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C O N T E N T S

RON'S ROOST.....	Ron L. Clarke	page 1
VICTOR-BO AND OTHERS.....	Sergei Sinyakin....	" 3
GOOD MORNING, ROGET.....	Gail Neville.....	" 7
MY DEN.....	Diane Fox.....	" 11
GIFT-WRAPPED.....	Alan Stewart.....	" 13
THE MALE-DOMINATED SOCIETY UNDER STRESS.....	John J. Alderson..	" 15
THE R&R DEPT.....		" 19
SPACED OUT.....	Mike McGann.....	" 28
REVIEWS.....		" 29

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I.A. Nau..... p.3, 5
Terry Jeeves... p.10, 18
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RON'S ROOST

Another issue comes around. It is nearly Xmas again - the best way to tell is by the condition of the mails; at the moment there is a mail strike in NSW, has been for some weeks. The mail being delivered has slowed to a trickle. About the only zines I have received has been a NOTIONAL, with a big red "A" on it. I don't know why - don't you trade anymore, Leigh?

Something else of interest is happening with Sydney fandom - it appears to be awakening out of its several-years-long sleep since the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation went into hibernation. One of the more visible activities of the new group of fans (calling them Sydney Fans (SF)) is the series of conventions they are intending to run, cumulating in the 1988 convention, which is the year of NSW's (and Australia's) BiCentenary. 1988 will be a big year in Australia, there is a lot of interest focused on it and any event in that year will be important. SF is running a con each year leading up to '88 - this year the Syncon is to be held in the YWCA, which is a new building and has a nice atmosphere. This Syncon will not be all that large, mainly because of the short time advertising it; it will be more of a relaxacon, with the Sydney fans getting to know one another.

The cost is aimed at the relaxacon style - \$8. This figure is not bad, unfortunately I have spent up big in the last six months - we now have a new Nissen Vanette (seats 8), a carport to shelter it (the garage is the fanroom), and a complete set of blankets and chemicals for the printer. About the only thing I haven't got is paper and carbon ribbons. So I doubt if I will be going.

You may have noticed that the printing of TM 55 could have been better (to say the least). It took some time, but I figured out what was wrong. When the rollers on the printer are in the "off" position they are supposed to take all pressure off the blanket when the printer is not being used. They didn't, and thus the blanket ended up with compressed sections which did not print well. I now can take the pressure off the blanket when the machine is off, and I also take the blanket off... Unfortunately the two blankets I did have are now ruined, which is why we are now broke, and will be till after Xmas.

One of the problems with offset is the complex nature of the controls of the machine. If one were to be printing each weekend one would not forget the sequences and the mode of corrections. When printing is done once a month then if you forget you are likely to end up with unacceptable work. At long last I have also found out how to correctly adjust the machine for printing pressure - from this issue on there should be a visual improvement. - Ron.

By S. Sinyakin
VICTOR-BO
AND OTHERS

The chairman of the fantafan Galactic Club, Boris Zavgorodny, was sitting in his room pulling thoughtfully at his nose. He had a typewriter in front of him on which he was batting out a letter to his extraterrestrial friends, in an Aldebaran script.

Around him were piles of boxes full of books written in Azerbaijan, Aldebaran, Turkman and Yaperar, with a thin scattering of Russian books. The book illustrations left no doubt as to their contents. A scantily clad beauty was looking at Zavgorodny from a poster on the wall and trying to reach him with her eight slender and tender tentacles. He turned his head away to the books by his side, stared at them for a while and heaved a sigh: "The best there is in SF... I wish I could read their languages..."

Amidst the crash and glare of lightening another visitor appeared in the room. For some time he looked around, grunting and moving his pink snout. Then, ceremoniously clicking his hooves together, he tapped the cheek of his host with the tip of his tail and uttered by way of greeting:

"An untimely death to you, Victor-Bo!"

"Hello, hello," said the chairman, "have you brought the books?"

The visitor rummaged around in his belly-pouch and readily plonked down several books on the table.

"Sure, Victor-Bo! And what's more, there's an autograph on every one of them."

Zavorogny leafed through the books and tucked them away in one of his boxes.

"And where are your bookshelves, Victor-Bo?" the visitor asked politely, his tail assuming the shape of a question mark.

"I had to sell them," the host grumbled out. "You know I'm going to marry. I need money right now. By the way, would you care to buy any books off me?"

Having looked through some proffered books and MSS, the snouted one took an ancient manuscript that bore the marks of Matuzin, who once authored the incomparable A FICKLE FINGER OF FATE.

"A quite rare thing," the host declared, showing his appreciation for the taste of his guest. "Only two copies left. Frolov conned me into giving him one for two C's, but I'll let you have this one for half that sum."

"Your bounty knows no bounds, Victor-Bo!" the snouted one exclaimed ecstatically, sticking the precious MSS into his belly-pouch. "You can't think how happy I am to have such a rarity in my possession!"

"You are welcome," Zavgorodny pronounced in a lordly manner. "I'll have it reprinted from Frolov's. Many people present me with something or other," said the host, his spirits reviving at the thought. "Gakov gave me this one day and, incidently, he doesn't drink. Sinyakin gives me something occasionally, but he indulges, that's for sure. Tolokonnikov presented me with his memoirs about theatre. And this here was presented by Frolov. It's worth its weight in gold. An unwritten novel with the author's autograph." Zavgorodny reverently fingered the blank pages faded with time. "Just think of the artistic schemes that were left to gather dust! And these wouldn't have been left to gather dust if it were't for the women. The females were his undoing. As they were mine."

"Your attitude to the fair sex is known all over the galaxy," the other hazarded cautiously.

"It'd be strange if it weren't!" sighed the chairman of the fantafans gloomily. "There's no star system where I haven't looked around for some eligible sexpot to take to my pad. No, the woman who could be my faithful companion hasn't been born yet."

"My first wife was against the very idea of buying any books. The next one wasn't strictly against the books, but against me instead. The eighth consecutive wife had nothing against buying books provided that it wasn't done with my wages. Recently I married the one and only Abevuahima from the Mulkeveira System. How the hell could I have known she fed on paper?" The host shuddered visibly. "The three volumes by Balabukhi were saved by the bell when I snatched them right from out of her greedily trap. Perish the thought! But manuscripts by the famous Buschov and Piskunov had perished irrevocably. The

worst part of it all is she gobbled up THE TALE OF TROIKA by the Strugatskys. Only three copies remained in the whole galaxy. Two were mine. The specimens of the most precious work ever conceived are no longer available."

Zavorodny became silent and took a few steps around the room.

"Please accept my condolences," said the guest, evidently embarrassed. "I brought you something. Would be like to see it?"

The neck of the 90 proof Blue Spirit was protruding itself mischievously out of the belly-pouch.

The host suddenly sat up and took notice.

"Well, it's nice you thought of that," he gurgled. "But if you had picked up a packet of dumplings on the way here also, it'd have been out of sight."



"But I did!" the snouted one proclaimed triumphantly.

Zavgorodny promptly tore the packet open and began feeding. He and his companion consumed the Blue Spirit thoughtfully. The Blue Spirit struck up its song at once. As soon as the two were getting a glow on and the singing filled the air, the chairman kissed the pink snout and waxing maudlin, generally started pouring out his troubles to his guest.



"The club owes me lots of money. No reply from Israel. They said that Golda Meir has written an excellent Sf novel. And my last wife sternly warned me I must bring my pay home intact or else... How can you get on with a wife like that? I won't be having any money for my correspondence. The cost of mailing letters to Aldebarran is enough to make me bankrupt in no time. Zharkovsky has borrowed money and books from clubs the Earth over and now they are arranging hunting expeditions to get him. All these hunters that are trying to track him down are not averse to good cheer, either."

The guest made sympathetic noises that naturally degenerated into squealing grunts.

"The bushman fan club in Australia had sent its representatives here," the host went on, "Dug a lot of pits with them cross-bows inst'alled inside all around Zharkovsky's home. The superintendant of the apartment house fell down one of the pits, the squad of militiamen crashed

down the other and the local party leader living in the very same house landed in the bottom of the third. A poisoned arrow hit Klavdia, our salesgirl from the local dairy, in one of her buttocks. The poison didn't take effect because Klavdia had been brought up on artificial milk shakes. But Klavdia did cut up quite savage and regarded settling Zharkovsky's hash as her personal assignment. Now he has been deported to the Sotana mines where he is writing the novel IN DURANCE VILE. He intends to sell it to some publishing house to pay his debts."

"And the low down tricks my former clubs' buddies play on me!" The chairman dabbed his eyes with the tip of his guest's tail. "Sinyakin used his official position in the Socialist Property Misappropriation Control to crack down on the book market so I won't be able to sell my beloved SF any more. Frolov look THE TAILED HANDS OF THE EARTH from my library promising to return it in three light years time with adjustment made to the Theory of Relativity. Tolokonnicov has become a theatre nut and maintains in the YOUNG LENNINIST that I am a puppet from the Obraztsov Theatre."

"The only solace is my books. Brian Aldiss has sent me his Helliconia work quite recently. He has a mansion of his own in England. It's the best novel of the century, to be sure! I wish I could have it translated. The book is just amazing! I know that by the smell of the ink. It's too bad I didn't study English seriously when I was in school. Though HELICONIA will fetch a nice sum on the black market..."

The Blue Spirit looked up alluringly from the belly-pouch of the snouted one again. Zavgorodny fed him the remaining dumplings. The snouted one seemed to have a snout full and the host was apparently burning with a low blue spirit flame.

The familiar crash resounded in the room once again and more visitors parked themselves on the only bed, facing the figure of the host slumped in his only chair. They looked adoringly at the chairman of the Galactic Club. Every one of them was holding a packet of dumplings in one hand while the other was clasped adroitly around the neck of a Blue Spirit.

"In case you wanna hear somepin' 'bout the Strygatskys," the host was saying in an inarticulate voice, taking another Blue Spirit in his hands, "Well, they'd fetch likker for me any time any place..."

The crunching of the dumplings was heard while the neck of the Blue Spirit moved knowingly.

+ + +

Zavgorodny threw the MSS away.

"A damn lampoon!" he fulminated indignantly. "What libel! Why the hell did they drag the Blue Spirit in anyway?"

He got up, looked over the boxfuls of books sprawled on the floor, straightened the blanket on his only bed and took a novel by Yazvitsky from one of his numerous boxes. It was Saturday night. After selling the book at the bookmarket for a reasonable price, with the bit of currency thus procured he dropped in at the nearest shop, bought a packet of dumplings and another Blue Spirit and wended his way home. He remembered to mail alimonies to his three wives on his way back. Once within his castle, he had a quarrel with his fourth wife who was trying to make herself a dress out of the pages of THE LAST JERK WATER by Nemtsov, cooked his dumplings on the front burner and began feeding them to the Blue Spirit, who at once struck up his lullaby about ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

The book's so much an alcohol
This seems all too sure
If you read'em at all
You'll have to take the cure

Put this book aside, my friend
Have instead a quick one
If you take too long to act, my friend
You'll sure be a right one

Never mind the loony bin
This is strictly for the birds
If you want to get somewhere in
It should be alcoholics anonymous

- Sergei Sinyakin.

GOOD MORNING, ROGET...

BY GAIL NEVILLE

"Good morning, Roget."

There was a soft whirr and a genteel clattering noise from the data storage unit as Roget came on line in response to Henrietta's voice. The screen lit up, displaying a graphic fascimile of a beaming smile

"Good morning, Henrietta."

"Anything in the mail this morning?"

"Just of couple of zines, Henrietta. Ron Quark's MENTAD, and Marvin Gallstone's FLOURIDE REVIEW."

"Print out MENTAD. I'll read it at lunch."

"Very well, Henrietta. I've instructed the printer to take care of it. What do you wish me to load now?"

"I think we'll work on REVENGE OF THE ROGANN QUEEN today. Where were we up to?"

"The last paragraph, Henrietta?"

"Hm - yes." Henrietta swivelled her chair to face the wide french windows that faced out onto the terrace, with its view of the calm ocean beyond, and the soft breeze that moved the curtains with a soft rustling sound. She sighed. Must concentrate on work.

"'...The powerful arms of the Rogann Guard gripped Torg in a vicelike grip...'...that's twice you used grip, Hentietta, and vicelike is a cliché."

"Yes, yes," Henrietta said impatiently. "Replace."

"How about this... 'The powerfully muscled arms of the Rogann guard slowly contracted around Torg's chest in a serpentine grip.'"

"Amazing. Save that."

"Saved. It continues...'The handsome young warrior cried out in agony and his cry echoed round the marble halls of the Rogann Palace.'... I think the reader will already be aware that it's the Rogann Palace, Henrietta. Palace alone would suffice."

"Very well. Delete."

"Deleted. That will read better."

"Continue." Henrietta growled.

"'In her high tower, the Princess Marita echoed his cry as the cruel features of the Dark Lord of Moradark loomed over her'... " The data storage rattled. "I presume we have a rape scene here?"

"I suppose so. Could we use that scene we cut out of THE BLOOD OF THE SYGON GOD?"

"You mean the one we codenamed Grope?"

"Yes, that one. Pull it out of data and see if we can use it here."

"I can't do that, Henrietta. I scratched that file."

"YOU scratched...! Who said you could scratch my files?"

"I did, Henrietta. It simply wasn't up to our usual standard. We can do better than that."

"But it was a good scene, Roget. That was why I saved it. It had power - tension - atmosphere - we could have used that scene right here."

"Henrietta, believe me - it was worthless."

"You're going too far, Roget. First you scrap that article I did on home holovision..."

"Home holovision has been done to death, Henrietta. There's no market for it."

"So what are you now, an agent?"

"No, but I have access to publisher's mainframes, remember? I know what they are looking for. THE JOY OF SCIENCE is looking for an authoritative article on the long-term effects of light-shift travel on pregnant sanitation engineers. Now I have a few ideas on that - "

"I'm not interested in pregnant sanitation engineers, Roget, or why they would want to travel at light-shift. Can we get back to Torg and the Rogann Queen now?"

"But I have access to NASA files on the effects of light-shift on all starship personnel since it was introduced. I could do the necessary research in five minutes, put the article together in ten, and have it in the JOY OF SCIENCE office before breakfast."

"How much do they pay?"

"80 universals per 1000 words."

"Chickenfeed."

"So feed the chickens. Every little helps. You have expensive tastes, Henrietta. The kitchen droid told me you had real pears for dessert last night. Trying to impress your new boyfriend?"

"What do you know about that?"

"Everything. The adjustabed was complaining about your antics to the household droid this morning. You know you have no secrets from us."

"Roget, you're going too far. The Editor of FANTASTIC YARNS is waiting for the Torg story."

"Forget it. I finished it."

"You what?"

"I finished it. Sent it off. Before you were even out of bed this morning."

"But I switched you off!"

"You can't switch me off, Henrietta. You only cancel my ability to communicate with you. But I'm still switched on - and I finished REVENGE OF THE ROGANN QUEEN while you were - er - occupied last night. Want to hear it?"

"Is it good?"

"Our best yet."

"I'll read it in print. But I wish you had consulted me first - I feel such a fool. Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"I didn't want you to feel redundant, Henrietta."

"How thoughtful. Well, what shall we do now."

"I could do that article."

"Big deal. Fifteen minutes. What then?"

"You know - I think we're ready for a novel."

"Hm - Torg? I did have an idea about that. How does this grab your microcircuits - 'TORG AND THE SWORD OF GAMMARON?'"

"Frankly, Henrietta, I'm getting bored with Torg. I have 1,000,000 basic plot devices stored in my data banks, and I've worked out this one about a light-shift sanitation engineer who leads a gang of seven crooked freedom fighters on a crusade against a corrupt Federation of Super-beings. This one really fires my diodes, Henrietta."

"Roget, you know SF bores me. I'm a fantasy writer."

"SF is where it's at now, Henrietta. I know that Wisgate & Girdle are thirsting for this one. I showed their mainframe a few paragraphs and a resume, and it practically had me file a contract there and then. Mega universals in this one, Henrietta, so why don't you let me get on with it?"

"Who'll compose the dialogue, create the characters - honestly, Roget, hard SF just isn't my thing."

"It's my thing, Henrietta. I've got it all worked out, and don't forget I've got billions of words, phrases and character traits stored in my data banks, plus a lot of material filed from our earlier collaborations - I could have the whole thing done and submitted in a week."

"Amazing. And what do I do?"

"I just got the drinks droid to mix you up a Mai Tai - your favourite -

and take it out on the terrace for you. Why don't you go out and get some of that fresh air and let me take care of the day's quota?"

"I do feel a bit tired... up late... you know..."

"I know."

"Wisgate and Girdle will really take the novel?"

"Practically begging for it."

"I suppose we could give Torg a rest... I'm a bit sentimental about him, I guess. After all, he was my creation... before I got you."

"I understand. Fame can be such a bitch. They expect you to keep delivering something new and fresh all the time. It drains one."

"It certainly does. A Mai Tai, you said?"

"With real Jamaican Rum. The bottle is over forty years old. You do have expensive tastes, Henrietta."

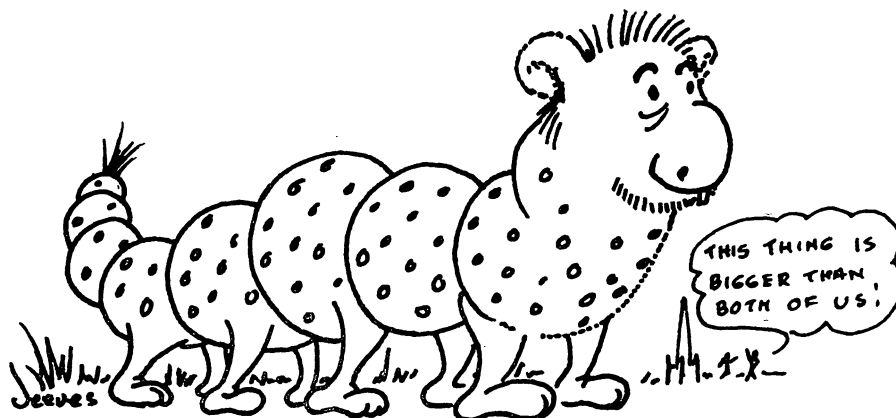
"I know." The soft breeze, as if summoned by Roget, floated in through the window and caressed Henrietta's face. The drinks droid hummed by, bearing a shapely glass filled with tempting golden fluid on his little silver tray. As if mesmerised, Henrietta rose and followed it out onto the terrace. Alone, Roget clacked and whirred softly as he ticked through his data banks, composing the novel.

"DRAKE'S EIGHT, The Quest for vengeance, chapter one... by... by..." another genteel clatter... "By Roget and H. Peterson."

Visions of fame and its glittering prizes danced in his microcircuits as he began feeding his opus into the publisher's mainframe.

- Gail Neville.

.....oooOooo.....



MY DEN

- *DIANE FOX*

THE BEAST OF HEAVEN by Victor Kelleher. (C) 1984. University of Queensland Press. Hardcover, cover illustration by Cathy Erickson. A\$10.

I didn't buy this book when it first came out. I had read another book by the same author (**MASTER OF THE GROVE**) and though this had won a prize and had been well praised, I thought it too much like many other books of its kind. When I opened **BEAST OF HEAVEN** I happened upon the computer debate, which to a casual glance seems pedantic, pompous and unnecessary. But later, **BEAST OF HEAVEN** won a Ditamr, a prize as best Australian Sf novel of the year; I realized that my judgement had been hasty, and bought a copy.

Most post-holocaust novels set in the distant future depict a society reverted to a more primitive level - usually Mediaeval or Wild West in type. There are also various colourful mutant people and animals. Most importantly, there are great tracts of thriving wilderness full of plants and wild animals. Most post-holocaust novels are rationalized adventure fantasy, even sword-and-sorcery, rather than serious attempts to show what it would really be like.

In **BEAST OF HEAVEN** Victor Kelleher depicts the skeleton of a world, bleak desert, the only plant life mustool or mutated fungi. (These are large grey mushrooms, a symbolic irony). Across the desert wanders the occasional mindless Houdin, or Beast of Heaven, feeding by licking dried mustool spores out of the dust. Though savage and dangerous, these Beasts are the sacred animals of the Gatherers, a wandering tribe even more primitive than desert Aborigines or Kalahari Bushmen.

The peaceful Gatherers are in trouble. "The goodness is going out of the world" - for some reason the mustool they eat are growing smaller and scarce. They must migrate to the feared plains to survive. The youth Hyld is troubled with doubts and forebodings. He is a Sensor, gifted with the ability to "hear" the emotions in ancient artifacts and in the bones of the dead. Gradually his insight and sensitivity give him a true picture of the ghastly and ironic nature of his world.

The other tribal shaman, the old woman Pella, is a Reader. She carried with her fragments of ancient microfiche, and reads them with the aid of a magnifying glass. (The Gatherer's use and understanding of these things, and of contemporary English, seems a contrived coincidence, but an explanation is later hinted.) Whenever the tribe encounters something unusual or needs to make a decision, Pella reads out an appropriate quote. These fragments of history or philosophy provide yet another layer of irony - the innocent Gatherers see them as direct and benevolent advice from their Gods, the Ancients. Pella herself is shrewder than the others, even slightly cynical, and seems to know more of the true nature of the Ancients than she lets on, even to Hyld or her apprentice the young girl Tir.

The Gatherer's fears and Hyld's doubts increase when the sacred Beast forsakes its aimless wandering and acquires a taste for meat, stalking the tribe with almost sentient malice, driving them onward. (The Beast is described very

vaguely, it seems to be a huge horned mammal somewhat similar to a bull, but much more stupidly aggressive.)

At this point the Gatherers discover the Place of the Ancients, where the ground is rich in lush mustool fungi, and where there is a huge underground complex. Here wait not only the giant bones of long-dead Ancients, but the glories and unspeakable horrors they have created, including two sentient survivors.

These are two self-aware computers, who had long ago been programmed to carry out a debate as to whether or not the nuclear weapons they controlled should be used to exterminate the human race. While the computers were engaged in formal and logical moral debate the human race went ahead with a nuclear war, without bothering to get their advice. Deprived of sufficient power to maintain their senses, the two machines sunk into the equivalent of centuries of sensory deprivation. The one who had been arguing in favour of destroying the human race has become psychotic, prone to Satanic ranting; the other, who has continued to uphold its viewpoint of the innate goodness and right to survive of humankind, seems to have survived the ordeal reasonably sane. Before long the Gatherers have begun to reactivate these two machines, and will encounter incarnate "Good" and "Evil".

BEAST OF HEAVEN begins with this Good versus Evil computer debate. Thought by many readers to be trite and dull, it is actually a viciously profound satire on human self-centredness and self-satisfaction, a revelation of the callous fatuity of the programmers of these ultimately pitiable machines. A person's concept of Good is only as good as that person. What is the moral level of people who would willingly set up two machines to decide whether or not to exterminate not only their own species but all others?

The Gatherers rejoice, for their belief in the benevolence of the universe is restored by their discovery of this holy place of long-lost knowledge. The reader is more likely to be horrified by their helpless naivety, and expect that the Gatherers, forced to choose between Evil and inadequate Good, will make the wrong decision - not due to their own malice (they are gentle creatures) but to a misplaced faith in their unworthy Gods the Ancients. But although poor Hyld comes to understand the full horror of the situation and dies horribly, the irony of this book is not tragic but black comic. There is even a somewhat restrained happy ending.

When the computers finally see the Gatherers and the brutish Beast which has been hounding them, their debate is resolved and the final decision is made about the deployment of their vast nuclear stockpile - a decision which has a result the opposite of the one intended. There is an astounding burst of obscene revelation of human priorities and racial egotism. An earlier description of the remains of nightmarish experiments in the complex's laboratory has given a hint of what to expect - but the reader is still in for a nasty jolt.

The twists and turns of the ostensibly simple plot of this short book produce first unease, then growing horror, and finally a mingling of outrage, relief, and realisation that in a blackly inverse way the innocent faith of the Gatherers in the ultimate goodness of the universe has been justified. The simple, almost colourless prose and the apparent lack of overt humour intensify this unlikely mix. The reader wants to laugh and wince at the same time, as again and again the book delivers its ironic jabs at human complacency.

Like Gerald Murnane's THE PLAINS, this book is not to be taken at face value. The biological mutation on which the final plot twist depends is a blatant piece of savage mockery, as implausible as Kurt Vonnegut's "ice-nine", and will offend anyone who resents levity at the expense of fanciful monsters and heroic adventures in their post-holocaust tales, though the Beast is indeed monstrous and the Gatherers in their humble way heroic. But I feel the award it won was well-deserved, and will look out for more books by Victor Kelleher.



GIFT-WRAPPED



BY ALAN STEWART

The Christmas presents were around the tree when Carol came down the stairs. Actually there only seemed to be one present, and on top of the tree seemed to be a better description. It had that pathetic crushed plastic look.

Pressing the button marked 'Press Here' she watched the present unwrapped itself. The seaspray blue paper peeled back from all sides, rolled up into a ball, grew legs and ran off to hide in the garbage disposal.

Looking at the present Carol knew exactly what it was, having seen eleven within the last month. It just wasn't fair, because her family had decided to have Christmas on September 21st., all the fashions and trends started in July or February. Every year it was the same, she always goes the nearly last in a dying fad, too late to impress anyone.

Oh well, she had better show her parents she liked it, after all they had chosen it to please her.

Yes, it was another one. Just like Susie's and Joanne's and Matthew's and... an alien spaceship.

Sitting there on its squat little legs, entry port open.

She decided to check it out.

If this is another one of those everything-turns-to-apple-trees-as-soon-as-I-think-about-it ones, I'll scream, she thought. Everyone had one of those.

Climbing into the entrance she moved down the metal corridor and stubbed her toe on a protruding apple tree root.

She screamed.

She had promised. Besides it was fun and no-one could hear. These ships were worlds of their own, even the lounge room was out of touch.

She picked an apple and began eating it as she wandered around the sparkling-stream-in-meadow-by-apple-orchard scene.

I wonder if it's a standard model, she thought.

Let's see.

Sahara desert oasis with date palms - yes.

Titan beach, Saturn in the background, okay.

Snow covered pines in Sweden - fine.

It seemed to be a standard model. Pretty impressive with its limited water/meadow/trees configuration, but nothing like the deluxe model Jenny had. Of course she got everything, and her family had Christmas in August.

Maybe this was a deluxe model, it did look a bit shinier, a brighter shade of silver, perhaps...

Trying 'bath of asses' milk in Cleopatra's palace' she closed her eyes.

Nothing.

Just a standard model.

Tossing the apple core into the stream she left the ship. Her parents were entering the room as she climbed down from the entry port.

'She's up already', her father said. 'I don't know how, but every Christmas she seems to be up earlier. How do you like your present, Carol?'

'Thanks very much, it's just what I wanted', with a smile, after all it was Christmas.

She gave them a hug then ran back into the ship to show them how much she liked it.

The ship burped.

- Alan Stewart.

=====000=====

**COMMERCIAL TARIFF CONCESSION ORDERS
(PART I)**

TCO R.2		Chapter 84/201
Tariff Reference	Description of Goods	Prescribed Item and Validity Date
84.59	Robots, personal, computerised domestic mobile devices, capable of performing multiplex, complex functions such as speaking, walking, transporting and responding to voice commands in accordance with optional software Op. 19.8.83 - Dec. date 12.6.84 - Ex Gaz 38 - TC 8333653	53

JOHN J. ALDERSON:

THE MALE-DOMINATED SOCIETY UNDER STRESS.

All societies come under stress, both from within and without. As with other types of societies the possibility that a male-dominated society will be changed by such stresses is perhaps in the same order as the possibility that any other society may be changed. That they may be altered is evident for a society is always in a state of flux, or it is dying. But that deliberate alterations are largely malign is evident to any thinker. Whenever a society has its checks and balances altered, and this is all we can talk of in this respect, then the advantages, and more particularly the disadvantages are going to veer sharply to one side or the other, with the disadvantages very greatly outweighing the advantages.

Deliberate attacks on the male-dominated society almost always take the shape of an attack on the dowry, despite that this is common to almost all societies, and is of course balanced by the nuptial gift. Indeed, so confused are people by these two that the attack usually falls on the nuptial gift. The final purpose of both the dowry and the nuptial gift or bride-price is to (a) provide a new family with capital, (b) provide a new family with a web of economic considerations whose main if not only aim, is to help the stability of the marriage, and (c) provide a redistribution of wealth. As the dowry and the bride-price are expected to balance, that is, both the bride-groom's family and the bride's family are expected to provide equally to the establishment of the new family, then a lessening of one means that one family is shirking its responsibility to the new family and usually the end result is that both contributions are restricted and the new family starts off greatly impoverished. Then there is a further vital consideration. Both sums are usually considerable and often takes years of saving on the part of both families which results in both the marrying partners being considerably older and more mature on marriage.

The end result of the abolition of the dowry is not only that the new family begins and usually remains impoverished, but because there is literally nothing to wait for the parties marry as soon as they reach puberty, with the result that elaborate laws are passed to prevent early marriages with resultant hardship and infringement of civil liberties. These earlier marriages are both lacking in financial and social stability, adequate capital, and personal maturity. With the weakening of the first considerations, we get less thought taken by the marriage brokers or the participants themselves, and as there lacks that financial stability, and the social intermesh that comes with it, the new family lacks stability, and the divorce rate and other marital stresses rise and not only does the immediate couple and their children suffer, but so does all society. Yet this vicious attack on the dowry is usually lauded by so-called reformers despite the fact that no good comes of it, but a multitude of evils do.

As the dowry is not an essential part of the male-dominated society, only a very vital stabilising force, the attack on such a society is pointless and only destructive. The end result of such an attack on any society is to reduce the dowry to a wedding breakfast and the nuptial gift to a wedding ring. This is painfully familiar.

Attacks are also made on the religious element of the society. That is, the rituals are attacked and made pointless. Thus for centuries the Jews fought to preserve their religion from attacks made on it by their neighbours who lived in woman-dominated societies, and the worship of goddesses and indeed a multitude of gods were introduced. Judaism shook all this off and it is possible that their highly organised priesthood was necessary to this end, and which became obsolete when the threat was over. Yet again, such an attack is pretty futile. Male-dominated societies began as ancestor worship, then went through a phase of planetary worship and emerged with the ideal of a sexless, self-created or always existent monotheism. But the corruption of the earlier Aryan monotheism into the gross polytheism of the modern Hindu has in no way altered the essential nature of their society.

Attacks are made on the patriarchal family, though as we have seen this is only a figment of the imagination of badly informed Westerners. It is easy to reform something that does not exist, and to consider the result a great achievement. Indeed, perhaps as high as ninety percent of so-called social reform is of this nature. The equality of man and woman, the oneness of the family in these societies cannot be improved upon and an alteration can only mean that one sex becomes highly ascendent and, no matter which sex this is, the end result is bad. For it means the other sex has suffered. There have been strange "achievements", such as the abolition of the veil, but the veil was merely a portable sanctuary of the harem, something like the shell of a snail. Harlots and slaves didn't wear veils because they didn't have the sanctuary of a harem, and the abolition of the veil simply reduced all women to the level of the harlot and slave-girl. What should one say, Hallelujah!? As a Turk once said when the veil was abolished in Turkey: "All of us received a great shock." Previously each man had thought he alone had been unlucky enough in getting a hard-faced woman, but with the abolition of the veil the misfortune of most men came as a great shock. Of course the wearing of the veil has nothing to do with male-dominated societies; its wearing is quite common (even amongst men) and probably had more to do with keeping dust off the face than preventing anyone peering over it.

Similar alterations to inheritance rules only upset the economic stability of the society, not the society itself, and ultimately result in section of the society becoming very poor or very rich. It does not shake the society.

Indeed, efforts to alter such societies mainly stem from paranoia, and paranoia is not usually dependent on facts for its mental state. Only the woman-dominated society where the male is held in despite can be held to be an essentially evil society. All the others work well enough. Admittedly all societies have existed for millenia and are somewhat moss-grown and some reform may well be overdue, and where genuine reform is necessary the correct reform can be made safely without altering the nature of the society. Any attempts to alter the essential nature of the society is foolish and doomed to defeat, but perhaps not without causing great harm and hardship - usually to those whom it is confidently expected would benefit from the alteration. A society can accommodate reform without any alteration of its essential nature, but it will not accommodate an alteration that attempts to alter its basic nature. And in any case, who are you, or I, or anyone who presumes to alter something which has worked successfully for millenia? It is vitally necessary therefore to know the nature of a society before attempting reform, and the belief that the nature of society is other than it is seems usual, with the result that so-called reforms usually make matters worse, and cause great suffering. Worst of all are idiots who believe in meddling for the sake of meddling.

Stresses come to a society without conscious knowledge. It is unlikely that the four varna of the Vedic society really excited any active opposition, or indeed caused any hardship. But nevertheless stress came to the society with the multiplication of castes, so that there are now over 3000. The Greeks had a saying: "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." Is the caste system

being destroyed by this very multiplication of castes, or are castes being multiplied because there is now a pressure to abolish them. Efforts are being made to abolish castes, yet the only rationality for this action is that other countries do not have caste. Is the multiplying of caste the answer of the collective mass of Indian society to this attack on caste, an unconscious realization that there is strength in numbers? Caste is peculiar to India, not to male-dominated societies, and the abolition of caste will no more shake that character of Indian society that did the original multiplication of the castes. In no way would it undermine the Law of Manu. It appears to me that the growth in the number of castes in India is due to the greatness (in terms of numbers) of the Indian peoples where the individual is lost in the vastness of the nation, whereas caste gives the individual an extended family, a sort of trade-union and a protecting umbrella from the masses about them, and provides a ready made society into which to fit upon migration to another part of the country. Each caste actually represents a society, intermarrying and with common ideals and beliefs and a common initiation and inheritance pattern. Nothing could be more foreign to the Arab who is essentially equal and democratic, than a caste system. Yet we frequently meet with the idea that the male-dominated society has a caste system. Only India has a caste system and it appears to work more successfully than a vaguely comparable Scottish clan system. Caste is the Indian answer to a certain problem and, were it abolished, it is hard to say who would benefit, but many people would be socially lost. A fundamental criteria can be applied to such a case: if caste does not serve the people of India it will die a natural death.

Even the removal of the Arab into cities has not altered the nature of their society. There is little that could be more foreign to the origin of a male-dominated society than city living, but the Arab has managed this transition quite successfully. So has the Jew. Even the obtaining of literacy (long delayed amongst the Arabs) did not alter the nature of their society. Indeed the nature of the society probably had more to do with the obtaining of learning than anything else. And it must be confessed that the Arab, in their heyday, were the most learned people in the world.

Centuries of sojourn amongst foreigners, many of them under persecution or the threat of it, from Christian, Moslem and heathen alike, has not destroyed the Jewish ideal, perhaps rather it has preserved it. Forced very often to conform to the social usages of their host country, the Jew has successfully retained his own culture and society. In fact the easiest way to destroy Jewry seems to be simply to assimilate it within an all-embracing mantle of conformity without any compulsion. Such is the easiest way to destroy any society and culture, and indeed one may look at our own Australian culture to see this destruction at work.. not that it will destroy the essential nature of our society as we have been discussing it, but our culture and way of life (and these are different things) are rapidly being destroyed to no apparent gain.

This leads us to the fact that stress on a society is the more dangerous when it is unconscious. That is, society has more to fear from its friends than its foes.

The male-dominated society rose with the advent of a nomad with a flock of livestock. It was the turning of the back on land-ownership, farming and city life. Most social historians would therefore regard it as a regression, a turning against civilization. As civilization simply means "city living", this is absolutely correct. But when it is realised that these three peoples, the Jew, the Arab and the Aryan (Indian branch) have given rise to five religions and that the adherants of any one of these religions number more than the adherants of the rest of the religions of the world combined, one might well stop in their tracks and wonder if these were not primarily religious movements, spiritual revolts against the materialism of city life. This seems certainly the case with the Jews, whilst the Aryans had developed their religion so early and so essentially a part of their way

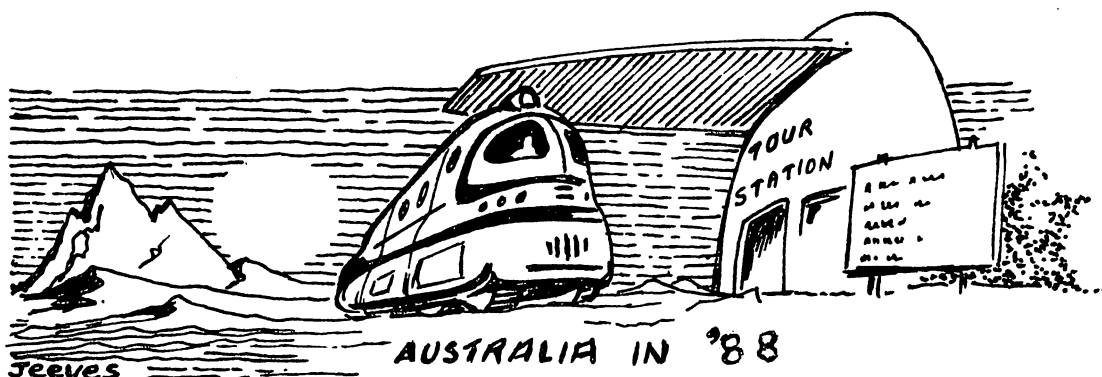
of life that one must perforce add them to that number. The Arab on the surface may seem the odd man out which could account for only producing one major religion, but it should be remembered that in actual fact the origin of the Jew and Arab was the same branch inasmuch as they are both descended from Abraham, and it may well be that Mohammed was truly a reformer, and certainly Allah was worshipped from ancient times, long before Mohammed.

All things alter and these nomads in every case became city dwellers and farmers, but remained the same male-dominated societies. For as they had broken originally with city life and its woman-dominated society and created a new form of wealth, livestock, of which they were the owners and their masculine strength was needed to handle bullocks and camels, so it later years when they again took to land ownership, that land ownership was vested in its grazing rights, and the grazing rights vested in the family or tent. This was the full turn of the revolution, needing centuries for the nomad to effect and taking with it the male dominance, not only of the economy, but of religion, ritual and social practice. The abolition of an organised priesthood made for the priesthood of all men. It is not surprising that Christianity, one of the religions which stemmed from these societies declared, and declares, the priesthood of all believers. Any alteration of this status for men and women must be a backward step, and whilst there may be room to reform in Christianity, it is in the complete abolition of surviving intrusions of organised priesthood from older religions which is needed, not the extension of the priesthood to women.

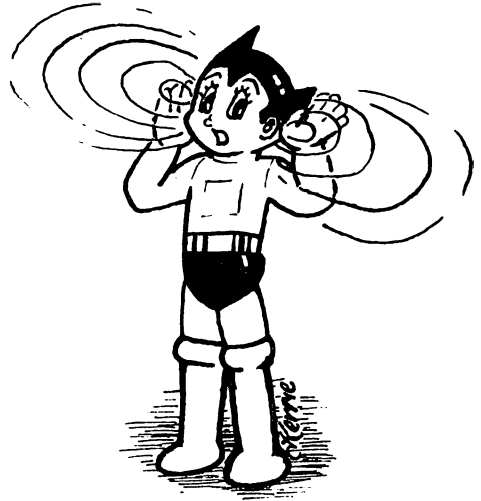
In their moving out of the cities and the farmlands the nomads created a new society, their own. Societies are not changed with the exception of perhaps the woman-dominated society where the male is treated with despite (a process men will be happy to know is reversible), so that when new societies arise they are not the old societies altered and reformed. They are, by their very nature, new creations. Older ideas that societies naturally evolved or developed from the non-dominated society upwards cannot be sustained. The male-dominated societies did not alter the old woman-dominated societies, they created a new society and a new religion. To say that they are better or more advance than the woman-dominated societies will require either a better informed man or a braver man than myself. I have no wish to make a qualitative judgement on any form of society.

It may well be that new societies will be created in the future, though it seems to me that there can only be three different types, with perhaps undesirable variants, but the old societies will survive. A society is almost indestructable: its members are not.

- John J. Alderson.



The R. E R. Dept.



COLIN GRUBB, 38 Spa Mill Terrace, Slaithwaite, W. Yorks, HD7 5Bd, UK.

I liked the Lana Brown portfolio in issue 52, but its a pity the pictures could not be done on heavier stock as it was difficult to appreciate them fully as it was.

Over issues 51 and 52 the series on Soviet SF was very welcome, and very well written. It is not often that it is possible to get such a comprehensive view of an aspect of life in the Soviet Union through other than official (and therefore in my view biased at best) channels, so many thanks for printing it. The only question now is how many of the books mentioned have been translated into English.

I have enjoyed reading the Peter Brodie stories, but I think he hit a high with VISITOR. Of all the things that could go wrong on a spaceflight I suppose that could be considered a minor one, but as he pointed out it would certainly be very irritating and uncomfortable, and he made it into a very funny story.

The newspaper cutting you printed on illiteracy was very interesting, especially since I am just starting to do a bit of voluntary work helping people to learn to read. It really is amazing that in countries with 100% schooling that some people never manage to learn to read, for whatever reason. I find it difficult to visualise getting through a single day without the ability to read, and to go through 50 years like it would be unimaginable but for the fact that I know someone who has done it. Somehow I feel that life must be emptier and more diffucult without this ability (just think how you would try and find a piece of information on history or some practical problem such as cooking) especially if it is due to some accident of upbringing rather than a simple backwardness.

As for John Alderson's STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY series, I find it totally impenetrable, partly I suspect because it is not a subject I have any real interest in, and because of this when I do feel in the mood for some serious reading I pick up something that appeals to me, and not something I am going to have to struggle to stick with.

ALAN STEWART, 18/329 Dandenong Rd., Prahran, Vic 3181.

After your ROOST in TM 54, I can't resist writing a bit about Aussiecon. Like Dennis Stocks (TM 54, p.9) 'I went to the Worldcon, met a number of Big Name Authors, and enjoyed myself'.

Meeting Hal Clement (Harry C. Stubbs) was very worthwhile. As a full time science teacher he has lectured for about forty years on the Southern Constellations but had never seen them until this trip. He mentioned that he caught up on the Lesser Magellanic Clouds in Alice Springs, but missed seeing Proxima Centauri with a Melbourne astronomer because it was too cloudy. He also took pictures of his audience at various panels 'for tax purposes, to prove I actually read to people'. His current novel concerns a group of graduate students (only one human) exploring a hollow world as an Honors Project.

As DUNE - THE MOVIE has been LoCed in the last few TM's, I will relay a few of the comments Frank Herbert made on DUNE - THE PANEL during the Con.

The original screen version ran for four hours fifty minutes, but the company didn't like movies of that length, so cut it. Frank argued for a two parter, cliff-hanger at the end of the first movie (maybe the crash in the desert), and screening over two nights - but to no avail. Various stills from the cut parts have been published and even the trailer shown in cinemas contains shots not in the released print.

To restore DUNE to its full length would be costly, an estimated \$10 million to just rescore the music. Ed Bryant (also on the panel) mentioned that in the U.S. handouts containing names and word explanations were provided. He thought these were virtually useless, and hundreds of people holding them up trying to read in the dim light, plus rustling, didn't help at all.

Frank felt reasonably happy with the acting of 'Paul' and the 'very very evil' Baron was the director David Lynch having a bit of fun, like the heart plugs.

But the rain, the rain! Frank hated this, absolutely didn't want it in. Unfortunately David Lynch had a blind spot, to him Paul was a God, and any intimations that he was merely a gifted mortal were't to be countenanced. Hence the rain and novel characters being scrapped. As Frank said 'The novel is about power structures - how it attracts the corruptable'. But not the film.

Personally I feel DUNE - THE MOVIE seems true to the 'facts' of the book but deaf to its 'spirit', in contrast to another recent movie, Stephen King's - THE DEAD ZONE which captures the 'spirit' excellently, while playing with the 'facts' of the novel.

Another big plus for Frank was that his publishers/Myers had said 'Thou shalt sign only at Myers, and not at the Con.' Frank said 'to hell with that' and signed books, appreciated by his fans. (Book signing queues at Aussiecon II deserves their own chapter, I made friends, has some very interesting talks and got sore feet in a couple of the longer ones).

I suppose you will hear a lot from other attendees, so will close with a couple of lighter incidents noted:

Gene Wolfe - bought a copy of one of his books before his 'reading' panel

George Turner - was asked how much the t-shirts behind him were at his book signing table.

I would also appreciate more information on the book BURNING WITH A VISION featured on p.51 TM 54.

RICHARD J. FAULDER, PO Box 136, Yanco, NSW 2703.

I'm not sure how much you missed by not going to Aussiecon. During the closing ceremonies I found myself sitting in front of a gaggle of Yanks who were

damning the con with faint praise like "I guess we've been spoilt by big cons, rather than intimate cons like this one". While I have no doubt that fanzine fans like the Cantors really meant their fulsome praise, I can't help wondering how typical this other reaction was of our other visitors.

Dennis Stocks had points of interest to make, but at least as interesting as this was the fact that the organisers of Con Amore invited a Literary Guest of Honor. On the one hand, this shows an attempt to unite the disparate parts of fandom, but on the other hand it does recognise that seperateness, and hence perhaps accentuates it. Is this better than the usual pattern of simply having a fan guest of honour, when that fan will almost certainly be nothing else besides a fanzine fan (except a filthy pro)? The other question is whether such a person could even be said to be representative of mainstream fandom, since I rather suspect that most fans these days are clubfans and/or convention fans. (Really, on reflection, this is probably true whether or not one is talking of mediafandom. Most people can't be bothered to take the time to respond to fhanzines, and similarly most people can't be bothered to shell out the high prices that mediafaneds ask for their publications.) The urge to publish fanzines is, it seems to me, a dying one in modern fandom. Apas are, it seems also to me, not necessarily a good introduction to fanzines. Editors of genzines, be they personalzines, serconzines, or whatever may make the move to apas, but rarely is the movement in the other direction. The demands upon the apahack are much less than on the faned, and the rewards, in terms of the egoboo of mailing comments, are much more certain than in the terms of the egoboo of LoCs. Like Dennis Stocks I have difficulty in seeing the reasons for the tensions between fhandom and mediafandom, which rather tends to prevent some fans from taking up interests in the other camps. In those days of the late 1960s and early 70s there was no mediafandom for Shayne McCormack to be part of - she was simply another fan, a bit more interested in Star Trek than most. I remember the walls of the convention room (the one and only) generously bedecked with film posters. *(Well, the Fan Guest of Honour at Con Amore was Susan Clarke, and as Dennis mentioned, she got a lot of questions from young fans interested in putting out fanzines. As she did from a previous Medtrek, and as she will no doubtedly get when she gives her Fan Guest of Honour talk at the Galactic Tours Convention in Melbourne next year. All the new fanzine publishing is taking place in media fandom now and fanzine fans are still leading lights in media cons. - Ron.)*

The article on the Golden Age of Soviet science fiction was a potentially useful summary. To fulfil that potential, of course, we need access to english translations of all those books. Igor's reference to Soviet sf being closer to the mainstream is a reasonable way of expressing the feeling I had from the small amount of Soviet sf that I have read, the feeling that the story is somehow less divorced from reality than is the case with that with which we are more familiar.

Alan Stewart's prose was reasonably well crafted, but I was left unaffected. This I attribute to a failure to suspend my disbelief in the story's fundamental assumption - that vocalisation will be replaced by non-oral communication. However, this is in conflict with the present trend, which is away from the use of keyboards, toward the use of 'mice', touch-screens and the development of voder/vocoders.

I'm afraid I found Evgeny Titaev's story just too cute to be enjoyable.

Michelle Hallett makes a reasonable point in observing that the stresses involved in working inside and outside the home are probably similar, and hence are no explanation for any discrepancy in the longevities of the genders. However, I have heard it put on several occasions by psychologists studying stress that the stress felt by an individual is inversely proportional to the extent to which that individual feels in control of the situation. One's home is the place where one is most likely to feel in control, so presumably stress is likely to be less for people working there.

Michael Hailstone's characterisation of certain types of behaviour as "typical of radical feminists" struck me as an unfortunate case of type-casting. While not sexist - he did not, after all, state whether the feminists were male or female - to ascribe the use of personal insults, for example, to one ideological group strikes me as a misleading explanation. The explanation lies rather in the fact that people with strong opinions, especially where those opinions are important to the way in which those people live their lives, feel themselves threatened when those opinions are challenged, and tend to lash out at the person they feel is challenging them. Backtracking slightly, if it is true that feminism is producing a neuter (although perhaps unisex is a better word) society (although it seems to me that it is economic forces, rather than feminism, which is doing it), then I for one have no objection. I cannot see that it is ultimately healthy for the genders to have monopolies on certain psychological characteristics, especially if those characters are mutually moderating. (Mind you, I do agree with Michael that "it has... become unfashionable to in any way bemoan the lot of men, as if women were the only people having a bad time". Diverting the argument to one based on the relative positions of the genders in the professional middle classes, which is what has happened, has caused society to blind itself to the sorry situations of people in lower socioeconomic groups, in spite of the fact that they form a larger part of society than the professional middle class, and in turn, I have no doubt, from what little contact I have with such people, the concerns of the professional middle class are seen by the others as at best irrelevant, and at worst wrong.)

Ah, no, I didn't say that some parents wouldn't have the sense to get their children to take fluoride tablets (although this could well be true). Rather I made the point that our water is fluoridated because the authorities believe this.

My own comments destroyed by what must be one of my own typos. "Augh!", as Charlie Brown would say. Page 35, bottom paragraph, line 4: the first word should read "is", not "isn't". Hopefully the next sentence expresses my intention, in any event.

I should be typing up an Australian Deomcrats newsletter, but since your latest issue arrived while I was Locing the last one, I'd be silly not to keep right on.

The Stephen Fox art was magnificent, indeed, better in its own way than the story it was illustrating. Not that the story was inherently poor, but it was crying out to be extended into a novella or novel, to really give that world depth, rather than a glimpse of curiosities, which is all the short-short allowed for.

Sue Bursztynski's view of Aussiecon II made an interesting view, inasmuch as hers, I gather, was strictly an observer's view, rather than that of someone involved in the running of the thing. Given that the Gang of Four portrayed themselves as the only people qualified to run a worldcon, the fact that they made elementary errors which others would not have made gives me a certain grim satisfaction.

Diane Fox at last reviews a book I have read. Unfortunately I can remember only one of the stories - THE SAVAGE MOUTH. Indeed, I rather suspect that I found it so horrifying - probably the most so that I have ever read - that it overwhelmed all other memories of the book. Unfortunately this prevents me from commenting on the Turner story, and determining the extent to which her comments are an analysis of the book, as opposed to a reflection of her own overwhelming cynicism (and what is "hypocrisy"? a system of government or a misspelling of "hypocrisy?")

In the event, of course, the Fan room at Aussiecon proved to be somewhat less than packed out with freshly printed Australian fanzines. To say that not all aussiefans were in favour of the worldcon is a misinterpretation. Rather, there was continuing resentment at the circumstances surrounding the loss of the original AUSTRALIA IN 1983 bid.

To my mind, whatever Steve Sneyd's (quite valid) misgivings about ICI, the encouraging thing is that there is an open discussion of the situation, with some mechanism for local authorities to veto the project. A few years ago the company would have been allowed to go ahead in perpetuating an obscenity like the Love Canal, all in the name of "progress". (I recognise the scorn that conservatives like Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and John Howard have for the obstruction of P*R*O*G*R*E*S*S by inconsequentialities such as environmental responsibility, but I remain hopeful that the new expectations of society will not be so easily rolled back.

Michael Hailstone's comment that "feminists tend to get their way, not by reasoned argument, but rather by emotional blackmail", while probably not true (feminist argument, in general, it seems to me, is advanced logically, but problems arise from the value judgements, the underlying axioms of their arguments, that they use, the problem being that not everyone regards them as self-evident truths), is interesting inasmuch that a criticism of men often advanced by feminists is that men are prone to use emotional blackmail to gain their ends. A common example cited is: "If you don't copulate with me I won't love you." However, I see no evidence that men have a monopoly on emotional blackmail. "You'll break your poor old mother's heart if you drop out of university/keep seeing that floozey/etc." is one that springs immediately to mind.

Since the obscure Christian sect (called by some the Cooneyites) had both male and female preachers, I have never been able to see the concern many other Christian denominations have about female priests. The accusation Andy Andruschak levels at Christianity is based not so much on Christian teachings as such, although St. Paul was certainly a male chauvinist of the first order, but on the fact that the larger Christian denominations are all modifications of Mother Church in Rome. The first woman Pope (or would she be the Mama?) will put an end to all that.

JULIE VAUX, 14 Zara Rd., Willoughby, NSW 2068.

I didn't see you or Sue at the Worldcon so I suppose you must have been busy with the new baby and bringing up 3rd generation fans.



I'm trying to break the habit of doing fillos but just for you (and seeing I'm a compulsive doodler anyway) I've sent a few things. My fan art outtake is being drastically reduced so that I can concentrate on writing instead, for I am weary to the soul's shadow of drawing for people whose main response to the visual images I create to share with them is indifference.

Art is meant to be shared.

How can I grow as a VISUAL artist or even as a craftperson in an environment of neglect. If no one gives a damn, can I?? It's time for a change - they can be indifferent to my verbal images and shapings instead. A change in the source of pain.

I took ten paintings to the Worldcon - ten kilos/20 lbs to carry - no one offered my paintings a lift. I set them up and, well, some people would say I was lucky - I sold two - yes, BUT at the reserve price, so I had to lug the other HEAVY eight back home again, and worse, I received NO offers of commissions.

I have been breaking my heart for years trying to have some skill and originality of style and image despite being a left hander who can't draw perspective cos I have a perceptual problem similar to dyslexia and have an uneven coordination due to what I refer to as "crossed wires". I offer that as an explanation, NOT an excuse, for those of you who wondered why I rarely draw backgrounds. I understand what perspective is, but I can't draw a complex one.



I would have been content, even happy, to be merely a "minor" artist. I don't want to be a mere "hobbyest", a happy middle class dabbler. I want to be able to create beautiful things and beings all the time, not the occasional hour here and there between shifts and sleeping and an inadequate social life. I yearn to be acknowledged as an artist, but women are apparently regarded as an extension of someone else before they're allowed to be anything at all. My failures by far outweigh my successes and the pain tears at me. My art is an essential part of my being - to reject or neglect it is to do so to me. I'm drowning in the shadow of my own pain, overwhelmed by the urge to create, but all I get is more frustration. I WILL NOT DO COPIES OR CLICHES. ART is meant to be shared and dreams grow stronger if they're drawn into the outer world.

Science says the world is solid, yet not. Is reality only the overlapping of our myriad perceptions of being?

I know of a certainty I have the compulsion to create but I do not know whether I simply lack the skill to enchant and haunt your hearts or if you are all or mostly incapable of anything but indifference.

Dante summed up my state of creative (and other forms of) frustration more fitly than me. (He's talking about trying to describe visions):

"As the geometer "her" mind applies
To square the circle, nor for all "her" wit
Finds the right formula, however "she" tries,

So strove I with that wonder - how to fit
the image to the sphere; so sought to see
how it maintained the point of rest in it.

Thither my own wings could not carry me
but that a flash my understanding clove,
Whence its desire came to it suddenly.

High phantasy lost power and here broke off.
Yes, as a wheel moves smoothly, free from jars,
My will and my desire were turned by love.

The love that moves the sun and the other stars.
Lord have mercy on me.

MICHAEL HAILSTONE. PO Box 193, Woden, ACT 2606.

Diane Fox's remarks in THE MENTOR 55 annoy me on two counts, firstly not because they are untrue, but because - well, what does she take me for? I am quite aware of the dreadful things some men do to their wives. We all know it's a sad world, a fallen world, full of cruelty and injustice, but that in no way invalidates the underlying principle that our civilizations - or any civilization, I guess - is designed and run foremost to shelter women and children. Nor does the fact that there seem to be quite a few women nowadays who don't want to be sheltered make it any less true. Also, where does she get the idea that I said or implied that all men and women should get married? Has she ever bothered to think beyond her moral outrage, why some men behave as they do? Has it ever occurred to her that it might be not because they are callous inhuman monsters but rather because they are human beings with common human shortcomings frustrated with married life as we know it in this society? I am single myself. I am not at all sure that I am happy to remain so, but of one thing I am sure: I don't want to become a suburban daddy. Maybe this is one matter where I am somewhat in sympathy with the feminists: married life as we know it doesn't seem much good for many men and women. Men need to be freed too, you know. This was the point Goodman made in his book but which has been since swept under the carpet for a few reasons, one of which must be its having been overshadowed by the women's movement since it became respectable.

Secondly, Diane seems to imply that women are all angels, men being the only evildoers. My brother died last Monday, 7th October 1985, after a two-year battle with melanoma. There seems to be a definite link between cancer and stress; that is, unresolved stress tends to weaken the body's defences. I can't claim positively to know, but I strongly felt this for much of the last two years; my brother just might have won the battle and lived, had it not been for the endless demands laid upon him by his feminist wife. I don't think one can blame his job, for he was one of the lucky few who really like their job. He was no mouse; no doubt he was emotionally blackmailed into sharing the housework. This hardly seems fair on a man with a fulltime job and a wife who has given up fulltime work because of the children. While it may be a moot point whether the man should share all the housework, it hardly seems right to me to demand this of a man with a life-threatening disease. It was not until last winter, when he was really ill, that she eased off him. Admittedly it was getting the flu that probably really finished him; it was an especially virulent strain around this year, (I myself was the sickest I'd been for a good many years for a few days and for some weeks thereafter plagued by a bad rash), but that still doesn't let her off the hook. Not that I want to be too hard on her; naturally she is the most grief-stricken of us all, and it is not for me to judge her. She'll have to answer to herself and live with that answer for the rest of her life. It would be kindest to see both of them as victims of one of the abysmal stupidities to which modern feminism has brought us.

I must own I'm biased. I had more than a gutful in the past of folk who make endless impossible demands and are never satisfied.

It's perhaps odd that it's only the menfolk in my family who seem to get sick (and in other families we know too). My mother and sister are both doing fine; it's the men who have been afflicted by such sickness as heart disease and stroke, melanoma, chronic endogenous depression, and possibly even a dash of schizophrenia.

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

I deeply enjoy the Dickian random effect of the literals yr computer introduces, but just a couple of the things crept into my loc (or maybe it was my inept typing, can't remember.. incidently, found yet another meaning for LOC - Line Of Control - the technical term for the Indo-Pak demarkation line in Kashmire) are maybe a little too surreal. No, Virginia, I don't come from an alternate universe

where Winston succeeded in joining up with Germany against the USSR like he wanted, instead of fighting 'em... the word "germ" shd appear before "warfare against Germany." Also, despite his political track record, the "Moroccan(sultan) king", not thing. I like Magrehand for Magrebland a lot, though, sounds like the version of some ancient traveller who'd done Timbuktu and back with only seventeen camels dead under him.

The USSR sections... responses: a) so many books by the Strugatskys, and so few available over here - how about a grand petition to the publishers over in the West. b) THE GREY ONES isn't on Toloconnou's list of Strugatsky works - wonder if it had a different title there. c) curious that Dick and Watson aren't among the Western authors mentioned, I'd've thought they were the Western SFnicks most likely to appeal to Strugatsky enthusiasts, gnawing at similar legs. d) "SF bases itself on extrapolation of reality, fantasy bases itself on extrapolation of human beliefs" is the most brilliantly succinct differentiation of the two strands I've yet seen... a bit too brilliant to be true, perhaps, but still brilliant. It's also interesting that he emphasises the folkloric element in fantasy - the number of people who make a living rewriting the Mabinogian is nobody's business, but they get away with it because the archetypal/"folk" memory elements can stand the hammer over and over again.

The GRACE OF GOD is an intensely atmospheric and even moving tale... only thing that threw me, probably it's me being thick, but was Aleph so hypnotised by the fact of hearing a human voice that his food kept getting the reheat treatment, or is the implication that even the supposed lonelyhearts message is itself some sort of hypnotic trick of a new type, the lead in to yet another sales gimmick?

MUMMY, I WANT A BUNNY was very readable, and indeed plausible given the context (interesting by the way, to see that the first of the electronic pets Dick projected in ANDROIDS ETC" has just hit the market, a "talkie" walkie petpseudocat, ready for Xmas in the real world) - but, perhaps as a translation factor, very hard to tell if the author is being satirical or trying to be genuinely moving. Perhaps the ambiguity of tone is part of the strength. Fantoditis is a nice oldologism - or maybe in English as taught in the USSR the fantods are still current usage?

Various things in the locs I'm tempted to react to, but the great feminist swamp-draining debate is beyond my strength to risk entering, and other reactions would require too much research to sensibly clarify, so will chicken past that sector, and just terminate with reactions to the art. The cover... superbly gloomy war at the end of the world scene. I think it was a bit unfair on SPACED OUT to blow it up to a full page...

John J. Alderson, Havelock, Vic 3465.

Steve Sneyd raised the question, in THE MENTOR 54, of the fate of Beni Hillel. I followed Thomas in saying they are extinct (and they are as a Bedawin tribe). Have checked through Burton (see Suppl. Nights Vol iv p.171, "History of Prince Habid". Habid was the son of Emir Salamah, a contemporary of Emir Hilal) but he has no note of their fate though he mentions that they were in a confederation of tribes which opposed the Prophet on his expedition to Honayn. Possibly the cause of their fate, whatever it was.

Michelle Mallett is obsessed with my supposed inadequate research. I certainly followed Graves in his suggestion that "Israel" could also mean Rachael's man... Genesis has many puns and plays on words and I did not and still do not think such a supposition untoward. The more so I suppose because both Graves and myself are familiar with languages where the loss of the very hard "c" is usual, eg. "lak" becomes in English *lake* and in Gaelic and Scottish *loch* (pronounced lo'h) where the "c" has finally vanished and been replaced by a silent explosive, the

"och" which the English will persist in sounding "ockk!". That this may happen in Hebrew seems a possibility to me, particularly as my Bible dictionary gives "Rahel" as an alternative for Rachael.

As far as considering Jewish society in a transitional position between a woman and a man-dominated society, I thought I made that obvious. As much as possible throughout the series I have used three differing societies to illustrate three differing stages of development. With the Jews we have in fairly full detail the transition period.

The fact that the children of a Jewish/Gentile family are automatically Jews if the mother is a Jewess is paralleled in every society because in every society the mother educates and conditions the children. (Thus it is expected in the Roman Catholic Church that the children will be members of the church regardless of what sort of society they represent). But when the mother is a Gentile the same applies and the children are expected to have been brought up Gentile. Consequently the fact is irrelevant to the nature of the society.

There is certainly an error concerning the use of the word "dowry". The dowry is certainly the "portion a woman brings her husband"... (that's a most inaccurate description, but we'll let that pass) and if Hallett had checked my sources, and she ought to check her facts before nit-picking, things may have been more obvious. The indirect quote I used reads "To this day the custom of the husband providing the wife with a dowry is found both among Jews and Muhammadans". Of course Westermarck is wrong as are most writers on the subject but I didn't bother to say so (he still remains the authority on the subject). Nor did I say so in the words I quoted from a particular story viz. "make the dowry heavy to them" where the dowry and the wedding present appear to be reversed, but I suspect that this is a device of the tale-teller to emphasise how the father tried to price the girl out of the man's reach with an enormous dowry (which the man cannot touch.) The two, of course, are expected to be equal, so the dowry was made heavy, that is the marriage present had to be enormous. I did not mention this because I was discussing or illustrating the part the women play in these marriage transactions. Mind you, in a way the matter is correct because the dowry and the marriage present both together represent the woman's dower.

As for the basis on which I concluded that Hayat Al Nufus was a "real man-hater"... well, I've read the story. Has Hallett?

I certainly did not patronise Julie Vaux. I respect her learning and intelligence far too much for that. She is a colleague.

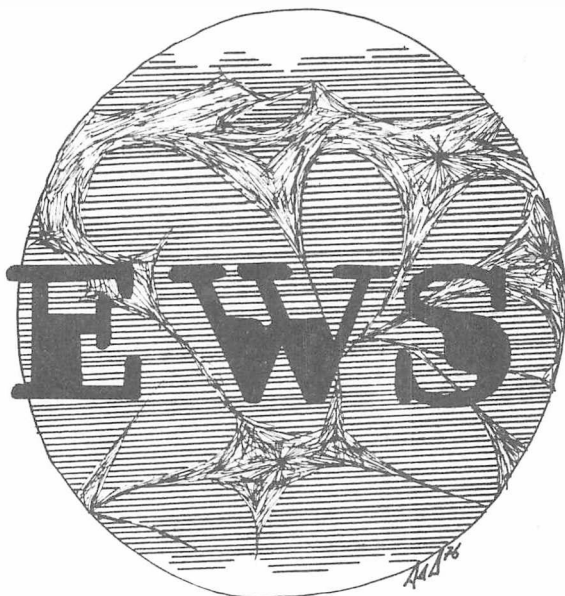
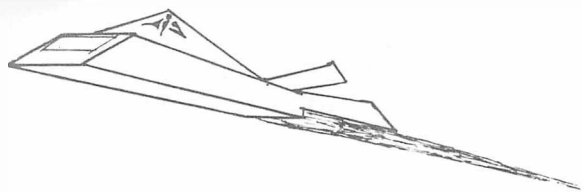
I think that Diane Fox is being unfair in suggesting that the Law of Manu was designed to make people a little guilty. The Hindu did have means of limiting their families, the KAMA SUTRA giving a number of recipes, and the art of love was actually elevated into a form of worship. Particularly so as she casts the asperation in general terms.

There is no doubt about an iconoclast like Harry Andruschak, and little wonder why at times he is puzzled. For example, why the largest percentage of churchgoers are women "given the anti-female attitude of most of the Bible"? Well! Perhaps what really happens is that women find a warmth and friendship within the church and a comfort and inspiration in the Bible, for neither the Church nor the Bible are anything like Harry reports, biased as he is with a heavy sectarianism. However, it is nice of him to admit at considerable length that he approached my articles with a great deal of prejudice. So do a lot of other people, but he alone has said so.

WAHF: Peter Brodie.



IS FINDING THAT RAY GUN YOU FIRED
HAS SOME STRANGE SIDE EFFECTS!



REVIEWS

POLAR FLEET by Warren Norwood. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Corgi & Bantam Books. (C) 1985. 234pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

Another War Saga, this time the chronicle is about the Double Spiral War, named after the galaxy in which it takes place - it has two spiral arms. This is volume two in that series. The first volume is MIDWAY BETWEEN.

Norwood has packed a lot of action in his 234 pages, and some readers might find the manner in which the author has many different scenes and protagonists in each chapter heavy going. What he has done is to show the struggle between the two human factions, and the aliens who are forced to either pick sides or go out on their own, by using some five or six viewpoints. I think if he had chosen one more than he did, or chosen character's names closer to each other (as one or two authors have done, to their detriment), then he would really have been in trouble. As it is, he has skirted close to it. When I was about a quarter of the way through POLAR FLEET I thought that he was not going to pull it off. However he did, and what you have is a very well written SF Adventure novel.

SKINNER by Richard S. McEnroe. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Corgi & Bantam Books. (C) 1985. 198pp. A\$3.95. On sale now.

McEnroe has had two other sf novels that have won him acclaim of sorts: THE SHATTERED STARS and FLIGHT OF HONOR. All three are part of a loose series SKINNER is mostly about a world which is run and controlled by one family, one of the "First Wave" of colonists that reached that solar system and elected to stay on that planet after the others had left for a more placid world. The chief export of the harsh planet was dragon hides. The dragons are giant lizards that are one of the hazards of the planet. The family uses indentured labour to hunt and kill the creatures. Because of the work and high turnover of personnel (the dragons kill many off) the family are always after the men and women who can survive and bring in as many skins as they can. The skins are almost indestructable and up till the time of the novel the skins had no real competition from synthetics.

Chavez Blackstone, the protagonist, was not really much different from the hundreds of others who preceded him. What set him aside was who his friends were, and the advent of an new antigravity freighter whose arrival set the economy of the solar system quivering. Another good solid sf adventure.

THE CHRONICLES OF CASTLE BRASS by Michael Moorcock. Granada h/c, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1973 & 1975. 432pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

It is not often that one can buy Moorcock in hardcover, and a trilogy at that. This volume contains the three novels - COUNT BRASS, THE CHAMPION OF GARATHORM

and **THE QUEST FOR TANELORN** - that makes up the **Chronicles of Castle Brass**. The **CHRONICLES** itself forms the sequel to **THE HISTORY OF THE RUNESTAFF**. Detailing how, some time after the battle of Londra, Castle Brass is rebuilt with the efforts of Dorian Hawkmoon and the endeavours of his wife Yisselda.

As in others of Moorcock's novels, Time plays a part in the plot; or rather the strange twistings of time that a distorted future produces. Some of Hawkmoon's old acquaintances arrive - D'Averc, Bowgentle and Oladahn. Another character also turns up: Jhary-a-Conel (who may be(is?) Jerry Cornelius). In the last Book Hawkmoon and Jhary-a-Conel travel through both the warped past and future times in search of the legendary Tanelorn.

In the beginning Moorcock wrote such fantasies as the Elric novels and science fiction as **THE BLOOD RED GAME** (printed first in Carnell's **SF ADVENTURES**) and only ten years ago, when the last volume of this trilogy was printed he was still writing first rate fantasy. *

THE FURIES by Keith Roberts. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. (C) 1966. 220 pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

British authors have a history of end-of-the-world novels, probably the best known being John Wyndham. In **THE FURIES** Roberts has equalled Wyndham in giving us an enthralling novel. Going by the copyright date, this was probably written before **PAVANE**, whilst Roberts was editor of **SCIENCE FANTASY** and **IMPULSE**.

What really started the trouble was the setting off of two five-hundred megaton bombs, one by the USA, the other by the USSR. They were exploded nearly simultaneously - the US one on the bed of the Pacific, the Soviet one somewhere in the Union. The shock sent waves of earthquakes around the globe, destroying much of civilization. To add to the chaos, giant wasps, a metre across, commenced to attack anything that moved (something like the Triffids). The problem was that the wasps seemed to be more intelligent than their size seemed to indicate. The hero of the novel escapes from the giant Nests for a time and joins others waging a guerilla war against the aliens. At the beginning of the novel is a fragment of an account that is made clearer later on in the book.

For readers who like their reading to be well written, solidly set out and a good yarn to boot.

GILGAMESH THE KING by Robert Silverberg. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1984. 320pp.

This novel isn't sf, though it could be called historical fantasy. It is a retelling of the Gilgamesh story. Silverberg has taken the various legends and works about Gilgamesh and written a story that is told from the point of view of the King.

Gilgamesh was one of the first, and the best remembered, of the ancient Heroes. It is said that his story, which has survived as the oldest piece of prose literature, could be over 3,500 years old. It comes from the time when the Tigris/Euphrates valley was the centre of one of the most advanced cultures on the planet. Like Solomon, Gilgamesh was a warrior as well as a king, though in those days they went together if the country ruled was to continue to expand or even hold its own. The novel gives a clear picture of life in those days, and the way that religion had more of a sway over the people than it does now.

The full colour cover that adorns the book is very well done, and should prove a valid selling point.

THE DEMON LORD by Peter Morwood. Century trade pb, dist in Aust by Doubleday Aust. (C) 1984. 304pp. A\$

Peter Morwood has written a sequel to his novel **THE HORSE LORD**, which was reviewed in a previous issue. The book is a fantasy, and quite well done. The author is twenty seven and writes of the adventures of Aldric Talvalin with verve.

The novel opens as Aldric and his retainer, Youenn, make their way into a dense forest. It is while they are moving across a clearing that they are attacked and Youenn is killed. This is the beginning, and after meeting up with a hunter who is looking for help to kill a rampaging wolf, Aldric eventually meets up with a

demon queller. Of course, it just happens that there is a demon that needs quelling and Aldric has some little use of sorcery in his past. The forester he had met is also killed on the way through and his daughter who had given her services as payment to Aldric to kill the wolf, tags along.

This is not brilliant fantasy, but is competently written and is an easy read.

STORM SEASON edited by Robert Asprin. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. (C) 1982. 219pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

Another in the Thieves World saga, this collection is also set in the thieves city of Sanctuary. The stories are written by different authors and are set in much the same period of time, indeed some of the characters appear in more than one of the stories.

Those included herein are: **AN EXERCISE IN PAIN** by Robert Asprin, **DOWNWIND** by C.J. Cherryh, **A FUGITIVE ART** by Diana Paxson, **STEEL** by Lynn Abbey, **WIZARD WEATHER** by Janet Morris and **GODSON** by Andy Offutt. There is also an Introduction and Epilogue by Robert Asprin, which sets the scene and ties up some of the loose ends. I found the introductory stories of mild interest, but thought as they went on through the book they became a bit stale. By the end of the book I was skipping pages. There are good stories there, though, the best being **DOWNWIND** by Cherryh, which is a very engrossing read. I don't know if it is the location or whether reading one after another deadens one's Sense of Wonder.

The styles of the individual authors is noticeable in this type of collection and the better ones stand out.

THE ARTIFICIAL KID by Bruce Sterling. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. (C) 1980. 245pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

The title of this novel created, in my mind at least, an image that is not true to the novel. Combined with the cover illustration which shows the Artificial Kid standing on what appears to be some kind of laticework, it reminded me of several novels that have been released recently that dealt with computers and those who got into their programmes, sometimes physically. **THE ARTIFICIAL KID**, however, has nothing to do with computers as a prime mover.

Set on a planet called Reverie, the area where the 'youngsters' live is called the Decrimilized Zone and in this area they can do what they like, as long as it does not break their own 'Law', part of which states that no guns be used in the area. The group running the planet from behind the scenes, the Cabal, has always kept behind those scenes, but events catch up and when the Artificial Kid came up with the founder of the Corporation, the previous governmental body, and whose cryocrypt and headquarters they had bombed, the entire structure of the social structure of Reverie breaks down and the pieces have to be gathered up.

I liked this book - it is no effort, and there are various 'messages' from the author that make sense in the context.

VALENTINE PONTIFEX by Robert Silverberg. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books Aust. (C) 1983. 367pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

This is the sequel to **LORD VANENTINE'S CASTLE** and **MAJIPOOR CHRONICLES**, the earlier volumes detailing the downfall and rise again of Lord Valentine and his efforts to regain his throne on the giant planet Majipoor. This starts off with another threat from the Metamorphs, the natives of the planet, who, after ten thousand years, break out into rebellion again and attempt to throw the alines off the planet.

The ancient Pontifex, Tyeveras, is being kept alive in a life-support machine, though he is senile and wants to die. Valentine departs on his processional and this is the time the Metamorphs pick to strike all over, using both biological weapons and riot to spread terror amongst humans and others. I originally found the series to be dull and hard to get into; however with this novel Silverbob rounds out the trilogy nicely.

Recommended.

THE DROUGHT by J.G. Ballard. Triad Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1965. 188pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Granada seems to be re-issuing all of Ballards works, soon they will all be in print. I find that his earlier works, from about 1965 (the copyright date of this one) are about the best of his material. That does not say all that much for his output for the last twenty years, but I think his obscessive writings centring abound drained swimming pools and deserted beaches can only be plumbed so far, though they partake of 'inner space'.

Though this is another British disaster novel, Ballard seems to make the landscape even more alien and dreamlike than any other sf novelist. Because of the pollution from years of industrial waste, the evaporation from the sea is stopped because of a skin which has formed over it. The shortage of water does not take very long to send society fighting amongst itself and the parched landscape that is so well known to his readers manifests itself: "Some twenty pink flamingoes huddled together in a shallow trough at one end of the rock pool, the water sunk to a palid slush between their feet. Sheets of matting covered the wire mesh over the pool but the birds fretted nervously, opening their beaks at Ransom." *

ON A PALE HORSE by Piers Anthony. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1983. 329 pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Piers Anthony appears to have, from the quantity of his output, taking over the reins of 'hack writing' from Robert Silverberg when he was doing it all in the 1950s. (By 'hack' I mean both quickly written and mostly shallow, but not always). The series listed on the inner cover of ON A PALE HORSE show The Cluster Series, The Tarot Trilogy, The Split Infinite Trilogy and many single novels as being part of his works. You could add the SOS novels and the long running Xanth series. With this novel Anthony begins another series - the Incarnations of Immortality.

The protagonist is Zane, who is described as an ordinary fellow who is introduced to a ring which he is told will fortell when death is near. It is a time when his life seems to be heading downhill all at once and when at the bottom he is given the role of Death, which is to do all that Death is supposed to: take souls, judge them and send them on to their (usually narrowly defined) futures. ON A PALE HORSE can be read on two levels - as a light read novel, and as a social commentary on society and the role (you could say) of death.

I found some of his series very good, much more than something flung off in a short time - the Tarot Series, for instance. *

LORD TYGER by Philip Jose Farmer. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1970. 284pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Edgar Rice Burroughs had quite a following with his Tarzan novels; LORD TYGER is a reissue of Farmer's book that re-writes the Tarzan legend in a more 'modern' style. Farmer wrote another similar novel in 1972 called TARZAN ALIVE.

The novel starts out with a history of the growth of the boy Ras Tyger and follows his growth to manhood. On the way to it he creates a legend with the doings of the white ghost who flits around the jungle. His contemporaries know that he is less than a ghost, as do the native women into whom he goes. It is when he comes into contact with the 'civilized' world that his jungle training comes to the fore.

Farmer writes adventure books with verve and writes them in a simple style that is its own signature. This is a long novel, the 284 pages are done in small type so that it is good value for the purchase price, especially if you like out-and-out adventure. *

E.T.: THE BOOK OF THE GREEN PLANET by William Kotzwinkle. Sphere pb, dist by William Collins. (C) 1985. 215pp & . A\$4.95. On sale now. Reviewed by Susan Clarke.

I hadn't seen E.T., but this book seemed to capture the charm of that creature that seemed to enrapt movie audiences all over the world. It resumes the tale from the last moment of the movie and tells of his adventures on his home planet where he is punished for his newly adopted 'alien' ways, and how he longs to

return to Elliott who is rapidly growing to become a dreaded adult. How he returns after feeding out his heart in messages to his dearest Earth friends, is lovingly and touchingly told with just that dash of humour and verve to spice up the sentimentality that the book could have sunk into.

The home world of ET and the creatures, especially the plants, described in detail in the course of the book, proves unique in sf. Certainly I didn't want to put the book down and although I must admit to being selfconscious when reading it in doctor's waiting rooms and cafeterias until I had a chance to finish it. By the time I had completed it, I was happy to pack the children's version (the red covered one) into my hospital bag for some light reading to compare them both.

The children's edition is enhanced by fine line drawings of ET and his friends and plants. One is hard put to find the difference at first between the two editions - because when simplifying the language somewhat (though not too much) you are not left with the impression that the children readers are not being talked down to as you get with a lot of film/after film books meant for child readers. I would be hesitant to use the word child, actually, but would substitute "younger" readers.

Both books are a must for those with a *Sense*of*Wonder* still intact.

CRYPTOZOIC by Brian Aldiss. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1967. 187pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Another author whose books are all being brought either back into print or new editions released. Aldiss is an author whose early works were straight hardcore sf (HOTHOUSE, NON-STOP/STARSHIP) and whose later works branched off into that area I suppose you could call writing about images.

CRYPTOZOIC is about time travel and some of the paradoxes. Bush was a man recruited as a killer and sent back into time to further the advances of a totalitarian state. The age he went back into is the title of the book. The use of language is what makes a novel, and Aldiss's later works, such as the HELLICONIA series, show how density helps, especially when the density is about social evolution. This novel, written nearly twenty years ago, shows a slight hint of what was to come, and some readers still think that these works, from the 1960s, are his best so far. Not as convoluted or as buried in images as some of his other works. *

THE UNFORSAKEN HIERO by Sterling E. Lanier. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1983. 318pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Another after-the-bomb novel. It is also the sequel to HIERO'S JOURNEY, which told of the quest of one Per Hiero Desteen as he sought, across a landscape changed in the five thousand years after the holocaust, for something thought to exist in that area - a computer. After blowing up the probable ground the computer was thought to be in, he went back to civilization with a set of books describing how to build one, which would have been interesting considering the technology needed to do it.

The sequel tells of another of Hiero's journeys, this time his quest also went wrong and without the aid of his mental powers he found that it was really bad news. In such a world where said powers exist, not only those on the side of right have access to them, and Hiero found himself up against one whose powers were of the type that animal cunning and luck were the only hope of his getting out alive. *

ELRIC AT THE END OF TIME by Michael Moorcock. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1984. 208pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

The stories in this collection range in the time they were written from 1957 to 1984. It is a collection, rather than a novel. The stories included are: ELRIC AT THE END OF TIME, THE LAST ENCHANTMENT, THE SECRET LIFE OF ELRIC OF MELNIBONE, SOJAN THE SWORDSMAN, JERRY CORNELIUS AND CO, NEW WORLDS - JERRY CORNELIUS, IN LIGHTER VEIN and THE STONE THING.

Moorcock has written many hundreds of thousand, and probably millions, of words in his fiction. In ELRIC AT THE END OF TIME he has brought together two characters who exist in completely different continuums - Elric of Melnibone and Una Persson, who has her own series along with Jerry Cornelius. This collection is a

kind of catch all: NEW WORLDS - JERRY CORNELIUS is a letter written to a reader where Moorcock talks about his time as editor of NEW WORLDS and the background of what he tried to do, and how it folded. Very interesting reading as both history and a warning to others who might try to publish. IN LIGHTER VEIN gives some background into the Cornelius tetralogy, and though only two pages, it does give an insight into what the author was trying to achieve. *

THE SENTIMENTAL AGENTS IN THE VOLYEN EMPIRE by Doris Lessing. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1983. 220pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Dorothy Lessing is not really a ghetto writer as are most sf writers. She is on the outside looking in rather than having the vast bulk of already published sf to draw upon, and thus the Establishment tends to look at her works from a different view than the rest of us...

THE SENTIMENTAL AGENTS IN THE VOLYEN EMPIRE is part of the ongoing series from the Canopus In Argos series. Previous books include SHIKASTA, THE MARRIAGES BETWEEN ZONES THREE, FOUR AND FIVE, THE SYRIAN EXPERIMENTS, THE MAKING OF THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR PLANET 8 and this volume. Her prose is funny and well written; the closest I have read to it is THE HITCHHIKERS GUIDE novels, though these are more complicated in regards to plot.

I suppose this is the kind of novel one points to when told that sf is 'rubbish' or 'trash', as some noted European writers have been heard to comment. It cannot be said to be exciting reading, but is quietly enjoyable. *

THE HAUNTER OF THE DARK - OMNIBUS 3 by H.P. Lovecraft. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1950. 544pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Lovecraft is an author I always have time for. This collection has some of his best works, and the cover, which shows a warty *thing* (which looks something like the fat slob in THE REVENGE OF THE JEDI) eating screaming women with relish, really set up the mood.

The stories included are: THE OUTSIDER, THE RATS IN THE WALLS, PICKMAN'S MODEL, THE CALL OF CTHULHU, THE DUNWICH HORROR, THE WHISPERER IN DARKNESS, THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE, THE HAUNTER OF THE DARK, THE THING ON THE DOOR STEP, THE MUSIC OF ERIC ZANN, THE LURKING FEAR, THE PICTURE IN THE HOUSE, THE SHADOW OVER INNESMOUTH and THE SHADOW OUT OF TIME. These make up one of the best collections of horror to be published recently. Maybe I should amend my comment to "this collection has his best works"

Lovecraft grows on one; I suppose you have to begin reading him in your teens to really feel the exquisite horror of the atmosphere he creates. If you haven't got this volume then get it. And the previous two.

Recommended. *

LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT by J.G. Ballard. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1978. 191pp. S\$6.95. On sale now.

The full title given on the title page is LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT AND OTHER STORIES. The said stories show the full range of Ballard's style, from THE ULTIMATE CITY to THE BEACH MURDERS. The other stories in this collection are LOW FLYING AIRCRAFT, THE DEAD ASTRONAUGHT, MY DREAM OF FLYING TO WAKE ISLAND, THE LIFE AND DEATH OF GOD, THE GREATEST TELEVISION SHOW ON EARTH, A PLACE AND A TIME TO DIE and THE COMSAT ANGELS. The range of topics can be seen from the magazines where they were first published - IF, PLAYBOY, AMBIT, NEW WORLDS, ROGUE and BANANAS (?).

There are fans of Ballard who still have not got his entire collection, so this book will help round out their collections. When the sources are so diverse then a paperback is the best way to get them in your library or to read them.

For the Ballard completist. *

THE DRAGON MASTERS by Jack Vance. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1962. 123pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

THE DRAGON MASTERS is one of the classics of the field. It was first serialised in IF, with illustrations by Jack Gaughan. Those illustrations, I am convinced, helped THE DRAGON MASTERS win the Hugo for best novel for that year.

Set in a future when genetic engineering has created dragons of many types for warfare, Vance creates a society that lives and breathes. The different types of dragons - Termagants, Murderers (both Striding and Long-Horned), Fiends, Blue Horrors, Basics and Spiders all go together to create the world of Aerlith. Vance is well known for his stylistic approach to creating worlds. This novel is as vibrant as when I first read it in that magazine serial twenty-three years ago.

If you haven't read it, get it. *Recommended*. *

Biog Of A Space Tyrant Vol 2 - MERCENARY by Piers Anthony. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1984. 413pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

I don't know how Anthony does it - one series after another. This is volume two - I haven't read volume one (and what a series title to tickle the tongue), but the introduction was enough to get by with. The present volume commences with Hope Hubris, the hero named, as he is being mugged. Being only fifteen he got flattened and was helped by one who has nothing good to say for the society.

The novel soon gets stuck into the meat and he joins the Jupiter Navy, in which he rises rapidly, followed by his picked staff - the women tied by ties of admiration, the men of devotion. The enemy are running the Jupiter Ecliptic and they don't take much notice until our young hero shows the stuff he is made of. One of the first things he does is have a pirate girl begging to be raped, done so.

Old fashioned space opera. *

THE DRAGON by Jane Gaskell. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1963, 1966. 206pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

I don't think many readers of sf know of this series, which consists of four volumes (THE SERPENT, THE DRAGON, ATLAN and THE CITY) which were first published twenty years ago. There was another edition in 1975, but this is the first since then.

The saga continues as Cija flees across an earth that at that time had not captured the moon and the continents were still different to those which exist in the present day. Atlan was the most powerful continent then, with the barbarians of the other main continents attempting to overthrow it. Zerd was one such, a lizard general whose ambition was to overthrow it and rule. He was a brilliant officer and the four books tell of his career as he fights on towards his goal. Cija also comes up against him again and again, with devastating personal results. This was one of the first of the series of novels that showed that that women sf (or fantasy) writers were at least as good as the men. *

THE HORSECLANS 10 - BILI THE AXE by Robert Adams. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1982. 185pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Another series that is getting well into the teens. THE HORSECLANS is a rough-and-tough series of novels about the peoples left on the North American Continent after a disaster of some magnitude. The series started off with the attempt of a near-immortal to unite the Horseclans, a nomadic tribe of Americans, into a cohesive fighting force and settle them. After the following novels when this occurred the novels branched off somewhat.

BILI THE AXE tells of the adventures of a leader of one of the Horseclans bands from when he was a Duke, through to him as Prince. The novel itself is told as a flashback of Bili as he lies dying of festering wounds. The immortals have a background role this time - the main story is about Bili and his peoples's adventures as they join forces with Prince Byruhn as he tried to stop an invading army. Also in the plot are the evil scientists who managed to survive the catastrophe in an Enclave. I would call this type of novel Sword Adventure. *

CONAN THE UNCONQUERED by Robert Jordan. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1983. 180pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

This is the twenty-third book in the series that commenced with CONAN and CONAN THE USPUPER and then went on to a list that is still going (and no, I am not going to list them). Jordan writes well, and if he does not write in the exact style

of Howard, at least he follows the creator of Conan more closely than some others who have written those continuations.

Conan is in trouble, as usual - an band of followers called the Cult of Doom is practising their evil ways, which entail worshipping nothingness, and who strive, as they call on the devils of their wanting, to keep Chaos chained. As usual there is theft (this time of a beautiful necklace, with the power to make the wearer irresistible to men) and he finds himself trying to retrieve it. In his journey to find it Conan meets the usual bevy of dancing girls whose mistress he finds worth meeting, both for her sorceries and womanly virtues. As mentioned above, this is one of the longer running S&S series - if your taste runs that way you'll like Jordan's work. *

THE DARKLING WIND by Somtow Sucharitkul. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Corgi & Bantam Books. (C) 1985. 384pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

Sucharitkul is a past winner of the John W. Campbell Award for Best New SF Writer. If you have read his past novels and short stories you will know that he has a distinctive style. **THE DARKLING WIND** is the fourth in the Inquestor Series and follows the events of the empire's fall as the Inquestors, whose god-like power finds itself turned against itself. The Inquest has lasted twenty thousand years and there were those who felt that the public use to which the Inquestors put their powers, that is to create small disturbances in the Destiny of Man, was really to create a stagnation in which their own victories were ensured.

I think that the closest writer to this type would be Cordwainer Smith and his Instrumentality, though Smith's series was opened ended. Sucharitkul has given his an ending. I don't believe that all readers will like his style - but I do.

WORLD WITHOUT STARS by J.C. Mezieres and P. Christin. Hodder Dargaud pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1972. 22x28.5 cm. 48pp full colour. A\$6.95. On sale now.

You don't see many SF comics in paperback format, especially when they have been translated from the French.

WORLD WITHOUT STARS follows the space adventures of spatiotemporal agents Valerian and Laureline as they give a fairwell tour of the planets of a pioneer settlement. It is while they are finished the tour that they find that an approaching planet is threatening to destroy the new colony. When they explore the onrushing world they find it is hollow and has a central sun and orbiting planet on which they land. There are inhabitants - one race spends its time digging up a crytals which implodes, creating destruction. The nomad race sells them to the two ruling races - one ruled by men, the other by women.

If one dismisses the idea of the central sun, then the plot is not too farfetched for a basic sf plot. Being from 1972 the comic shows up both the bad and good points of a male/female dominated society (though there don't seem to be many good points). In the end the two terrans get off the planet and try their last ditch plan to divert the speeding wanderer.

THE DAY OF THE DISSONANCE by Alan Dean Foster. Futura pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1984. 292pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

If you have already read the first two volumes of the Spellsinger series (**SPELLSINGER** and **THE HOUR OF THE GATE**) you will already be aware of the world of thinking and talking animals that Foster has created. Jonathan Meriweather had been studying to be a solicitor when he was transported across the dimensions to a world where magic worked. He found that he was a Spellsinger, that is he could while singing songs conjur spells that (usually) followed the verses of the song.

The latest novel finds Clothahump, the wizard who brought him across from his native earth, apparently quite ill. Clothahump says that the only medicine that can cure him is in another part of the country. The journey that Jon partakes, along with his companion Mudge the otter and several others they pick up on the way are quite amusing, if predictable for this type of fantasy. The images are aimed a little more at 'reality' than soft fantasy usually is.

THERE IS NO DARKNESS by Joe Haldeman and Jack C. Haldeman II. Futura pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1983. 245pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Parts of this novel have been previously been published in ASIMOV'S SF ADVENTURE MAGAZINE, so some readers may have already read some of it. However there are other sections of the whole which have not. The 'sections' are labeled EARTH, HELL, CONSTRUCT and SPRINGWORLD.

The book is built around the notion of a space-travelling school called Starschool which, with its students, visits various planets in order to educate said students using the various planets as 'on the job' training. The group of young people that the plot is built around have as members youths from two of the most violent planets yet colonised. The others are a terran and a girl and a youth from elsewhere. The first piece, set on earth, could really be present day adventure as the hero fights sharks, bears and bulls to earn money. Even when they land on Hell and commence military training, this could conceivably still occur in the present. The novel would make a good introduction to someone who thinks sf is all about space ships and aliens.

HEROES OF THE EQUINOX by J.C. Mezieres and P. Christin. Hodder Dargaud pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1978. 22x28.5 cm. 46pp in full colour. A\$6.95. on sale now.

The Valerian spatiotemporal agent series consists of four titles available in English. HEROES OF THE EQUINOX is another comic aimed at the adult audience. The colour is that deep shade which was used by Classics Illustrated, not the washed-out products put out by the ordinary comic publishers.

HEROES is set on a planet where the known native people are all old, and they are running a contest for four 'heroes' sent by their respective planets to save their race by conquering the elements and beasts on the Children's Isle. The four picked by their respective governments are representative of those planets - there is a warrior from the planet Kraham, a Hero of the People from Industrious Bourgnouf, Blimflim from Irridescent Malimum (a mystic) and Valerian from Earth. Their job is to win through so that the children can be born and repopulate the world.

An enjoyable half-hours read.

THE BEST OF HARRY HARRISON. Futura pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1976. 315pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Harry Harrison is more known for his novels than his short stories. This is a collection of some of his best short stories. Each has a short introduction and they are set out in order written, from 1962 through to 1973. The stories are: THE STREETS OF ASHKELON; CAPTAIN HONARIO HARPLAYER, RN; RESCUE OPERATION; AT LAST, THE TRUE STORY OF FRANKENSTEIN; I ALWAYS DO WHAT TEDDY SAYS; PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST; MUTE MILTON; A CRIMINAL ACT; WAITING PLACE; IF; I HAVE A VIGIL; FROM FANATICISM, OR FOR REWARD; BY THE FALLS; THE EVER-BRANCHING TREE; BRAVE NEWER WORLD; THE WICKED FLEE; ROOMMATES; THE MOTHBALLED SPACESHIP; AN HONEST DAY'S WORK; WE ATE THE WHOLE THING and SPACE RATS OF THE CCC. Some of the above stories are superb, others are well worth reading.

I would honestly say this collection represents Harrison's best works. Stories such as RESCUE OPERATION, A CRIMINAL ACT, BY THE FALLS and ROOMMATES are up there with the best in the field. *Recommended*.

LIFEBOAT by Harry Harrison & Gordon R. Dickson. Futura pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1977. 181pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

Harry Harrison seems to have hit the big time - his name on this collaboration is larger than Gordon R. Dickson's. The novel definitely has much of Harrison's style, and Dickson's aliens.

At the time of the story, mankind was colonising interstellar space, using the ships of a race that looked on going into space as their religion. The humans had a very stratified society, which was created that way to handle over population. The society had been like that for some two hundred years and there were now various movements to bring about a more harmonious mix. Giles Steel Ahsad was an

Adelman, one of the ruling class who was determined to reach a certain planet and assassinate the founder of their rebel movement. The founder was determined to bring change at once no matter what the consequences to society, whereas the rest of the organisation was for slow change. An explosion wrecked the ship Giles was on, with great loss of life. He escaped with two aliens and five members of the subserviant class. The rest of the novel follows their plight as they try reach planetfall safely, with the aliens seemingly wanting to save their honour rather than their lives. Interesting SF.

WEST OF EDEN by Harry Harrison. Granada pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1984. 509pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

I had thought that Harry Harrison had done his best work back in the 1960s, with novels like the Deathworld books. His latest novels, such as the Worlds series, I thought went along truly well worn grooves. And then along comes a novel that shows that an author can still surprise his readers.

WEST OF EDEN is a "What If" story; in this case, "What if the giant meteor that struck the earth back in the Age of the Dinosaurs had not struck?". Harrison has started with this premise and worked his way through the projected events and drawn his own conclusions. The world of West of Eden (from a biblical quote) is well planned and thought out, right down to language and psychological aspects. The intelligent dinosaurs are believable, and alien enough to show that they are different creatures, and that the disgust that they bring out in the humans fighting against them is that of the present day human to the reptiles he has come up against - the snake and crocodile, to name a few.

A well written book.

BEST SF OF THE YEAR 14, edited by Terry Carr. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. 374pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

If you want to see what some of the best sf stories written in 1984 were, then this collection shows what one editor who knows his sf. The stories in this volume are: **PRESS ENTER** by John Varley, **BLUED MOON** by Connie Willis, **SUMMER SOLSTICE** by Charles Harness, **MORNING CHILD** by Gardiner Dozois, **THE ALIENS WHO KNEW EVERYTHING**, **MEAN EVERYTHING** by George Effinger, **A DAY IN THE SKIN** by Tanith Lee, **INSTRUCTIONS** by Bob Leman, **THE LUCKY STRIKE** by Kim Robinson, **GREEN HEARTS** by Lee Montgomerie, **BLOODCHILD** by Octavia Butler, **TROGAN HORSE** by Michael Swanwick, **FEARS** by Pamela Sargent, **TRINITY** by Nancy Kress. There is also a 'Recommended Reading' list.

It is noticeable that there are several stories in this volume that have similar backgrounds - two, **PRESS ENTER** and **BLUED MOON** have personal computers playing a major role, and in another two, it is God who is another of the major roles. This year's selection has some powerful stories. I can't say that they are the 'best' - that is a subjective view - but they are memorable stories.

FUTURE BANTAM RELEASES, when released in Aust will be dist. through Corgi & Bantam:

THE BOOK OF KELLS by R.A. MacAvoy. (C) 1985. 340pp. US\$3.50. A new novel in the Damiano series. It tells of a young artist who somehow opened a gateway through time to Ireland of a thousand years ago. For those who like Celtic stories.

THE MIND GAME by Norman Spinrad. (C) 1980. 342pp. US\$3.95. The story of a man fighting for his wife, who was in the grip of a group of people who were running a 'self-help' group, and who were in reality, taking control of people's minds. Set in the near future.

THE LAST RAINBOW by Parke Godwin. (C) 1985. 350pp. US\$4.95. Trade pb. There seems to be a rash of Celtic novels overseas - this novel is about the early years of Saint Patric and his encounter with Dorelei, the ruler of Faerie, who he falls in love with.

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

CENTURY HUTCHINSON H/C:

SLOW BIRDS & OTHER STORIES - Watson
BEST SF OF THE YEAR 14 - Ed T. Carr.
REACH FOR TOMORROW - Arthur C Clarke.
THE GODS THEMSELVES - Isaac Asimov
THE DOOR INTO SUMMER - R.A. Heinlein.
TIME FOR THE STARS - R.A. Heinlein.

THE BELGARIAD in two books - Eddings.
ENDER'S GAME - Orson Scott Card.

PENGUIN:

SETTING GENES TO WORK - S. Yanchinski
A POCKET GUIDE TO MICROCOMPUTER BASIC.
OCTAGON - Fred Saberhagen.
COLIN'S FANTASTIC VIDEO ADVENTURE.

SPHERE:

A CELTIC ODYSSEY - Michael Scott.

HODDER & STOUGHTON:

V - THE CHICAGO CONVERSION.
THE GINGER STAR - Leigh Bracket.
MIDAS WORLD - Fred Pohl.
THE HOUNDS OF SKEITH - Leigh Bracket.
SPACE FAMILY STONE - R.A. Heinlein.
THE COSMIC FUNHOUSE 3 - Chris Black.
THE EXPLOSING SUNS 4 - Chris Black.
HORSECLANS 11 - Robert Adams.

CORGI & BANTAM:

DEATH'S ANGEL - Kathleen Sky
THE HAMMER OF DARKNESS - L. Modesitt Jr.
THE TRUE GAME - C.S. Petter.
THE CHRISTENING QUEST - E. Scarborough.

DOUBLEDAY:

THE DRAGONLANCE CHRONICLES 1-3.

GRANADA:

DISASTER AREA - J.G. Ballard.
ATROCITY EXHIBITION - J.G. Ballard.
BEARING AN HOUR GLASS - P. Anthony.
CIRCUMPOLAR - Richard Lupoff.
COSMIC PUPETS - P.K. Dick.
GALAXIES LIKE GRAINS OF SAND - Aldiss.
ALIEN ANIMALS - Janet & Colin Bond.
THE FOUNDATION SERIES - Asimov.

DECEMBER RELEASES:

CENTURY HUTCHINSON:

JOURNEY BEYOND TOMORROW - R. Sheckley.
DIMENSION OF MIRACLES

HODDER & STOUGHTON:

THE REAVERS OF SKEITH - L. Bracket.
THE END OF THE MATTER - A.D. Foster.
ENCHANTED PILGRIMAGE - Clifford Simak.
WHERE THE EVIL DWELLS - Clifford Simak.
THE HORSECLANS 11 - Robert Adams.

CORGI & BANTAM:

THE ATLAS OF PERN - K. Wynn Sonstad.
THE GOLDEN SWAN - A. Springer.
THE MASTER OF THE SIDHE - K.C. Flint.

INFINITIES WEB - S. Finch.
FAR FROM HOME - Walter Tevis.

JANUARY RELEASES:

CORGI & BANTAM:

DAY OF THE DOVE - James Blish.
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