matters - for thousands of years moralists have been denouncing this human habit. There was even an experiment on introducing the concept of coins to a group of apes. (If they put the coins in a slot machine, they could get various kinds of fruit). The apes soon became as mercenary and prone to cheat one another as our own species.

PETER BRODIE, 12/13 Waratah Street, Cronulla, N.S.W.

Ta for TM #51. Thought it time to make a few comments.

Bit of T and P on the cover, eh? Interesting back illo, too. Roll on, Kerrie. Care to see my etchings?

PASSTIME by Alan Stewart was a good amusing short piece. I always enjoy stories, no matter how short or long, that include a lot of seemingly 'innocent' background. They add to the depth of the tale being presented.

The article on Russian SF reminds me of a time, about twelve years ago when I went through a period of reading the stuff. A lot was hard to get through, seemingly concentrating on some dry intellectual mythos (ala SOLARIS book and film) or the vaguely humourous. The only piece that sticks in my mind was a short story about this inventor who leaves his robot to guard his house while he goes to have his head shaved for the summer and can't get back into the house as the droid doesn't have his new visage in its memory (I think he had his beard shaved off as well). Can't think of the title now.

Diane Fox's book reviews continue to give the no-shit approach to these pieces of paper with writing on them that come between covers. She calls drivel, drivel. So her thoughts on a book are always worth considering.

THE CLOUD SHIPS by Gail Neville had some interesting things to say on 'what is life' but its tone and much of the prose left me to think that she's seen STAR TREK THE SLOW MOTION SPECIAL EFFECT too many times. The last page is very

reminiscent. Well written though.

The artwork throughout was very good. Some better than others but a lot of variety both in styles and content, which makes for a more interesting zine all round and also perhaps gives encouragement to those who might be thinking of sending in some artwork.

Thanks to all for the kind words regarding my pitiful prose efforts. It never ceases to amaze me how Ron keeps printing only those letters that have something nice to say about my work.

ALAN STEWART, 2/34 Manningham St., Parkville, Vic 3052.

... I agree with Roger Waddington's comments regarding Aust. S.F. lately. The Australian names just aren't in the current anthologies like NEW WRITINGS IN SF of the past. Perhaps it is the lack of such 'original anthologies' being published and available today. I can't really remember seeing any 'new' such anthology series around on the bookshelves in the last few years. Have I just missed them? Or are the ORBITS, NEW WRITINGS, CHRYSALIS and NEW DIMENSIONS gone, without evolving into contemporary descendents? Particularly with respect to Aust S.F. stories. They must be around, seeing the fanzines such as THE MENTOR continue to publish fiction.

{I haven't seen many original anthologies at all, except the 'Best Of The Year' regulars, certainly not the like of Carnell's NEW WRITINGS. It looks like those that used to be published regularly are dead, with no descendents. - Ron.

I also appreciated the A. Bertram Chandler Biography, as the various publishers and issues make it difficult to organise just what he has written and in what order. I look forward to tracking down some of the earlier ones I haven't seen yet.

MICHAEL HAILSTONE, PO Box 193, Woden, A.C.T. 2606.

Don't know whether I like the new-look MENTOR all that much; it seems to have lost some of its old cosy familiarity.

All I can say about Alan Stewart's story PASSTIME is that, just as the story seemed about to begin, I reached the end!

Where did you get hold of the stuff about Soviet sf, and who did the English translation? One minor quibble though: Shouldn't the title of Vladimir Michailov's book, STOROZH BRATU MOYEMU, literally A WATCHMAN TO MY BROTHER, be better more idiomatically rendered as MY BROTHER'S KEEPER? Surely that is meant at the end of the novel: "I am not my brother's keeper. But I am his defender/champion..." It seems that the metaphor is to be found in Russian as well as English.

I was a little comforted to read Diane Fox's review of THE PLAINS and her uncertainty how to appraise the book. I fear I may have made a fool of myself in my comments thereon in my letter to SCIENCE FICTION. But then those comments arose from my expectations, which were prompted by a review I heard on the radio. But I can find only one dust jacket on my copy, and it is bright green, not blue. And there is nothing wrong with my colour sight.

Odd, isn't it, how my article on lead and fluoride seems to have evoked more sympathy overseas than in Australia. I don't remember saying anything about the belligerence of the general public, but I think Harry Warner is right to mention it. Indeed I feel quite paranoid near groups of young people nowadays, though I don't know how much that is due to my own paranoia. But, to get back to the point, there is one aspect in which the British are diametrically opposed: Whereas the British kick up one hell of a fuss, as Alex Stewart has mentioned on fluoride, when politicians and bureaucrats try to impose such a thing on the people; Australians just gutlessly and apathetically lie back and let the bastards walk right over them. Anybody who dares to protest is automatically a shitstirrer and ratbag. "Don't let it worry you, mate. She'll be right."

I think it's time I came out of the closet about these supposedly

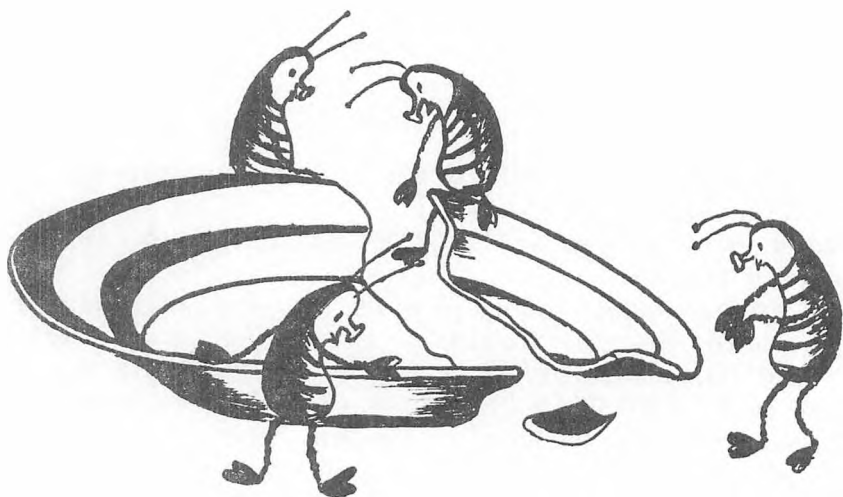
scientific folk who condemn such things as astrology and the tarot without having looked into them to see whether there might be some truth in there somewhere. Sure, some of it is nonsense, but it sure annoys me to see and hear wholesale rejection born out of blind prejudice. You all seem to think just because science has done such wonderful (and horrible) things, the lores that don't fit into modern science won't be able to explain how astrology and the tarot really work? Though, quite frankly, I don't think science will advance that far; it will have destroyed itself (and us) before then.

I read *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS* way back when the film came out, but there is one thing about the novel that does stick in my mind: It's more than just a travelogue; it also pokes a bit of fun at the English. You have Phineas Fogg as the archtypical English eccentric, and there's that bit about the judge in Madras (or somewhere) going on about his wig.

SUE BURSZTYNSKI, 45 Hartingdon Street, Elsternwick, Vic 3185

Your zine is certainly looking beautiful these days - clear and readable and doing justice to the fine artwork submitted.

Speaking of artwork, I was most impressed by Kerrie Hanlon's covers for #51; not only does she draw beautifully, she always seems to have something interesting to say in those drawings of hers.



Esther Mace's art portfolio in this issue was also beautiful. The *DUNE* one would make a lovely painting. The Conan one was also excellent, filled with movement, summing up what the Conan stories are about. The letters of Conan's name are cleverly worked out.

I'm glad to see so many book reviews, as it's always handy to have someone else's opinion before buying - and, of course, to have one's attention drawn to books one hasn't seen. It's also a good idea to have a column catering for Australian books. Diane does her reviews well. Possibly there's just a bit

too much detail; I personally would rather not know all about a book before I read it. However, on the strength of her review of *FRONTIER WORLDS*, I've brought a copy. Hope it's as good as she says!

I'm curious to know John Alderson's source for his statement that a Jewish man has to marry his brother's widow only if the brothers were living together. I know the sentence in the Bible, but these aren't usually taken literally; generations of scholars have had a marvellous time splitting hairs over Biblical interpretations. In any case, it's the first I've heard of it. If true, it could get many a couple off the hook! In the old days, of course, they may not have been so eager to be let off, because a woman without children couldn't necessarily count on her husband's family to look after her out of the kindness of their hearts. It was considered a woman's right - and the ceremony by which a man renounced it was carefully designed to make him look slightly ridiculous.

But, believe it or not, the law exists to this day. I've heard of a case in which a man got run over on his wedding day, after the ceremony, and his widow was expected to wait for his one-year-old brother to grow up and let her off. Fortunately for her, the court stuck out its collective neck and released her.

A fascinating interpretation of the word "Israel" as meaning "Rachel's man" - presumably from the words "ish Rachel" - I'd never thought of that one before! Only trouble is, it isn't spelt that way in Hebrew at all and, in the Bible at least, doesn't seem to be connected in any way with the story of Jacob's marriage but with his wrestling all night with God - literally! And the Hebrew for "husband" is "ba'al" not "ish". An interesting theory all the same. Again, I'd love to know where it came from, so I can look it up for myself.

I've been enjoying Gail Neville's stories. I'm not enough of a scientist to be able to pick holes in them. So have appreciated her skill and her delightful characters. I hope we'll see more of her work in MENTOR.

Before closing, I'd just like to say, with other readers, that I'm saddened by the news of Bert Chandler's death. I'll miss his "Grimesish Grumblings", but most of all, I'll miss him. He was the first person to make me feel at ease at my first con and when we met again a year later, he remembered me. We met at a few cons and it seems so strange to think that there will be no more... ah, well.

JULIE VAUX, 14 Zara St., Willoughby, NSW.

Concerning The Mentor 51 - very strange covers.

It's ironically funny that Eric should end his letter on the Tarot 'correspond with reality' cos Tarot cards are linked to the Principle of Correspondence, ie Macrocosm equals microcosm, greater is linked or echoed by lesser. The 'results' of a Tarot reading are based on the correspondence of symbols with 'reality' - the crossover from the symbolic realm to mundania. I just hope I haven't muddled up the principles of magic in my remarks as it well becomes a would-be bard/ess to be in acquaintance with the Theory of Magic, if not practice.

{Julie also mentioned a mistake made in her poem in TM51. The correct version is hereunder. - Ron.}

IN MEMORY OF A. B. CHANDLER

You set your sight so far outwards
that your own light far raced forwards
you've left us earth bound
broken gravity's bond
forever now you can sail
along the edge of night
blazing a star bright trail
burning nova ever bright.

ROGER WADDINGTON, 4 Commercial St., Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 9ES, UK.

Received The Mentor 50; I must admit the offset came as a bit of a shock. Sf fen being the most traditional of people, it's very hard to see the end of an era, one more fanzine going over and leaving stencils behind; who's going to be the Keeper of the Flame now? Though can forgive much, for this clarity; justified margins, too. Though I suspect it was trying to achieve this, left an extra 'not' in my LoC: "I do not appreciate a well-drawn female.

Think I had the news of Bertram Chandler's death the last time I wrote, thanks to the fan press and various letters. Even though the shock's receded mpw. I'm still going to miss him. Not the least that he, for me, was one of the great writers of entertainments (to use the Graham Greene term) stories. without a shred of message or philosophy designed to occupy readers, keep publishers happy, and the skekels flowing in. Oh, I know that he wrote THE BITTER PILL and KELLY COUNTRY, besides the Grimes novels (and I've read them both) on his more serious side, but I think he'll be more remembered for giving so much pleasure. Like Murray Leinster, that practitioner of an earlier age, he could maybe be regarded as more of a

craftsman, a jobbing writer, than an artist. But his achievement isn't any the less, for that.

Sorry to hear that the Damien Broderick interview wasn't the authorised version, but it had the same effect, that of leading me to look up what he's been writing recently, and track those books down. Though I doubt Damien would see that as sufficient justification. Defending a comment he didn't intend to make (the philosophic overtones are enormous) and hopefully speaking as a mass audience, Lee Harding is well known to me for appearing in the magazines (notably with SPACEMAN in Worlds of IF). whereas George Turner, for example, I didn't think of as an author before YESTERDAYS MEN. A critic, yes; but that's a much more limited field. Certainly he hasn't been in there so often as Chandler and Wodhams; and I'm probably part of the last generation who'll equate fame with magazine appearances; but he's still one of the best known. Cherry Wilder I know from the periodic NEW WRITINGS IN SF, Wynne Whiteford from the Carnell years of NEW WORLDS and SF ADVENTURES, though of the other names that Damien mentions, I've only come across three. Which shows how little I still know about Australian sf.

Joy's comment on the 'unreal' crime of possessing pot, stirs thoughts of how long this present system can last, how many years are left for the Protestant work ethic that governs it. With judges and police in the front line to defend the status quo, their position increasingly undermined by a growing acceptance of the alternative, drug-based society, what happens next? Oh, there's been stories before, but they're on the level that it's either (a) instigated by Communists to take over the country, or (b) a new Paradise, where everyone can lie around in drug-induced dreams; and both are equally idiotic. I'd like to see the stories that explore the possibilities beyond, when this culture is past; stories based on real extrapolation, not present prejudice. Mind you, would they be commercial enough to sell? Are we ready for such stories?

Diane Fox's glimpses into her Den much appreciated. I'd like to think that it's through your efforts I've seen an increasing number of Australian books reviewed in the overseas mags, in prozines such as Locus and Analog; but I suspect it's more through Cory & Collins' own efforts. Still, the more they're seen in the marketplace, the more attention they receive; and who knows, there might be more Australian writers selling abroad, besides Chandler and Wodhams (and Harding). And onwards to the Silver Jubilee issue!

HARRY WARNER jr, 423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, Maryland 21740, USA.

The offset reproduction is quite good in this issue. The only serious casualty from the change seems to be the little pictures of paper-back covers on the final pages, which don't seem to retain as much tonal gradation as they did under your old electrostenciling. On the other hand, your picture at the start of the editorial looks better than ever before.

[I had trouble with the amount of ink being taken from the one spot on all the pages of the reviews. Also those covers had been photocopied too dark. - Ron.]

Diane's book reviews have a welcome length to them, enabling her to combine reactions and objective descriptions. I suppose some readers will complain that she gives away too much information about how some of the stories come out. But who can read all the science fiction and fantasy that gets reviewed nowadays? And who can remember all the reviews? I suppose it spoils the suspense for anyone who happens to read a book immediately after seeing the review. If a month or so intervenes, the denouement will probably vanish from most memories.

I found it hard to relax and let enjoyment from the A. Bertram Chandler column seep through my intellect this time, due to the unhappy knowledge of his death. It's another pleasant column, the kind that made me look forward to each issue of THE MENTOR, but my attention inevitably was distracted by thoughts that there wouldn't be much more new ABC writing in fanzines and by gratitude that he had a generally good time in Japan late in life. Curiously, I don't remember the autobiography at all. Maybe I wasn't on your waiting list that long ago and maybe

those memory cells dropped dead a while back.

Peter Brodie's story makes me feel even more stupid than usual. Either I didn't read carefully enough or the author didn't reveal quite enough information or I'm unaware of a generally accepted theory or something else is wrong. I think I understand that the majority of the characters are projections or something or real people of another location. But I don't understand who the hunters are, where they came from, or the meaning of the last paragraphs. The story sticks in my memory, despite its or my failings.

Either you or I mistyped a word in my loc: three lines from the end of the first paragraph on page 41, it should be "sex charge" instead of "sex change" which isn't a crime in the United States to the best of my knowledge. Oh, well, a local newspaper advertised yesterday a strumpet for sale, adding that the merchandise had been recently cleaned and was in good condition. And Harry Andruschak's loc makes me wonder if Shakespeare read fanzines. One of the most famous group homes for fans in New York City was known as The Nunnery because its previous inhabitants had been ladies of the night.

BORIS ZAVGORODNY (Address as per previous loc).

I am hard put to tell anything new to interest such sophisticated readers as those of THE MENTOR, but I'll try and see what I can do. It must be said that I have at my disposal only the last few issues of THE MENTOR, and understandably enough my knowledge about this interesting fanzine is rather sketchy. I am not in a position to argue that such and such a story by whats-his-name is not so bad and I don't think I have what it takes to find out the third mistake in Clarke's ODYSSEY, since I have not the foggiest idea of how it looks, the book, I mean. In one of the copies of THE MENTOR I came across a letter by A.B. Chandler (I was very sorry to learn about his untimely death - the best people pass away early) where he discusses poetry and the metric system. It may well be best not to replace the old words that are easy on the ear, and hence so poetic, such as the inch, foot, mile and so on, by more matter-of-fact ones such as kilogramme, metre and kilometre. Maybe it would be enough to consider a mile as equal to one kilometre. In that case poetry would retain its expressiveness and the technological unification would proceed unhindered.

I enjoyed the letter by Hailstone where he tells how he first got into Sf. It seems to me it is very natural on the part of any reader to ask himself how he was bitten by the Sf bug. I fell to thinking, and soon realised that I do not know for sure when I was. Certainly this is not the first time I thought about it - I already know how I first got to know Sf.

I remember clearly the time that I, already fascinated with science fiction, was not content with the books available at the local juvenile library (the Sf, by the way, was represented by fairy tales and such books as THE BARON MUNCHHAUSEN and WINNIE THE POOH) and I made my mother take out a card in my name at some lending library near where we lived and I used to pop in there almost every day, browsing amongst the books and inhaling their strange, but already pleasant, smell. Maybe it was then and there that I came down with Sf, and that so seriously that I will never get over it till I die. I became familiar with many new books, but the ones that impressed me most were THE PLUTONIA and SANNIKOV'S LAND by V. Obruchev - books devoted to earth's past. I read and reread them, gradually sinking into an unusual, wonderful, but yet real world of my own. The windowsill represented a range where herds of plasticine brontosaurus were grazing along with diplodocus and stegosaurus made of the same stuff. Under the kitchen table was the vicious tyrannosaurus, with the dog-like name of Rex, lurking for prey. However the animals he was stalking rarely fell into his claws, for the herds were vigilantly protected by the fighter plane in my hand that nose-dived with a dismal howl, making the brutes huddle together, while the bad 'un slunk away under the table, as hungry as could be.

When I reminisced about whether it had all started when I thought it did, I found the answer was no. I recollect a rather curious experience - at one

time, when I was about five years old, I was standing near the porch of the apartment house with some of the boys. The day was ending when we happened to look up at the sky - and there was a star shooting across the skyscape. We tried to guess where it would land, making plans to find it. It was falling slowly, and I was pretty sure I knew where it came down. "Down there!" I told the others authoritatively, pointing to the dark basement. We rushed down, striking matches as we went and, oh, a miracle, there it lay, the star, in the dirt and dust. It was only after I grew up that I understood that it was but an ordinary ironstar coated with silver paint, one of those things used to decorate a fir tree at Xmas, and what had happened was the long arm of coincidence. At that time I was dead sure it was a real live star, my star. I hastened to ensure this sank into the minds of my gang. It was no picnic, with them so many and me so small, to make them believe it. Those were the days of serene childhood.



It could be that my love of fiction started when I dropped into the reading hall of a library after classes and read on till I was made to leave. Even today I remember the thrill I felt while reading the first books by the Brothers Strugatsky. That is going back some! And when reading THE PREDATORS OF THE CENTURY I came to the page where it told of how the previous guest in a boardinghouse had presented the hostess's son with bathing trunks and him saying: "Sonuvabitch! I went in swimming and them trunks melted away!" I almost roared with laughter. This disturbed the other readers who looked up at me from their books with disgust. The library girl made indignant noises but it was all I could do to stop laughing as I went over and over the phrase. Now a similar passage might raise a smile, at the most.

It was with interest that I read Chandler's story in TM 48 about how he was held up. Well, I thought, it's still a long way to the peaceful, bright and happy future; it

brought to mind an incident that had befallen me not so long ago.

I had returned home from work late and had poured some soup, taken up a book with a happy sigh and was at the most interesting place in the book when the double window in my kitchen was smashed to pieces and a rock crashed down bang! in my plate, splashing soup all over the table, me and, woe betide the day! the book. My mouth opened and shut as I tried to collect my scattered wits. I took up a towel and tried to dry the book - no soap. It was too wet, so I dried myself. I took up the stone - could it be a meteorite? No, it didn't look like one because there were no traces of its passage through the atmosphere. It was a simple rock like you could see anywhere around here. I then commenced a slow burn. Infuriated, I rushed out into the street. The bench just in front of the house was occupied by two decrepit old ladies. "Who did it?" I shouted. "Those two guys," they replied, pointing to two men loafing around the corner. I ran up to them, grabbed their arms and pulled them along. They didn't seem to understand anything but walked along by my side. My grip on them did not relax. I brought them up to the shattered window and, by my furious look, sort of asked them what on earth did they mean by busting it? "Well, you're nuts," they remonstrated. "We don't know anything about your damn window." "All right then," I said, and since the decrepit ladies kept on wailing "They're the

fellows!", I appealed to them to call in the militia. "He will find out whether it was you or someone else," I told my detainees. The word 'militia' acted like a red rag to a bull. "Oh, you talk of militia," the nearer of them exclaimed, and I was bounced under the impact of a good push into the hands of the other. As I flew back to the starting point I realised that these two guys were each double my size. As I repeated my journey I managed to get in a good sock, but felt all the time that I was losing on points. Then the circus started.

I was knocked around like a ball, and not able to give as well as I was receiving I thought that I would soon be out for the count. I made a bid to break away but my adversaries were in no mood to let me go. I rushed up the stairs and into my apartment, with the two irate gentlemen in hot pursuit. My thoughts ran on at a feverish pace: "What's this! My home is my castle, but I am still retreating," as I tried to escape through the narrow corridors by sheer speed. I ran into my room and slammed the door, but I was not quick enough. The door creaked on its hinges under mighty thumps from outside and seemed about to give way any second. "I won't weather this siege," I thought desperately, as I looked around my room at all the books which I had taken so much pain to collect. A rapier hanging above the davenport caught my eye, and I visualized Zehlyaznoi's and Murkok Tolkin's characters. I left the door to itself and, with a loud "Hurrah", jumped onto the davenport as if it was a purebred steed and snatched the rapier from the wall. My adversaries rushed into the room and in their ardent desire to tear me to pieces did not pay heed to the fact there was another factor in the picture. I was now armed and dangerous. My adversaries stopped in their tracks, looking rather bewildered. I realised that I should follow up my advantage and I rushed at them and made them shamefully retreat. By adroitly prodding their backsides with my weapon, I forced them out of my apartment and downstairs untill they were out in the yard. The enemy forces were dispersed, so I returned home with flying colours, stroking the bruises and bumps on my face.

"That's the stuff to give 'em," one of the ladies on the bench said approvingly. "You sure had it all over 'em," the other added admiringly. Then, after giving the matter some thought, one of the ladies remarked "I'm not sure it was them that busted the window." The other one seemed of the opinion that it was some teenager who threw the rock. I felt another slow burn coming, but checked myself, counted up to ten, and left. I was sure to be the laughing stock of the neighbourhood for a pretty long time. A Russian proverb crossed by mind - 'The circus is gone, but the clown remains.' Just my luck!

I must interrupt my recollections; the more so because they are not all that interesting. Anyone can think of something unusual that happened to him at one time or another.

I wrote this letter having in my some quite definite aims: to increase my correspondence and exchange of info about myself with fellow fans. A bit of background: I am 32, and have a job as a common worker. I finished secondary school, married twice but both my wives did not share my interest in Sf. In 1981 my efforts brought about the establishment of the 'Wind Of Time' Fan Club in Volgograd, and I have continued as President up till now. My dream is to edit a fanzine and I'm making steps in that direction. I have even thought up a title: PHOTOZINE, which is, to my mind, original and reflects the method of proposed reproduction. I'll always be glad to receive any letters and will reply to them without fail. I am of the opinion that similar contacts should be promoted and encouraged. Alas, I wrote to more than two hundred addresses from the FANDOM DIRECTORY, but only received five or six answers. This rather let me down. However, I am not about to give up hope, for Sf taught me otherwise.

Peace and friendship guarantee our future.

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, PO Box 606, La Canada-Flintridge, Ca 91011 USA.

Here at JPL we continue to test the GALILEO spacecraft. The scheduled launch date is still May 1986, but more and more it is becoming questionable if the Shuttle will be ready. The latest delay with the shuttle resulted in the DOD mission

that was to go up this month, December, being delayed to at least January. To make room for it, the January launch of Spacelab 3 was delayed to at least April. This left the February and March missions untouched... they have commercial payloads. The original mission for April, SPACELAB 2, is thus delayed till later in the year, and so on and so forth.

That is the way NASA now has its priorities. DOD missions first, commercial satellites second, and space science a very poor third.

Meanwhile, Congress is debating the 1985 budget, in which NASA proposed a new start in the Mars Orbiter, to be launched in 1990. It is a sitting duck for budget cuts, and frankly I see no hope of it surviving. In fact, Congress may even cancel the Venus Radar Mapper, approved in the 1984 budget but still new enough that it can be cancelled for about \$20 million or so.

I sure hope you Australians are treating your science guys better, especially the radiotelescope outfits.

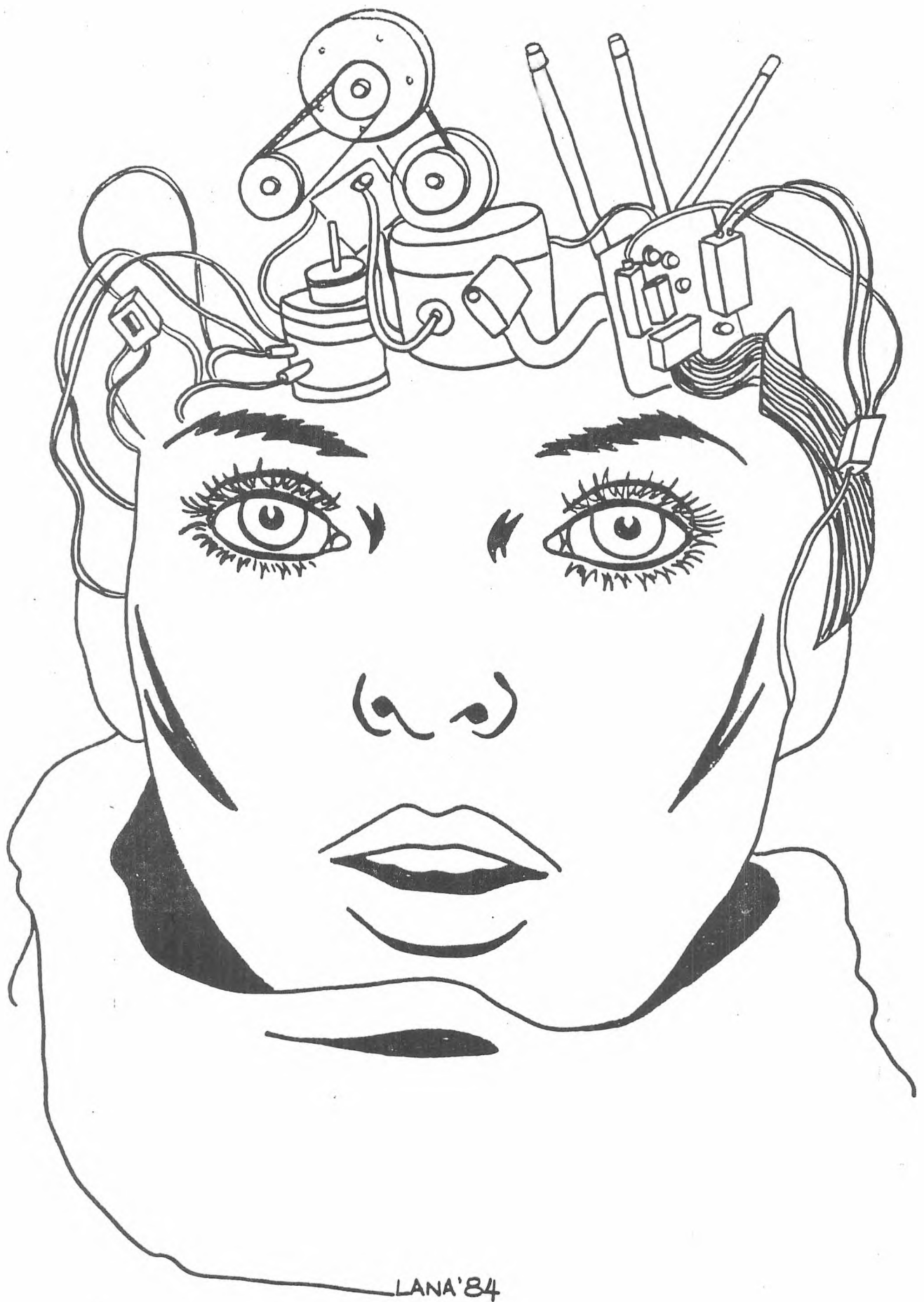
{It is interesting, but a blood experiment, to be conducted by one of the top scientists in Australia, Dr Ho, was nearly cancelled because of lack of funds. In the end, NASA said they would send the experiment up for nothing (the Australian Government would not allocate funds) and all Ho had to do was get to the USA. There was a fund raising push by the Media organisations and the Sydney Space Association, which got together the money. They were quite upset that the sf fans and faanish fans did not wish to participate. - Ron.}

WAHF: Raymond Clancy.

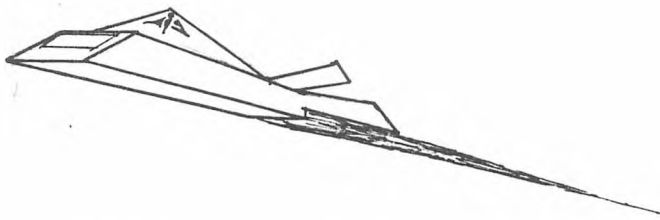




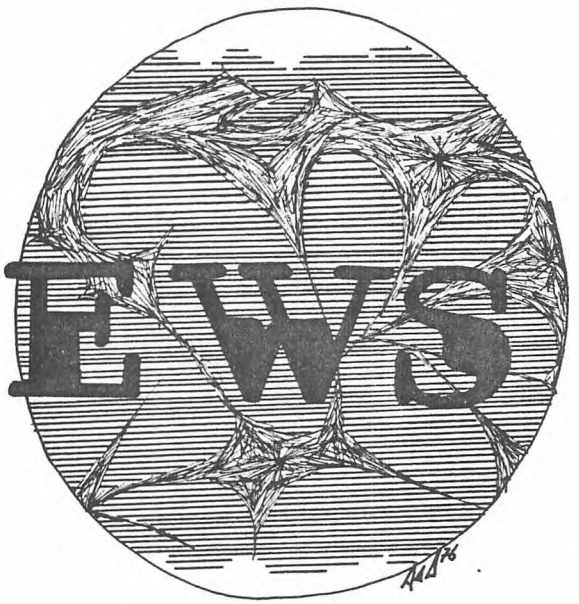








REVIEWS



CHIPS, COMPUTERS & ROBOTS by Judy Allen. Puffin Books, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust Ltd. 96pp. A\$2.95. On sale now.

This is a good explanation book on how computers and robots work and is a simplified record of their background and their uses. I think that people from ten on up who have not had that much to do with computers would find this account interesting if they wanted to find out a little about computing in as non-technical a way as practical.

Some of the headings for the chapters include: Making A Microchip; Computer Language; Inputs and Outputs; The Friendly Computer, and goes on to such topics as the house of the future, the 'real' robot, and ends with a glossary of terms. If you want a gift for a bright eight or ten year old then this might be it.

A ROSE FOR ARMAGEDDON by Hilbert Schenck. Sphere SF, dist in Aust by William Collins. 190pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

I found this novel a strange mixture. To quote from the blurb - 'Set against a rising tide of global chaos and anarchy, A ROSE FOR ARMAGEDDON is a magical science fiction romance...'

The book is broken into two parts by telling the story from the personal point of view of the two main characters, Dr Elsa Adams, an academic at the end of her tenure and her colleague, Jake Stinson, joint professor of archaeology and computer science at the same university. They are pioneering the science of Morphology - the study of patterns of behaviour in order to ultimately find the answer to human conflict and ways to end it. In their research they find a spot on neighbouring Hawkins Island that has apparently never been visited in the hundreds of years humans have been on the island. Oh, and that blurb quote is dead right.

LOST DORSAI by Gordon R. Dickson. Sphere SF, dist in Aust by William Collins. 152pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

At first I thought this was another novel in the Dorsai saga; however it turned out to be three stories - two about the Dorsai, the third about another military outpost, which could have been in the same universe.

If you haven't read any of Dickson's stories concerning the Dorsai - brilliant mercenary personnel from the splinter planet Dorsai - then you are missing one of the classic series in modern science fiction. I first came across the Dorsai when I read THE GENETIC GENERAL in the British edition (Digit Books) back when they were being remaindered in Woolworths in the early sixties. The power of the writing struck me then and when SOLDIER ASK NOT was serialised I loved it, and the following full novelisation. This series explores not so much the military mind as the mystique of warfare, and such things as faith and science, which are not necessarily exclusive. *Recommended*

GILDEN-FIRE by Stephen Donaldson. Fontana pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 94pp. A\$3.50. On sale now.

When Donaldson sent in **THE ILLEARTH WAR** for final publication he had cut some 150 pages in it because it was too long. To achieve that he actually cut an entire episode out. **GILDEN-FIRE** is that episode.

The episode is actually an account of the journey of the force led by Korik Bloodguard, together with others of that body, along with the Lords Hyrim and Shetra to warn, the Giants of Lord Foul's intended invasion. The bulk of the account is their attempt to penetrate Grimmerdhore Forest, and the account ends as they emerge from the other side. It is a really a novella and is more an episode. I think this is something the Donaldson completists will want.

THE PRACTICE EFFECT by David Brin. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 277pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

David Brin's scientific background shows up in this novel of another world where one of the laws of thermodynamics is subtly different. Physicist Dennis Nuel was one of the people in charge of the testing of a zievatron, an experimental device for probing other realities. Up to the time that something happened to that part of the machine that intruded into that other reality, the only thing they were able to find was a swirling purple mist. However they then stuck lucky and found another world.

Nuel found himself volunteered to venture into the other world and fix the machine. What he found there appeared to violate at least one of the basic laws on which science was based. I found this novel very interesting and a novel puzzle.

PICTOR'S METAMORPHOSES by Hermann Hesse. Triad Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 206pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

This is described, in the Introduction, as a collection of Hesse's fairy stories. It is a collection of fantasies Hesse wrote between 1900 (LULU) and 1951 (THE JACKDAW). There are nineteen stories altogether, ranging from three pages in length, to forty-three.

The stories include **THE MERMAN**, **THE DREAM OF THE GODS**, **BIRD**, **REPORT FROM NORMALIA**, **TALE OF THE WICKER CHAIR** and **THE TOURIST CITY IN THE SOUTH**. All are recognizably fantasies of the category that Grimm collected in that well known anthology. The stories are well written and the translation seem well done as the messages are discernable.

THE PLAINS by Gerald Murnane. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. 126pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

This edition by Penguin has a cover that accurately portrays a scene from the novel, though the plains seem to be a little hilly. When I read Diane's review in the last issue and later received this review copy I thought seriously of not reading it; however my curiosity got the better of me.

After reading Hesse and then coming on to this work I found that it compares favourably as a work of speculative fiction. It is in the same category as Ballard's earlier works such as the crystal landscape and his deserted swimming pools and beaches. In this case plains stretch to a misty horizon, with greenish-blue and yellow tiles casting their sombre colours over the rustling sound of acres of grasslands. As a work of speculative fiction it rises over its mediocracy.

1984 - **SPRING** by Arthur C. Clarke. Granada h/c, dist in Aust by William Collins. 268pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

The sub-title of this book is 'A Choice Of Futures'. The volume consists of (mostly) talks and lectures, interspersed with articles from journals that the general reader would not have seen. It is broken up into four sections: THE WEAPONS OF PEACE; APOLLO AND AFTER; THE LITERARY SCENE and FROM THE COAST OF CORAL.

THE WEAPONS OF PEACE section deals mostly with communications of various kinds (satellites, computer nets and educational uses for electronics), and ends with the article A FLASH OF GOLDEN FIRE, which concerns what would be left after an a nuclear exchange. APOLLO AND AFTER deals with space and ends with some predictions, THE LITERARY SCENE gives that subject a good going over, and FROM THE COAST OF CORAL is a collection of various subjects, none of which are of much interest to the sf fan. Overall an interesting read; if you are a long-time fan you will have read much of this before. Oh, and there is an interesting piece on his visit to Moscow.

HEECHEE RENDEZVOUS by Frederik Pohl. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 311pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

I have not read, as yet, GATEWAY or BEYOND THE BLUE EVENT HORIZON, of which this is the sequel; however the novel is easy enough to follow because of the way it is set out.

In this novel the Heechee, hiding in their black hole, are horrified when, on one of their routine checks of their orbiting watcher probes, they find that mankind is broadcasting to all and sundry with their communications channels. Not only that, but one of their ships, piloted by a human crew, is attempting to penetrate an event horizon which on the Heechee charts is labeled danger!! The reason for the label is that the hole in question hides the dreaded Assassins, aliens who have in the past destroyed any technological species they found. Pohl throws in some interesting societical changes and technological innovations.

DARKCHILD by Sydney J van Scyoc. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. 249pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Sydney van Scyoc has created a world where, centuries before, a human ship crashed and no rescue mission came. It was a harsh world of mountains, ice and cold. To enable them to live it became necessary for the remaining humans to hibernate during the winter months. Their social structure changed also with females coming into positions of responsibility, especially after the discovery of psychic powers in several lines. The society that the world ended up with was essentially feudal...

The Darkchild of the title is a programmed male child who is being used as a data gathering instrument by an agency which deposits him on planet after planet. His latest assignment is the planet of the hibernating humans. The unfortunate thing is that though the novel is written as straight sf, when the powers of the women leaders are introduced, it turns into fantasy: 'The sun hovered over the horizon, diffusing energy across mountain and valley alike, across sterile rocky slopes and fields waiting for cultivation, across pasture land and waste land. Then Tiahna caught its orb in her suddenly blazing eyes and drew the energy it diffused to her, concentrating it into a single intense beam.

'The beam quivered from sun to glowing eyes, quickly becoming so finely concentrated that it exactly matched the aperture of Tiahna's distended pupils...'

DRAMOCLES by Robert Sheckley. New English Library h/c, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 204pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

The sub-title is 'An Intergalactic Soap Opera' and the novel follows the dictates of that genre - especially the TV version. Dramocles has reigned in a kingdom that has not had a war for thirty years - almost from the time he took over from his father, who had died when his laboratory exploded. His reign had been very quiet, in fact. Then an old woman had turned up in his throne room and spoke a code word to him, opening to him a memory suppressed thirty years previously.

The memory is a lead to what his personal robot tells him is his Destiny. Other memory keys turn up, giving him directions to follow. Following them, he finds himself directing an interplanetary war, and alienating his fellow kings. The novel has some genuinely funny moments - a good novel to read to perk you up.

FIRE PATTERN by Bob Shaw. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 190pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

Bob Shaw has several hallmarks in his novels - a broken marriage is one of them. FIRE PATTERN uses as background SHC (Spontaneous Human Combustion). Shaw gives the facts of this phenomena, and then extrapolates as to a possible cause. All through the available facts about SHC, one thing is evident - a lack of pattern as to a cause. Rayner Jerome was a science reporter on a small town newspaper who unwittingly falls into the case when two citizens of the town suffer SHC. The town doctor seems involved and when Jerome goes to visit him he is precipitated into mystery.

The mystery deepens when the doctor is killed and Jerome is forced to kill the assailant. At this point the plot leaves the mundane world and departs into the sf realm. I think I would, rather Shaw had continued and found a mundane solution, using a detection-type plot, than delving into sf for the cause of SHC. Still, the background on SHC was interesting.

PRINCE OMBRA by Roderick MacLeish. Pan sf, dist in Aust by Pan Books. 256pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

When I first read the blurbs on the jacket of this volume I thought that I would have to plough through it. It tells of how, all through the ages when the Power of darkness called Ombra descended into the world, a hero sent by heaven would do battle with him. Sometimes the evil was defeated, sometimes it was victorious. The last time it was victorious resulted in Nazi Germany.

In the introduction, the remembrancer tells how, when souls are about to be born, a cavern angel holds its finger to our lips (creating a cleft in our upper lip) and says: "Hush! Don't tell what you know." However when Ombra is destined to return to do battle, the heart of a hero is reborn in another body and the body the soul is born in does not have a cleft. He is a hero in a line of heroes that stretches back to Gilgamesh, Arthur and David. In this case, he was the thousand-and-first to do battle with Ombra. Would you believe that I couldn't put this down before I finished it? If you are feeling down and want a stimulant and an uplift - this is *Recommended*.

SPELLSINGER by Alan Dean Foster. Futura pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 347pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

This is another Volume One in another fantasy series. When I start to read through yet another of such it has to be better than the average otherwise I start to get grumpy and have to force myself to carry on reading. In this novel Foster proves he can write fantasy like Piers Anthony.

The alternate earth the hero finds himself in is peopled with talking,

intelligent animals, much like WIND IN THE WILLOWS. The said earth is, however, more bloodthirsty than the world portrayed in that book. The animals, in fact, are caricatures of the various nations of earth - there is even a Red dragon who is a dedicated Marxist. These quite unusual characteristics in an adult novel go some way in saving it from a dreary death. I even find I could read the sequel...

CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY by Robert A. Heinlein. A Puffin (and Penguin) pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. 263pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

This book is copyright 1957, but it one of those sf classics that has not aged. It could have been written as a mainstream novel, but the sf elements add that extra dimension. It has been marketed as a juvenile, but it can be read with enjoyment by people of all ages.

The protagonist is a young boy who, as a slave, was bought by a beggar on a frontier world. The beggar is more than he seems, however, and brings up the boy, Thorby, in a way markedly different from the usual way a slave is treated. Eventually Pop is killed and Thorby endeavors to follow Pop's last wish and pass on a message to a starship captain.

If you haven't read this, I can recommend it.

NIGHT MARE by Piers Anthony. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder and Stoughton. 307pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

Piers Anthony found that he had a goldmine in the magic land of Xanth, which he created. NIGHT MARE is another of his novels set in that land. King Trent again takes a bit part, losing his mind early in the piece.

The action centres around Mare Imbrium, who is exiled to the day world because of her mismanagement of the delivery system of bad dreams. The Night Stallion had admonished her to "Beware the Horseman". Unfortunately she did not know what he meant, until too late.

If you are into the Xanth series you will probably like this continuation.

OGRE, OGRE by Piers Anthony. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder and Stoughton. 307pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

Smash was an unlikely ogre. He had been born of a human woman. The usual ogre was huge, horribly ugly and had a taste for young girls. Smash had gone to Good Magician Humphrey to get an Answer and he somehow ended up guiding seven females through various adventures.

Ogres had another thing going for them (if you can say that being huge and horribly ugly is something going for you) - it was extremely difficult to kill them. This circumstance had many times saved Smash's life when an ordinary mortal would have been plain dead.

For the Xanth completist.

CONVERTS by Ian Watson. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 191pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Granada seem to have picked a printer who prides himself in a good looking product - this edition is well set out and is printed clearly on good quality paper.

Watson's newer novels have explored the religious experience and death. In this one he explores accelerated evolution via viral mutation. The Sponsor, a millionaire with a yen to be the first actual superman, organises genetic research towards this end. The first human to try it is a female, with the hoped for result to be Eve to his Adam. The operation seems successful and he undergoes

metamorphosis. Others follow, and the individuals form a gestalt, much along the lines of Sturgeon's **MORE THAN HUMAN**.

I like Watson's work - they are a cross, I suppose, between science and speculative fiction, but Watson is enough of a craftsman as to hide the changeover.

HALLEY'S COMET, THE FURTHER ADVENTURES by John Calvin Batchelor. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 424pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This edition has a cover illustration which gives an insight into both what the novel concerns itself with, and the author's style of writing. Batchelor is a sibling of William Burroughs, and follows his format and image-type - the cover is a collage of the characters and locals.

Batchelor sets the time in the latter part of 1985, extending into 1986, when Halley's Comet is due to come sweeping back into the solar system. Personally I find this style of writing almost intelligible. It demands too much of the reader's attention trying to follow the events and conversations. Said conversations are written as spoken - which is ok in a play, but it not suited to written expression.

DOCTOR WHO - THE KEY TO TIME : A YEAR-BY-YEAR RECORD by Peter Haining. W. H. Allen h/c, dist in Aust by the Hutchinson Group. 24x19cm. 264pp. A\$27.95. On sale now.

This is another of the 21st Anniversary specials which are being published celebrating the above. It takes each episode as published in the UK and runs several paragraphs about it. Almost every second page is a black-and-white photograph from the series or illustration from the fanzines published in Britain, Australia, Canada and the USA. Each section, by way of a break between each actor playing the Doctor, has a selection of full page coloured photos.

I think that Doctor Who fans will find this volume, like the other Haining volume published by W.A. Allen: **DR WHO - A CELEBRATION**, is a great addition to their collection of Doctor Who memorabilia. The illustrations from the fans are professionally done and the notes on each episode give good glimpses into the goings on and planning that went into the series.

Recommended, especially for the Dr Who fan.

THE BIRTH OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF ANTARCTICA by John Calvin Batchelor. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 388pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Several years ago this novel won the Ditmar for the best sf published overseas in that year. I suppose you could say that this volume and **THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF HALLEY'S COMET** were companion volumes in that they were released at the same time and are in the same format. In fact they are completely different. Before I started to read this book I fully expected to find that it was written in the style of **HALLEY'S COMET**. It is not.

The plot commences in the near past when young people attempting to escape the US draft for the Vietnam War escaped to Europe. Grim Fiddle's father was one of these draft dodgers. It took but a moment to impregnate Grim's mother, who disappeared from the scene until she returned after the birth and left the baby with the surprised father. The boy grew up in the image of the grandfather he later met and emulated.

The book is set in the mood of the British disaster novels, such as **THE CHRYSALIDS**, **THE KRAKEN WAKES** and **THE BURNING LANDS**, and like them is well written and has depth of character and mood. *Recommended*.

CASTLES by Alan Lee. Designed and edited by David Larkin; written by David Day. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 20x29 cm. 192pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

This is one of the most beautiful books to come out in a long time. The artwork (about 95% of which is in colour) is finely detailed and reproduced. Beginning with the landscape of a ruin, the artist takes the reader back in time to the original castle at the height of its splendour. The text is printed alongside the artwork and sets the scene for it.

I think this book would really appeal to the SCA people and those others interested in ivy covered castles and those who inhabited or attacked them. Several periods are covered: the Norse Sagas, Celtic myths, the Age of Chivalry, etc and the text also goes into the Age of Fantasy - Castles in Fantastical Literature, Castles in Fairy Tales and Castles in Modern Fantasy.

As I said, it is beautifully reproduced. Though it is meant as a coffee table volume, the buyer will probably lock it up so that it does not get damaged...

WORST MOVIE POSTERS OF ALL TIME - A TREASURY OF TRASH. Gregory J. Edwards & Robin Cross. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 22x32cm. 64pp full colour. A\$13.95. On sale now.

This poster book gave me some of the best laughs for a long time. The cover has a poster-type quote to sell the book - "This book will STERILIZE you with fear!". There is a majority of sf, fantasy and horror posters from B grade movie, including FIRE MAIDENS FROM OUTER SPACE, QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE, DEVIL GIRL FROM MARS, FIEND WITHOUT A FACE, THE INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN and FORBIDDEN PLANET.

The various sections are headed ALIEN BOSOMS AND BLOBS, THE GREAT OUTDOORS, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, GIGNATICLES, HELL ON THE BACKLOT, TEENS DREAMS, WHERE GOULS RUSH IN, NAUGHTY NAUGHTY, BRAT'S CORNER, MONSTER COCKTAIL, SHAME, and TOP SCHLOCK. Each poster has a brief introduction that sets the mood for it. A good present for someone you think needs cheering up.

THE RIDERS OF THE SIDHE by Kenneth C. Flint. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld. A\$3.95. On sale now.

This quasi-Celtic setting liberally uses figures of Celtic mythology and is liberally coated with adventures and lots of graphic blood and gore. It cannot make up its mind if it wants to be a fantasy or a science fiction novel with shadowy hints of the time past when elevators and machines and glass towers were built and abominations were born of people after the last conflict.

I had to perservere through the beginning - a typical quest situation - I had seen it recently, yet again, in the THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER. The quest itself was fairly exciting. There were actually places where it flowed and I didn't notice the pages go past. However, the hero, a fourteen year old expert in every field imaginable, called Lugh (but of course), seemed oh, so adult, at times wielding his sword with the best of them, defeating warriors of skill and long-standing.

Lugh, in the companionship (albeit unwilling on his part at times) of Gilla the clown/warrior and Aine the sister of the Sea God, tries his best to impartially study both sides of the situation in the isle of Eire; Bres the High King who seems to have only his own interests at heart, the Fomor who are mockeries of men who have taken over, and the people of Eire: druids, teachers, etc. who are in hiding; the Dananns or warriors who are held bound by their own oaths of allegiance to the High King, and the people of the land. Little does Lugh realise that he is the warrior of the prophesy, come to help the people back to their rightful places and to rout the Fomor from Eire... by some mistake, he came too early and was only a boy.

However the blatant ending setting up for a sequel, things together as they should, eventually. The most blaring irritation in this book was the fact that

the Sea God, Manannan MacLir, speaks with a blatant "Begosh and Begorrah" type of accent and is the only one in Eire and Tara to do so....

Okay if you like Blood & Gore & Quests & don't mind the similarities between it and every other book of its ilk.

ACROSS THE SEA OF SUNS by Gregory Benford. Macdonald h/c, dist in Aust by Macdonald Futura Australia. 399pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This is the second in the Starscape Trilogy, the first being **IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT**. It is not necessary to have read the first volume (I haven't), but it would help understanding the plot.

One spur of the novel was run as a serial in **AMAZING** early this year. That part of the novel is set on earth in 2061 in the midst of an alien invasion. Said invasion has severely disrupted shipping and the story follows two victims of a shipwreck as they build a raft and attempt to drift to safety, in the meantime trying to survive attacks by the aliens. The other spur is set on ramship Lancer as it follows its directive to explore a solar system from which a signal had been received. This is a hardcore sf novel and is one of the best for some time. If you can pick up the first volume I suggest you do.

Recommended.

THE WHITE HART by Nancy Springer. Corgi sf, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 202pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

Another first in a trilogy - this time the Book of the Isle Trilogy. It is set on an Isle some little time ago, when gods, ghosts and sundry olden forms of life such as dragons and their kin were still running wild. The humans of that time were much like those of today - some were power hungry, some wanted just to be left alone, and some were destined to be Kings.

Another pointer to the time was that the downfall of Woman from her place of power had nearly been completed. One of the principles was the daughter of a powerful noble and she believed in the old ways. In the end she wed the hero, Bevan, who was the son of a god and the last of the High Kings, who had been toppled from his throne by the evil Pel, another of the fading race of gods. The third in the triad was Cuin, who also loved the fair Ellid.

Not high fantasy, but readable.

SO LONG, AND THANKS FOR THE FISH by Douglas Adams. Pan sf, dist in Aust by Pan Books. 191pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

At first glance, the fourth book in the Hitch-hikers trilogy was a disappointment. The basic black cover had a photo of a sea lion (and a small one at that) instead of a dolphin that anyone who had read the first three books would have expected. The white typeface did little to appeal to the imagination. An eager thumbing through the pages leads to more disappointment. I found only mentions of Ford and Arthur; the other HHG regulars, Zaphod and Marvin in particular were absent. It was probably at that stage that I decided I would not like this latest effort by Douglas Adams. I was wrong.

The back panel of **SO LONG...** gives a hint of things to come - and that is that this is Arthur Dent's story. The hapless earthman thumbs a ride back home to Earth, and tries to take up the uncomplicated life that he left off just before the Vogons arrived. (He restarts his life on the Earth Mark II, in case you are interested). He manages to fall madly in love, but if you think life then settles down to getting on with each "happily ever after" routine, you can think again. With the possible exception of **MEANING OF LIFE**, this is undoubtedly the best book Adams has written since penning **THE HITCH-HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY**. He concentrates on only two streams in this book, Arthur Dent's story and Ford Prefect's story and how

they were once again brought together, if only briefly. Dropping the scene-hopping from chapter to chapter, while trying to write upwards of four stories into one book (a style most prevalent in **RESTAURANT AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE** and **LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING**) makes this novel easier to read, and much more enjoyable.

There are a few more references to the **GUIDE**, which is good to see, and amusing to read. There are still little snippets that mark **SO LONG...** as being a full brother to the other Guide books, in particular there is the Train God, and something becoming a part of Douglas Adam's style - the teaser that eventuates nothing. In **HITCH-HIKERS GUIDE** it was the Ultimate Question, in **SO LONG...** it is God's last words to mankind. To those fans of the trilogy that became disillusioned by **RESTAURANT** and **LIFE...**, Douglas has got his act together again, and this novel is well worth a read. - Edwina Harvey.

FLIGHT OF HONOR by Richard S. McEnroe. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 149pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

I wonder why assassins (or a guild of assassins) draws the attention of US sf writers? I suppose one reason is the violent nature of that society. Leaving that aside, this is part of a new future history called **FAR STARS AND FUTURE TIMES**. There are several consortiums spanning the galaxy at the time this novel takes place, with the worlds in them habited by humans as well as aliens, though I am not sure whether several 'alien' species are not mutated humans.

The Guild of Assassins have armour that is much better than anyone else has and are determined to keep it that way. The idea released to the public as to the aims of the assassins is that, because of the 12 thousand million population of earth, it is almost impossible to keep society going, with corrupt politicians, business, etc. So the assassins evolved to eliminate those who the assassins thought were doing the wrong thing to society's aims.

I liked the way McEnroe sets out the format for this novel, though thinking over the plot, it is not unique.

THE INTEGRAL TREES by Larry Niven. Macdonald h/c, dist in Aust by Macdonald Futura Aust. 240pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This is another novel from Larry Niven with a totally new concept; in this case a smoke ring around a neutron star consisting of air, water and living species. When a ramship reached it, exploring for the State, the crew managed to persuade the computer personality to stop and they proceeded to colonise it. The local plant life was in the form of immense tree-like forms, up to fifty kilometres long, shaped like an intertral sign. Other forms were a cotton-candy-like jungle and floating ponds.

Life was rough on these floating jungles and trees. The plot follows a group on one of these trees that sets out to explore the far end to try to find food and water. A drought had been slowly killing off the food birds and the local stream flowing into the tree mouth was almost dried up.

There are many similar points to link this novel with **HOTHOUSE** - it had the same atmosphere of sense-of-wonder. Definitely *Recommended*.

FIGURES OF EARTH by James Branch Cabell. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 233pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

This is the first book in a trilogy - however, the three books can be read in any order. Manuel, an apparently simple, but very shrewd peasant, has been put under a geas by his mother to "make a fine figure in the world". He is minding his pigs and spending his spare time fulfilling the spell by making handsome clay statues when a mysterious stranger appears with a tale of a villainous wizard, a kidnapped princess, and possibly a large reward. Manuel sets off on a series of

adventures. He isn't the stereotyped naive and idealistic hero, but a crafty, pragmatic and at times ruthless fellow, and it is no surprise that he eventually ends up as one of these beings who are national heroes and living legends, with the title Redeemer of Poictesme. On the way he encounters all manner of mythic beings and has love affairs with a series of legendary beauties, but the great love of his life is plain, short-tempered Niafer, who becomes his queen.

FIGURES OF EARTH (and its sequels) is rich in wonder and magic, yet it is a satire on both realism and romanticism - both attitudes hold only part of the truth, and the characters are constantly being surprised and having their version of reality stood on its head. There is much humour, even more irony, and all is set out in deceptively simple, straight forward, slightly archaic prose - Cabell apparently used to revise his novels at each new edition to improve them. - Diane Fox.

THE SILVER STALLION by James Branch Cabell. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 269pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

A kind of sequel to FIGURES OF EARTH, takes up the adventures of Don Manuel's nine chief followers after the somewhat ambiguous departure of their great leader with a dubious supernatural being. The legend of Don Manuel the Redeemer, demigod and saviour, is beginning to spread, encouraged by a devious cleric, by Manuel's increasingly pious (and not very intelligent) widow, and by some of the nine lords who can see political value to it. The others, however, are not pleased at the distortion of the facts of the life of a man who, whatever his good points, was a warlord, not a saint.

A wandering wizard (or possibly a disguised god) prophesises that each of the nine will meet a different fate, and points out the directions in which they must go. The rest of the book describes the adventures and eventual fate of seven of the nine heroes (two apparently are left for a later book). The adventures are marvellously varied and bizarre, and each of the seven is a distinct and somewhat eccentric individual who handles his experiences in a personal style. Some court dazzlingly beautiful pagan queens, others venture into dark crypts in search of forbidden knowledge, they have dealings with demons, sorcerers, and gods; one by quarrelling with his wife nearly destroys the universe but saves it by realising that he loves her anyway; another turns out to be a (partially) reformed demon. The youngest and most naive has the strangest fate of all - he dies in battle, end up in the wrong heaven, and eventually becomes God. The characters constantly run into trouble with nagging wives, hypocritical clerics, and plain nincompoops of all descriptions.

After the darkest and strangest secrets of the workings of the universe are revealed, it is a toss-up whether the Ultimate Power is love or plain human thick-headedness. Cabell's view of the universe is a little like Robert Anton Wilson's, but even more like Douglas Adams. This book and the others are loaded with weird cosmic humour often expressed in a sly, ironic, leg-pulling way - and sometimes with a deep tinge of wry sadness. - Diane Fox.

JURGEN by James Branch Cabell. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 288pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

I read this book first of the three, although it is the last of the trilogy. It deals with the adventures of Jurgen the poet-turned-pawnbroker, who was a minor, but interesting, character in the first two books. Jurgen is middle-aged, with a rather mundane job, and an ugly, quarrelsome wife. He inadvertently does a favour for the Devil, who grants the pawnbroker's unspoken wish, and the wife mysteriously disappears. However, Jurgen feels he ought to rescue her and sets off on a quest to do so. It is a long rambling quest and he gets side-tracked into many adventures, some of them with attractive women. Apparently this aspect of the book upset some people when JURGEN was first published, and it was prosecuted and received much publicity, which turned out to be a great boon to sales. There are

certainly plenty of double enterdes, puns and suggestiveness, often funny and bawdy; but I doubt that anyone nowadays would find JURGEN indecent or even particularly erotic.

At the beginning of his adventure, Jurgen flatters the Goddess of Wednesdays and Mundanity who restores his youthful looks and vigor (though he retains the experience, shrewdness and detachment of an older man), however he acquires a rather disturbing shadow. Later he rescues a flirtatious princess from a evil dwarf enchanter, becomes the consort of a sensual nature goddess, falls foul of the hypocrites of Phillistia (though their pleasant Queen appreciates his 'mathematical' skills) and winds up in Hell. There he meets his father Coth of the Rocks, who was one of the Nine Lords in THE SILVER STALLION. Coth is as short tempered and opinionated as he was in the earlier book, and is only in Hell because he is vain enough to consider himself a great sinner. Jurgen finds Hell isn't all it was cracked up to be, and ultimately escapes to Heaven - which turns out to have been created because Jurgen's grandmother thought there should be a Heaven. The moral seems to be that we create our own reality.

The mood of the book is quietly melancholy underneath all the bubbling inventiveness and humour, yet there is a hint that even mundanity and disillusion may themselves be more illusion. - Diane Fox.

CONAN AND THE SPIDER GOD by L. Sprague de Camp. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 173pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

The Conan of this saga is but twenty years old, however his fighting skills are honed, though he is still learning to use his wits. de Camp is an old hand at writing fantasy, and this addition to the Conan saga is smoothly written.

The story opens with Conan in the pay of King Yildiz. All is going well until he is caught in a compromising situation with his Captain's mistress. He is forced to kill said captain, who is the son of the local sorcerer. Fleeing, Conan is linked with the kidnap of the King's favourite wife. He arrives at the village where the priests of Zath are planning an invasion using their spider god as a means of terrorising the local populace. Conan is soon in the thick of the invasion plans and eventually ends up in the subterranean tunnels being stalked by the god and its brood. For Conan fans.

NEUROMANCER by William Gibson. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Hutchinson Group. 251pp. A\$21.95. On sale now.

There are several good stories that have as their background the interior networks of computers and computer systems. One such short story was published in AMAZING last year. This novel is an in-depth look at a world which is about fifty years in our future and is an extrapolation of the present rate of social decay and technological innovation. No doubt there are some points that are not scientifically valid (for instance Gibson talks of a satellite in a geosynchronous orbit over New York), but most of the time he successfully submerges the reader in computer jargon.

I found the book enthralling, and the images (sic) quite absorbing. If you like the new technology or like a mind-expanding vision, then you will find this novel such. I thought it worth the read and feel that Gibson, if he can get past this first novel, will be a talent to watch.

THE SEARCH FOR KA by Randall Garrett & Nicki Ann Heydron. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 180pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

Garrett & Heydron have created a world in Gandalaran that is proving well worth their time spent in building up its basic ecology. This is the fourth in the series, the previous being THE STEEL OF RAITHSKAR, THE GLASS OF DYSKORNIS, THE

BRONZE OF EDDARTA and THE WELL OF DARKNESS.

The action takes place in what appears to be an alternate universe, though it could be in this space-time continuum. I think the series will build a dedicated following if the distribution system works as it should. I have found, though, that there is a sameness throughout them. I thought I might get bored when I first started into this volume, but picked up interest when about a third through it. Heydron seems to have given the series a woman's touch which is distinguishable; it also gives the atmosphere a more intimate aura.

ARE COMPUTERS ALIVE? by Geoff Simons. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 198pp + references & index. A\$7.95. On sale now.

This book is subtitled THE EVOLUTION OF COMPUTERS AND ROBOTS AS NEW LIFE FORMS. The above is what Simons endeavours to prove. There are eight parts to the book, and they are headed: 1. Are computers alive? 2. The robot background. 3. The behaviour of machines. 4. The anatomy of robots. 5. The psychology of computers. 6. Computer liberation. 7. The human response. 8. The future.

Simons goes over the background of robots and computers and then goes further into the definition of 'life', 'intelligence', 'emotions', and other like terms. He approaches the subject in a straight forward and logical manner, though he does tend to take some things for granted - such as that many of the people who are against the idea of computer 'life' are thus because they are afraid of the idea (it makes them feel downgraded) or they think that humans aren't biological machines, rather they are a mystical union of flesh and disembodied mind.

THE DUNE STORYBOOK by Joan D. Vinge. Sphere softcover, dist in Aust by William Collins. 20mmx28mm. 62pp most in full colour. A\$6.95. On sale now.

This book has been adapted from the screenplay by David Lynch, and was based on the novel by Frank Herbert. I saw the film DUNE at its preview on the tenth of December. Several people at the door were handing the paperback copies of DUNE out, along with this volume.

If you have seen the film you will know that it is a much condensed version of the novel. At the preview the person who introduced the film mentioned that the Producer had to cut the footage down from 4 hours to 2 ¹/₂. In fact there are some passages (and stills) in this storybook that are not in the movie released in Sydney. (The scene with Paul drinking the changed Water Of Life, for instance, and the small sandworm turning inside out).

I liked the movie - and consider it should win the Hugo next year - and if you have to opportunity to purchase this volume, do so; it is a good souvenir of the movie. (As is Corgi DUNE ENCYCLOPAEDIA distributed by Transworld).

FEVRE DREAM by George R.R. Martin. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 407pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Vampires on riverboats in the American Deep South just before the Civil War when the boats were in their heyday... I was unimpressed by the setting. Different, admittedly. However, it is well written and would appeal to all vampire buffs. The theory of vampires being a different species of human being follows the course of the fairly recently revealed disease that drives the sufferer into requiring the constituents of blood to survive and make them sensitive to the sun's light. Using his longevity to good use, one vampire discovers a reasonable substitute and so, the book is about the 'good' vampires against the 'bad' ones -- and their leaders battle for supremacy (the bloodmaster -- who leads the other vampires). The only human featured in the book is a fascinating riverboat captain, who is fat and ugly and a wonderful character. Some sections have rivetting action... with chase scenes and riverboat races and more.

After getting over my hang-up about vampires in the Deep South, I found I couldn't put it down. A fascinating horror book.

EYE OF CAT by Roger Zelazny. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. 188pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is the first new Zelazny I have read for some time. It is totally different to his Amber series, and has a straightforward plot. He uses Amerind background and integrates it nicely.

Billy Singer was a Navajo, the last of his tribe alive in the 21st Century who had been brought up in what was basically the old ways. He had broken out of the mold set by most of his tribe and had gone into space as a tracker and had 'nearly filled' one zoo with alien life-forms, one of which was a shape-changer he had captured and which he called Cat, because of the one cat-like eye it had. He found himself at loose ends when his wife died and he discovered that he really was the last of his tribe. The situation changed drastically when he was called upon to help to kill an alien who was trying to assassinate a top government figure. He decided to try to enlist the aid of Cat, who he had almost decided was intelligent to a certain extent. However the alien wanted to drive a hard bargain, and when eventually it killed the assassin, it tried to collect. Good sf.

THE PLANET OF LOST THINGS by Mark Strand, illus. by William Pene Du Bois. Hodder & Stoughton h/c, dist. in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 32pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This is a book about a small boy who did a quick tour of the solar system and when he noticed a planet he did not know the name of, landed. It was The Planet of Lost Things - such as letters that never reached their destination, money from pockets, and other things that get lost, such as dogs and cats, balloons, Missing Persons, Unknown Soldiers, socks, hats, glasses, umbrellas, keys, dominoes, etc etc.

As you will have guessed, this is a children's book and would make a good present for a space-minded boy or girl. The illustrations are full page colour and appear on every other page. The text has obviously had a lot of work polishing it and is not only interesting, but really funny, especially in the way that the various facets were tied in.

EARTH TRAVELLER by Wendy Boase. Walker books, h/c, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 30pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This is a book which is much like an encyclopaedia, except that it makes the reader work for his knowledge. It uses text and illustrations to pass the knowledge to the reader and then on the bottom of each page are questions to ascertain what the reader has retained, and how observant he or she is. The answers are given in mirror-reversed printing alongside the question.

The text covers all the continents and oceans. The information is not always that which is the usual sort - for example, where in the major deserts of the world, if you are trying to survive, you can find water. This book would be a good buy for an intelligent child, as the way it is written is a carrot for such a reader.

SPACE TRAVELLER by Wendy Boase, consultant Dr John Griffiths. Walker books, h/c, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 30pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Along the same lines as EARTH TRAVELLER, this has sections headed OUR SOLAR SYSTEM; STICKING TO EARTH; LIFT OFF!; TOPSY-TURVY WORLD; FLOATING ABOUT; LUNAR RECORDS; ASK YOUR COMPUTER; SPOT THE DIFFERENCE; ABOARD PATHFINDER; EMPTY HIGHWAYS;

SPACE GAME; INTERGALACTIC STARSHIP I and MESSAGE FROM VOYAGER I.

The information about the various planets and information about space is given in a form as if it is from a computer, and is in the form of questions, to make the child think. It uses information that the book has given, and asks questions that are a mixture of that information and commonsense. The material is as up-to-date as practical (1984 copyright date), though Pluto is shown as the most outermost planet.

A book for a good child's library.

THE WAR AGAINST THE CHTORR Book One - A MATTER FOR MEN by David Gerrold. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 397pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

This book is dedicated to Robert and Ginnie Heinlein; if you are one of those readers who like the middle-period Heinlein then you'll like it. I found it a mixture, if you like to look at it that way, of Heinlein, Eric Russell and Lan Wright. It has lashings of action, and lectures by military-type father figures in the style of, say, STARSHIP TROOPERS.

The plot is a usual one - biological manifestations are sweeping across the Earth after a series of plagues wiped out 90% of the human race. These manifestations in their toughest take the form of gigantic red and purple centipede-like creatures that eat various animals, including humans. They are mainly spread across Asia, Africa and North and South America. One of the principal weapons used to destroy them is a napalm flame-thrower, which has been outlawed by the UN as inhumane. It seems that the US was caught doing some underhanded deeds and made to demilitarize. However the types running the power structures there built up the same type of organisation that the Nazis had in the thirties for training troops - and off the novel goes.

CASTLE OF WIZARDRY by David Eddings. Century h/c, dist in Aust by the Hutchinson Group. 373pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Book four of the Belgariad - one of the best current fantasy series. This volume continues as Garion escapes the crumbling crag containing the city of Rak Cthol following the fight between Belgarath and Ctuchik, which resulted in Ctuchik's death when his magic backfired.

Garion makes it to the island of Riva where he is acknowledged of the line of the Riva Overlords of the West. The Princess Ce'Nedra is not happy when she finds that Garion, whom she thought was a peasant and not up to her socially, was actually outranking her. It was worse when she realised that she had to marry him. Another part of the Prophecy came to his attention: the whole history leading up to his birth for the last several thousand years was to end in him fighting to the death a god. The outcome of which even the other gods knew not.

Recommended.

RAPHAEL by R.A. Macavoy. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. 230pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

This is the last novel in the trilogy which consists of DAMIANO, DAMIANO'S LUTE.

The story continues as the Archangel Raphael, weakened from his contact with mortals, is stripped of his powers, sold as a slave and continues his moral journey. His friendship with Djoura, and the spiritual friendship of his former pupil Damiano Delstrego enables him to carry on with some semblance of humanity.

If you liked the earlier two volumes you will also find this to your liking, why, even the black dragon makes an appearance.

VOYAGE FROM YESTERYEAR by James P. Hogan. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. 377pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

The time of the novel is several decades into the 21st Century, when the various nations of the earth are still squabbling, and events seem to point towards another flashpoint like that which destroyed the previous civilisation. One of the final gestures of that civilisation was the launching of a starship to Alpha Centauri. On board was stored in the electronic memory of one of its computers, the DNA structure of colonists. After the war, and the subsequent rebuilding, another starship was sent by the again smouldering earth to ensure it followed the correct social path. The society they found was completely different to any that had previously existed on Earth, and the second ship came into violent contact with the colonists, who seemed to be anarchists.

At nearly four hundred pages this is quite a thick book. It holds together well, and makes an enjoyable read. The cover is symbolic of the story - it shows a wheel-shaped ship being overtaken by stork-shaped ships, each of which is carrying a fetus.

THE HORSECLANS, SWORDS OF THE HORSECLANS and REVENGE OF THE HORSECLANS by Robert Adams. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. 199pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

I had heard of this series by Adams, but till now I hadn't read any of them. These are the first British editions of the series, and this, **THE COMING OF THE HORSECLANS**, is the first in the series. It is set some six hundred years after an atomic war has cleansed the world.

Set on the North American continent, it follows a tribe of the Horseclans - nomad barbarians who are sweeping across the country in search of their promised land - towards a city it has been foretold they would raise near the sea. Their leader is Milo Morai, an immortal who, three hundred years before, had drawn them together and forged them into a unit, also supplying them with their legends. Over the years he had been trying to find other immortals - the undying men and women 'cursed' with immortality - and who were pursued by the mortals who destroyed them. The more civilised people of the continent were of Greek descent, who had apparently journeyed over from Europe after the Catastrophe and colonised some of the land near the coast. The South American Spanish had also fought their way up from barbarism and were now at a feudal stage.

The author states in the Introduction that the novel contains no hidden meanings or messages. Indeed, it is meant purely as entertainment - for the enjoyment of those who "ever felt a twinge of that atavistic urge to draw a yard of sharp, flashing steel and with a wild war cry recklessly spur a vicious stallion against impossible odds." I suppose this is the Ocker version of the Gor Saga. There isn't anything redeemable here, either.

The second book, **SWORDS OF THE HORSECLANS**, continues the consolidation of the various States as Milo fights his bloody way across the country.

The third book, **REVENGE OF THE HORSECLANS**, follows his exploits further as he builds his dictatorship (which does not have as its end the creation of another United States of America).

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

HUTCHINSON:

THE SONGBIRDS OF PAIN - Kilworth
BEST SF OF THE YEAR 13 - ed. Carr

TRANSWORLD:

STAR TREK 5 & 6 - Blish
QUEEN OF THE LIGHTNING - Herbert
LORD OF DARKNESS - Silverberg
CASTLE OF WIZARDRY - Eddings

DOUBLEDAY: DEMON LORD - Norwood
THE WAY OF WYRD - Bates

HODDER: THE MIXED-UP ROBOT - Norby
OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN - Simak
THE ZEN GUN - Baily
THE MAN WHO USED THE UNIVERSE - Foster

PENGUIN: THE TRIPODS TRILOGY - Christopher
TIME OUT OF JOINT - Dick

GRANADA: THE LOST TRAVELLER - Wilson
CHEKHOV'S JOURNEY - Watson
THE HISTORY OF THE RUNESTAFF - Moorcock
ASIMOV ON SCIENCE FICTION - Asimov
MYTHS OF THE NEAR FUTURE - Ballard
HOTHOUSE - Aldiss
VISCIOUS CIRCLE - Anthony
THE MALACA TAPESTRY - Aldis
THE COMPASS ROSE - Le Guin
THE SUN SHINES BRIGHT - Asimov

FEBRUARY RELEASES:

HODDER: THE GOD MAKERS - Herbert
HORSECLANS 4 & 5 - Adams
THE RAINBOW CODNEZA - Schulman

DOUBLEDAY: BISHOPS HEIR - Kurtz

TRANSWORLD: STAR TREK 7 & 8
PERRY'S PLANET - Haldeman
STYLUS WORLD - Eklund
VULCAN - Sky
FAR FROM HOME - Tevis

MARCH RELEASES:

HODDER: CATFANG - Fisk
EVIL EYE - "
VOLCANO - "
SUNBURST - "
STARSTORMERS - "
THE WAR OF POWERS II - Vardeman & Milan

DOUBLEDAY: GUIDE TO STAR WARS - Blasco

TRANSWORLD: TICK-TOCK
THE HAREN OF AMAN AKBAR - Scarborough
STAR WORLD - Harrison
MIDWAY BETWEEN - Norwood.

APRIL RELEASES:

DOUBLEDAY: THE ENCHANTER'S END GAME - Eddings **
DERNI RISING - Kurtz
JOURNEY CHECKMATE - Kurtz

TRANSWORLD: STAR TREK 9 & 10.

For those who can't read Boris's address on page 32,
it is reprinted below:

**Волгоград-66, главпочтамт,
до востребования Завгороднему
Борису Александровичу**

