

THE MENTOR 69

Australian Science Fiction



THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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EDITORIAL SLANT: THE BLUE MOUNTAINS SF GROUP

RON CLARKE:

I'm writing this on Christmas Eve. December has been quite a hectic month, what with the Railways deciding to do track work and thus only one Blue Mountains line has been open for getting to and from Sydney, a total distance of 80 km. To add to that, our youngest daughter, Eleanor, had a knee reconstruction on the 17th of December, and tonight Susan took her to Nepean District Hospital with suspected Appendicitis. Just before she left, eight year old Eleanor was saying "Why me? Why me?".

I see in the December issue of the newszine THYME that the Canberra SF Group has pointed out that one of the fiction books they publish is eligible for Ditmar nominations: they pay contributors. And a new "fanzine" from Queensland, SYZYGY, (which I've heard of, but haven't seen a copy of at the time of writing) also pays contributors. If I was at all serious about the Ditmars I might think of paying contributors to THE MENTOR a nominal payment, say \$5 for an article or piece of fiction, so as to enable them to be eligible for "professional" status as writers. Another anomaly in Ditmar selections: Since when is a fanzine not a fanzine - when it pays contributors. THYME seems to be both a newszine, and with its "fiction" issues, a prozine (paying contributors). Tch, tch. It's too bad I'm not serious about the Ditmars.

This issue I'm giving a coordinator of the BMSFG organisation a opportunity to give some background to the group. I've had this article on hand for several months and think it should get an airing. There are several such groups interstate, but only one, as far as I know, in NSW. It has been some little time since the demise of the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation, which lasted from the late '60s to the late 70's, in the end turning into a social group, which didn't discuss sf at all. The SSFF had a constitution and when I was active in it, business meetings, minutes, etc, just like the older NSW group, the Futurian Society. Maybe the BMSFG with its more looser organisation will keep generating more interest. It is covering a much smaller geographical area (about 20 km along the highway through the Blue Mountains), but it is branching down to Penrith - the local growth area - for newer blood. As with most such groups, there seems to be a high turn-over of persons interested in sf, though they come from all age groups.

Over to Julie.

JULIE HAWKINS: WHAT'S GOING ON?

What do an artist/lib. technician, a clerical assistant, a hypnotherapist, a couple of writers, a technical officer, a teacher and a clerk have in common? They are all members of the Blue Mountains Science Fiction Group. And these are not the only members.

About eighteen months ago a man by the name of Ron Clarke (does anyone know this man) rang me and suggested we start a science fiction group on the mountains. Great, said I, perhaps foolishly. Find somewhere to hold the first meeting, said Ron, and put up some notices. So we did, not without problems, I might add.

Our first meeting was held in a coffee shop in Springwood, on the first Friday in April, 1989. About eight people turned up and we discussed what the group should be about, what science fiction

was about and why we all loved it. All this was over the noise of the coffee machine alongside us and music in the background. But we managed to organise a second meeting and the group has grown from there.

The main objective of the group is to get together and talk about science fiction and related subjects, and, in some cases, unrelated subjects. We have about fifteen regular members, although this number goes up and down as new members come and check us out. As already shown, our members come from all walks of life, in all shapes and sizes, all with one thing in common: a love of science fiction.

Our meetings are usually held in member's houses with a specific topic for discussion or a book or author to review. It is not unusual for other subjects to arise as conversation heads off along a related line or a totally unexpected idea is put forward. Some comments that have been made are unsuitable for publication.

In the course of our meetings we have covered the Greenhouse Effect, remedies for this including planting more trees, and personal recycling units. The Third World population crisis was mentioned here, with the suggestion of letting everyone drown when the water levels rose or assassinating the doctors so all the people got sick and died. Negative population growth was to be aimed for and countries should stop giving "aid(s)" to underdeveloped countries, with several cryptic remarks about them giving it back. Naturally someone asked if the Greenhouse Effect would result in better tomatoes.

Other subjects covered include: Mind Powers, Psychic Phenomena in Science Fiction, and Astronomy. In the talk on Mind Powers we first had to decide exactly what the mind was. Is it the soul, the thoughts we have, or is it the brain itself? Various forms of mind-related study were discussed and a demonstration of levitation offered but politely declined.

Along with topical discussions, we also review books and authors. Some of the books we've looked at include THE SEA AND SUMMER by George Turner and the Foundation Series by Isaac Asimov. We have also reviewed authors instead of a particular book. Among these are Harry Harrison, whose books discussed included THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT, INVASION EARTH and DEATHWORLD. Unfortunately for Harry several members weren't overly impressed with his works.

We also discussed the novelisation of movies and discovered that there weren't many good ones around; of course this only relates to the ones we discussed. One thing that has come out of these discussions is the way we look at the books we read. Some authors have been severely criticised because of their characters, either because they weren't believable, or they were wimps.

We have held video nights and our September meeting was a wine and cheese night.

Our first anniversary meeting was held in a tea rooms at Wentworth Falls. Some members dressed up for the occasion, and badges were specially provided. When we first started no-one knew how long we would last, if there was enough interest or not. We were all pleased when the first anniversary came around and we're all hoping for a second.

Casual is the word that describes our group; no committee or constitution etc., and perhaps that is better. We do take notes of the meetings and a newsletter is printed every month (courtesy of Ron). If you are interested in reading about our meetings you should ask Ron to send you a copy with THE MENTOR. By the way, this little article was another suggestion from Ron and if he doesn't wipe this sentence I'll be surprised. Sorry Ron!

All in all we have a good time when we get together and the variety of members makes for some interesting conversations. Hopefully we will have many more.

- Julie Hawkins

CREW WAITING

by Margaret Pearce

Tim, second astrophysicist of the defunct space exploration ship, MERCURY 2, argued as he worked, tamping the seedlings into the soggy black mud.

"In fifty years, the crew of the MERCURY 1 could have been absorbed into the local population."

His close friend Gerard, the ex-resident biologist, grunted as he swung the spade. Months of hard work hadn't, as yet, made much difference to his plump form.

"Where's the ship then, or any traces of an Earth style culture?"

It was an argument that had been raging for the past eleven months; ever since MERCURY 2 made her emergency landing. The intense cloud of radiation which destroyed the shielding screens, communications, and all the delicate electronic equipment could have caused the silence and emergency landing of MERCURY 1, as it had of MERCURY 2, but the argument among the shipwrecked experts still raged. Where was MERCURY 1?

The second satellite around Sirius had gravity, atmosphere, and a humanoid population. Logically it was the only spot in the extremely barren corner of the galaxy where the missing vessel could be.

Up on the plateau, MERCURY 2 reared in all its undamaged majesty. The landing was without casualties, and the distress signal flashed through, before delicate electronic equipment faltered into its permanent silence.

The humanoid population proved peaceful and helpful. They helped the crew build the light huts that were so much more suitable in the humid climate than the dead ship, with its now useless recycling and air-conditioning plant. They also showed the crew how to plant and harvest the tap-rooted plant that seemed to be their staple diet.

No form of animal life was eaten, and the natives were shocked at the suggestion of killing the six-legged herbivores that slunk through the jungle, but the plant life was high in protein. The crew stopped lamenting the lack of decent steaks, and settled down to wait out the two years until their rescue.

The continuous cloud cover was changing colour and flushing pink. Around them, the black green heavy jungle reared up, the tips of the trees reflecting the deepening crimson of the clouds.

Tim squinted along the row. It was getting hard to see. He covered his remaining pile of

seedlings with the wet soil, and Gerard leaned on his spade and waited. Around them other figures were doing the same. The tap-rooted plant only grew in the swampy patches that broke up the dense jungle into clearings, and the crew and natives worked side by side with feverish activity to space out the seedlings in every inch of clearing.

'I mean, look at her,' Tim continued as he straightened up. 'She looks like Earth stock.'

The girl noticed him, and flashed a bright grin. She was blonde and blue eyed, but her skin with the shining bronze green of most of the other natives. Her companion shifted her load of harvested root to the other hip and giggled. She had pink skin and shining brown hair and eyes, but an extra joint in her arms and legs gave her a very alien look.

Gerard was not convinced.

'In fifty years there should be someone who can speak English, and some crew members still alive, and where is the ship?'

This was the irrefutable argument. They scanned the planet in their last hurtling orbit before landing, and if the ship was there it should have registered on their sensors. There were no traces of any manufactured tools such as Tim and Gerard were hefting back to their hut, no traces or remnants of any meters, clothing, utensils, or any of the civilised comforts that the crew were presently using in their native built huts.

The natives were child-like and primitive. There seemed to be three sexes, male, female and hermaphrodite. Each adult had a hut to themselves, sometimes shared with several children. The hermaphrodites were silent solitary creatures who ignored the pleasant social life of the village, and the few Elders lived in the mysterious circular stone buildings that reared up among the flimsy huts.

The language was easy enough to learn, although stacked with ambiguities. There was no way of getting from the natives the age or function of the beautifully shaped stone domes.

The natives spoke of ancestors, oracles and respected ones. The conclusion was that they were temples, and the Elders some sort of priesthood, but the tall stone doors slid down with a menacing hiss whenever any of the crew drifted too close.

The torches of the village glowed a welcome through the dusk, and Tim slapped absently at the striped bloodsucking bats hovering around them. They passed on no identifiable diseases, and were no problem to a healthy conscious adult, but it was more restful to return without them in attendance. Some of the female crew members had an almost hysterical aversion to them.

'It's a big planet,' Tim persevered. 'The ship could have submerged in one of the swamps, and crew could be anywhere.'

Gerard shook his head and ducked as the striped bats swooped closer.

'We were swept into this orbit by the radiation cloud. We know the pattern is consistent. This is the only area where the other ship could have landed.'

Tim sighed, and winked at the pretty girl with the green eyes, and bronze skin and hair. She shared the next hut with the ship's engineer, Larsen. He was one of the first of the crew to accept the advances of the friendly females. Not all of them had double jointed limbs and six digits on hands and feet. Over the months, several of the crew drifted into hut sharing with the humanoid females.

Tim shut his eyes to brush through the hedge of woven spikes that were placed in the door and window openings at dusk. Gerard waited until he was through, and then followed. The spikes were angled to brush off any of the parasitic bats or leeches.

It was awkward to always have to push through a dense hedge to get in or out of the hut, but the natives were insistent about the importance of all openings being covered after dusk.

They waited on the sentient moss mat as the curved feelers probed through and around their bark moccasins to absorb the mud fleas and smaller leeches carried in from the swamp.

'Roasted parsnips?' Tim guessed.

'It's a new recipe from Abani,' Jenny smiled.

She and Bronwyn, ship's doctor and linguist respectively, waited by the table, flushed from their cooking. The fire crackled cheerfully in its stone well.

'We spent the afternoon harvesting with Abani,' explained Bronwyn, as she edged the clumsy clay pot into its niche on the hearth, and dropped the distinctive pink leaves into the bubbling water.

'What's wrong with the kettle, Bron?' interrupted Gerard rather thickly, through his mouthful of savoury vegetable.

'And no cutlery?' queried Tim, noticing for the first time the crudely pointed wooden spikes in front of him.

'You boys are slow tonight,' reproved Bronwyn. 'Check the spades.'

Tim picked up his spade. It felt lighter. In the flickering light of the fire the metal seemed darker and dulled. He shook it, and watched the metal flow down like a powdered black dust, leaving him holding the wooden handle.

'The planet's orbit has taken us through the radiation cloud again. We're four hours into it, and it's disintegrating the molecules of anything metal,' Bronwyn explained.

'The Old Man's nearly off his head,' Jenny sighed. 'The ship is literally dissolving under his nose.'

Gerard half rose as the thought struck him.

'No laboratory facilities any more?'

'No nothing,' Jenny corroborated grimly. 'The computer boys are having classes in how to handle an abacus. The elliptical orbit means the whole planet is doused about every eleven months. If our rescue ship arrives when the planet is in conjunction with the "Shower of the Gods" as our locals call it, it will have a one way trip, and there's no way we can beam a warning through.'

'Proves my point,' Tim said triumphantly. 'That's the reason why there are no traces of MERCURY 1. Everything must be dissolved.'

'Not necessarily,' Gerard objected. 'What about no cultural traces?'

The two girls raised their eyebrows and looked at each other, but the hedge of spikes in the doorway started to whisper and shiver. Someone was coming through.

It was the Captain. He waited on the heavy mat of sentient moss. Tim noticed with secret amusement that he had his feet laced into the bark moccasins the rest of them were wearing. His treasured magnetic soled boots must have powdered off his feet. A traumatic day for the Captain, losing first his boots, and then his ship. Dressed in the vine tied kilt, topped with the close fitting bark fibre hood and cape, the obligatory protective covering after dark, he looked like a sad little gnome.



'Just in time for a cup of brew, Sir,' Bronwyn said as she fumbled with the long-handled wooden dipper to fill up the clay mugs.

The aromatic odour of the herb tea scented the air. The Captain unlaced his cape and hood and sipped carefully. His sad grey eyes inspected Tim. Tim sat up straighter and uneasily reviewed his conduct. The easy going relaxed atmosphere of the village had not rubbed off on the Old Man. His eyes inspected Gerard, and then Bronwyn and Jenny.

They waited for him to speak in a well trained silence. The Captain had no social conversation. He assessed problems, estimated probabilities and delegated authority.

'We have eleven months to make a beacon to warn the rescue ship.'

'A beacon that will reach into space?' asked Jenny, keeping her voice a careful neutral.

'We should be able to work up some sort of a lens by then,' was the reply.

'What about the cloud cover?' Gerard asked.

The sharp grey eyes darted in his direction, and Gerard sat up straighter, flushing a little. It was a reasonable question, but here was a glint in the Captain's eyes, that made it sound ridiculous.

'First thing tomorrow,' the Captain ordered. 'You both go off with Larsen and find a suitable site for the beacon. It will have to be across the line of orbit and fairly high.'

'How are you going on the language?' he snapped at Bronwyn, who looked uncomfortable.

'I'm making progress,' she admitted. 'But the hermaphrodites are telepathic and won't talk, and there's no way I can approach the Elders to find out more about the stone domes. I think they must be temples with resident priests. None of the natives will talk about them.'

'Pity', the Captain grunted. He put down his mug and laced himself back into his cape and hood. 'Whoever built those domes must be a lot more advanced than the natives. Their help would be invaluable in setting up the furnaces.'

He nodded a dismissal, and forced his way through the spikes of the door. They heard his voice raised as he called to Abani and Larsen in the next hut.

'We can see what Larsen thinks about heading eastward,' Tim said.

'After we organise a new digging tool,' Gerard grumbled. 'We still have to eat over the next eleven months.'

'The harvest patch is on our way,' soothed Tim. 'We can get Larsen to give us a hand to finish early.'

In the morning however, there was no sign of Larsen, or Abani, his green eyed flat-mate.

'That's funny,' Jenny mused. 'She promised to show us a new patch of Khani.'

She and Bronwyn waited in their high-laced bark leggings with their bags slung over their shoulders. The natives drifted past and smiled their greetings. A lot of the women were dressed in a similar manner to the two girls, and most of the men carried their pointed gardening sticks. There was a mounting bustle and stir around the newer huts belonging to the crew.

The Captain came stamping up. Despite the mark moccasins and the knotted vine around his

kilt, he exuded bad temper and authority. Tim and Gerard and the girls stiffened to attention.

'Something's up,' he snapped. His mouth was compressed in a grim line, and his eyes were narrowed. 'Twelve crew members missing, and so are their native females.'

'Missing,' echoed Tim. 'We heard you talking to Larsen and Abani last night.'

'They've gone,' retorted the Captain. 'And since yesterday, we have no weapons. It's too much of a coincidence.'

Gerard looked around for inspiration. Some sort of answer seemed expected of him, but he couldn't think what. Up on the plateau, the big ship still reared its head into the low cloud cover, but somehow this morning it was duller and less majestic. Around its base collected an ominous heap of fine black particles.

He peered into the open doorway of the hut. The hedge of spikes had been removed from the window and door opening, so presumably they hadn't left until the early morning. The fire was out. Two clay mugs sat primly on the wooden table. Larsen's large bark moccasins were missing, but Abani's small narrow ones still rested by the tumbled bunk. There were no particular signs of disturbance.

'An early start?' suggested Jenny, and Gerard gave her a grateful look.

The Captain glared at her.

'All of them?'

Bronwyn reached out to touch one of the tall natives slouching past, and spoke in the soft liquid tongue.

'It is permitted to ask where our friends Abani and Larsen have gone so early in the dawn?'

The native fingered his long lobed ear, and looked puzzled.

'It is always customary for the blessed ones to go into the jungle to meditate after the "Shower of the Gods".'

'Ask the fellow where?' demanded the Captain, who followed the conversation, but lacked the skill to slither his tongue around some of the words.

'Would it be possible for some of us to join them at their meditations?' Bronwyn asked.

The native looked more puzzled than ever, and his eyes wandered first over Bronwyn and Gerard, and then Jenny and Tim.

'When the Gods give you their blessing, but the blessed ones will return when they are ready.'

He sauntered off after his friends down the narrow track, swinging his sharpened stick back over his shoulder.

'Twelve crew members missing, including that idiot Larsen,' fumed the Captain. 'I knew no good would come of this fraternising. Sounds as if they've gone religious as well as native - meditations indeed.'

He stamped off, and they heard his voice raised as he redirected the depleted work party.

'And if the natives are lying we're in trouble,' Gerard murmured.

They glanced around. The village seemed normal. Children were playing around the huts, and the large stone domes. Young women giggled and called greetings to each other, and some of the white haired Elders stood and gossiped in the clearings.

'We should stay together, anyway,' Tim suggested.

The others nodded their agreement, and they set off down the narrow winding track that led to the marshes. Whatever was happening, the planting had to be finished, and the mature plants harvested. They still had to eat.

The days drifted on, and the huts of the missing crew members and their humanoid companions remained empty. Gerard chipped a sharp stone to wedge on to his spade handle, starting a fashion in spades among the natives. The fire hardened sticks became less common as the village men chipped and shaped the sharp stone into new style digging implements.

'It still proves my point,' Gerard said one morning, as they strolled along the narrow track that led out of the swamp. For a few weeks the interminable planting and harvesting were finished, and everyone spent their time searching for the few patches of wild khani in the depths of the jungle.

'About what?' Tim asked, as he veered around the cluster of sleeping bats that hung from the trees like pendulous striped fruit.

'If the crew of the MERCURY 1 were here they would have left some trace. Look how the natives swapped over to stone shovels when they were shown.'

'Supposing we don't get rescued, and a ship comes down in another fifty years, how would they know the natives haven't always used stone digging implements?' Tim argued back.

They finished the distance back to the village in a moody silence.

The natives were intrigued and amused by the sudden burst of activity that the Captain forced on the crew, and lounged around to shake their heads in bewilderment.

The crew were hardest hit by the disintegration of their chronometers and watches. Their obsession with time caused some interesting experiments with water-clocks, candles and hourglasses. Sundials were out because of the continuous cloud cover.

A group was experimenting with primitive stone furnaces to manufacture a lens. To date, no-one had found any suitable sand, and there was trouble in getting the furnaces hot enough. The Captain glowered as he prowled from group to group, getting more terse and abrupt as the weeks slid by.

They heard his voice, hectoring and lecturing as they neared their hut. He was the only one with any knowledge of the abacus, and he was teaching a disgusted group of programmers how to use it.

'How are the mighty fallen,' Gerard chuckled.

A small group of the elite computer programmers were crammed together in a small hut, scribbling calculations on slates. Without the computers, it was taking a long and wearisome time to estimate the possible orbit of the rescue ship, and when the elliptical orbit would take them back through the radiation clouds.

'That figure is inaccurate, you dunderhead, check it again,' snarled the Captain's voice.

'Yes Sir,' was the resigned answer.

Out of habit, both men waited on the sentient moss mat to ensure they carried no parasites back from the swamp. Jenny and Bronwyn were sitting at the table drinking the herbal brew that passed for tea.

'Finished already?' Jenny queried.

'Could say the same to you,' Gerard replied, as he picked up the clay dipper.

'We're building another furnace,' Bronwyn sighed.

Tim took a bite of the tapering root that was almost their staple diet. Boiled and let go cold, it was almost nutty to eat. The trouble with the furnace was that none of them knew enough about the principles of forced draft, and they couldn't find anything hotter than wood to burn.

Despite the beautiful stone domes, none of the natives seemed to know anything about building stonework, and there were no adequate cutting tools to use on the stone. They built furnace after furnace on a trial and error basis, and each morning a work party toiled over squaring the stones with more precision.

After eating, they pulled on the long bark leggings, and laced the close fitting hoods and capes against their bodies. Steeped in the twisted bark fibres was a repellent that discouraged the biting, stinging clouds of flying, crawling insects they disturbed in their passage through the denser jungle behind the clearings.

They looked enviously at the natives lazing around the shallow river. It would be nice to spend the afternoon splashing around in the water. They were assigned the job of the extra food gathering to feed the crew diverted into calculations, experiments, and the endless search for the right sort of sand. Also they were still searching for the right peak to build the beacon on.

The native girls and young women, many of them with new babies on their hips, or in the carry bags over their shoulder, called cheerful greetings to Bronwyn and Jenny as they followed Tim and Gerard across to the edge of the jungle.

'Looks like a new crop of babies,' Jenny commented.

Tim waved and smiled at the blue eyed blonde girl with the bronze green skin. She flashed a bright grin back and waved. He caught a glimpse of a sandy fuzzy head nestling in the bag over her shoulder.

'Funny,' Gerard pondered, as he glanced back over his shoulder to see who Tim was waving to.

'What?' Bronwyn asked, as she checked her laces were tight and her leggings secure.

'All those babies. I never noticed any pregnancies.'

'Maybe they stay in their huts,' Jenny suggested from behind Bronwyn.

'Maybe they just don't show,' Tim said. 'I don't remember noticing any bulge on Lani.'

'Well, she's definitely got a baby,' Jenny said.

There was silence for a while, as they trudged up the steep winding track that led across the mountain deeper into the jungle.

'We really don't know much about them,' Bronwyn commented after a while, somehow voicing the uneasiness of all of them.

All the months they were stranded, they took for granted the mild and friendly disposition of the natives, and accepted their help gratefully. The ship's stores spoiled, and the native's generosity in sharing their harvest, and explaining the difference between edible and poisonous fruits, meant the crew's very survival. They lived and worked among them, but it was impossible to fully understand their culture and customs.

Apart from the Elders who drifted in and out of the stone domes, all the adults had a hut each. Sometimes several children shared the huts, but there seemed no family organisation. Sometimes an adult male and female shared a hut, but it was noticeable there was no family organisation. No children lived in the huts with the man and woman. As each child became old enough to be considered an independent adult, he or she was built a hut, and took over an adult's share of food gathering and harvesting.

There was no surprise when the females shifted in with the crew members, or any jealousy. The village was amused, and admiring of the crew's willingness to accept the girls as hut mates, and village life went on as usual.

'Did you notice all the hermaphrodites are missing,' Jenny said after another long silence.

'Away meditating,' Tim answered.

He was branching off along a narrow twisting path that gave promise of curving around the other side of the mountain.

'Except their huts were pulled down,' Bronwyn called. 'And they were concerned we hadn't pulled down our spare huts yet.'

They moved along the track in another silence, as they considered the implications of the cleared spaces among the other huts of the village.

'Perhaps they build new ones when they return,' Gerard suggested.

'Wish we knew more about them,' Bronwyn fretted. 'Their language is sort of slippery and full of evasions. Wish Abani was around.'

The tangled tunnel widened and opened out into a clearing draped with the heavy bruised purple of the khani vines. They moved into the clearing looking for the vivid orange sickle-shaped fruit. They picked for a while in silence.

'We should keep on going to the top to check for a beacon site,' Gerard suggested after a while.

Bronwyn looked doubtful. They had not yet filled their bags, and it was hard to estimate how much more daylight they still had. Because of the bats, neither of the girls would risk being away from the huts at dusk. Gerard interrupted her look.

'You and Tim stay here and keep picking, and Jenny and I will try and reach the top. We will go straight up, and come straight back.'

'Do hurry,' Bronwyn said, as she watched while he and Jenny unslung their bags and checked their leggings were still secure.

'We'll be right,' Tim soothed. 'And they can move a lot faster without their bags.'

Gerard and Jenny waved and vanished into one of the winding tracks that snaked upward. It crisscrossed other tracks, and the dense jungle met overhead making it shadowy and gloomy. Gerard paused to mark the trees at each crossing. The jungle was monotonous in its sameness, and it would be easy enough to take the wrong turning coming back, and be completely lost.

Jenny waited patiently, checking that the gash was deep and clear cut. It was fatal to wander in the jungle after dark. One of the crew members who became separated from an exploration party spent the night in the jungle. He had fallen asleep, and the warmth of his body attracted the bats. It was his last sleep.

They broke through onto a cleared summit, and stared at the half dozen huts. An air of stillness hung over the clearing. There was no sign of life.

They were pretty high up, and the jungle clung dark and menacing to the hills and valleys around. Across the valley, a taller mountain peaked into the crimsoning cloud cover.

'That looks like the site for the beacon,' Gerard said as he stared across.

Jenny screamed, and he swung around. The clearing was still deserted, but Jenny was shivering, with her hands over her face.

'I saw Abani,' she quavered.

'So why screams?' Gerard said in disgust.

He glanced around. For a fleeting second he thought he saw a shadowy figure behind the trees edging the huts.

'Abani,' he called as he ran over.

Green eyes stared at him, and the shadowy figure melted into the thick jungle.

'All this meditating,' he sighed. He walked back to Jenny. She was whitefaced and still shaking. 'What's the matter with you?'

'Didn't you notice?'

'Notice what?' Gerard asked. He suspected that stolid reliable Jenny was about to go into hysterics. She looked at him strangely, and fought for self control with a visible effort.

'Never mind. Let's go back. The others will be worried.'

The crimson was deepening across the gold of the clouds, and the jungle darkened around them. They turned their backs on the huddle of freshly built huts and plunged into the narrow track.

There was still enough light to see the raw slashes on the trees, but they moved in a shadowy gloom, and the striped bats were stirring, disturbed in every increasing swarms by the vibration of their feet.

Actually, it was due to the bats that they discovered the body. The bats were spiralling above it in the whirling pillar that was their feeding pattern. They must have passed the body on their way up, unnoticed under its canopy of shrub.

They pulled their cloaks closer around them, and the bats, repelled by the acid in the woven bark, flapped out in waiting circles. The bats were sated and slow moving, but that wasn't what killed him or her.



It was one of the hermaphrodites. Its sensitive face was twisted in the convulsion caused by the distinctive red dye of the quickberries. The body was collapsed just under the quickberry bush, and the red berries glowed in the fading light.

'Why?' puzzled Gerard. 'A suicide?'

They all knew of the deadly quickberries. It was one of the first things the natives warned them about, with a lot of anxious pantomime. One of Gerard's tasks had been to analyse them. It proved to be an incredibly quick convulsive poison which attacked the nervous system.

The staring slanted black eyes gazed dreadfully up at the dusk. They looked incongruous under the mane of silky yellow hair. Gerard frowned down. The face seemed familiar. They didn't have much to do with the hermaphrodites, but they were around, and after a while you began to know the faces. It was a small village, after all.

Jenny started to shiver again, and Gerard glanced around to see that the bats still circled at a respectful distance.

'It's Chan,' she managed.

Gerard looked again. The information meshed in his mind. Perhaps it had been there all along, ever since the tall shadowy green eyed figure slunk off. Chan, the Asian computer engineer, and Eeda, the yellow haired humanoid with her six fingers and six toes.

This figure had Chan's eyes, and arrogant sharp-cut features, but the mouth was the soft full mouth of Eeda, now bared in an ugly grimace. The six fingered hand ended in Chan's square blunt finger tips, and Gerard felt a little sick as his trained gaze inspected the hermaphrodite body. What would have the arrogant, masculine Chan have felt trapped in a bisexual body?

Comprehension hit Gerard in a sickening wave. He moved away from Jenny.

'I knew it,' Jenny choked. 'That's what I thought I saw up in the clearing. A combination Larsen Abani.'

'We'll get back,' Gerard said.

Jenny fell two paces behind, and followed him back down the hill to the clearing where the others waited.

'You two look as if you are adopting all the native customs,' Tim greeted them.

He and Bronwyn were sitting together on the grass beside their full bags, eating raw khani. Around them circled the striped bats, keeping beyond the odour of the cloaks with lazy flaps of their wings.

Gerard explained his theory of the hermaphrodites in terse short sentences, and Jenny broke in with a graphic description of Larsen Abani.

'No wonder male and females stay in separate huts,' Gerard ended in disgust.

'So what,' Tim said coolly. 'It gives us a lot of answers, and it looks as if we've lost twelve members of the crew unless it's reversible.'

'Eleven, if it's reversible,' Jenny said, and choked again. 'It didn't look reversible.'

It was after dusk when they got back, and pushed into the Captain's hut to report their finding

about the hermaphrodite.

'We've got so little time,' the Captain fretted. 'It must be something to do with the adaptation of their life cycle to the radiation cloud. We've got the get off this damned planet. If only we had the computer. If only the lab was usable.'

They waited in a respectful silence, as the Captain stared into space. They knew what was going through his mind. They were going to have to build a beacon with their bare hands, and fashion a furnace hot enough to make a lens, with no technological help. Eleven months, or was it now down to ten months? was a very short space of time until the rescue ship arrived.

In the morning, there was a rash of hut building, as the crew members separated their short term or long term relationships under the Captain's orders. Some of the married couples grumbled at the Captain's arbitrary decision, but as the hermaphrodites started drifting back to the village, unnaturally silent and detached, there were no problems about obeying orders. The crew became nervous of even the most casual of physical contact with each other.

The natives were their usual friendly placid selves. They treated the new batch of hermaphrodites in the same way as they always did, helping them harvest, and passing on their knowledge of the choice patches of the khani vines.

The building of the furnaces, and the testing of the sand went on, and they kept exploring the surrounding jungle for the suitable site for the beacon. Three quarters of the crew worked feverishly on the calculations, the testing, and the shifting of materials, and the remaining groups worked long and tiring hours to produce enough food for all of them.

The site for the beacon was approved, and the sweating crew built primitive counterbalances to swing the heavy stones up to the mountain top. The most suitable stones were the ones by the rivers, and it took long and painstaking efforts to get them to the high mountain top.

Down the stream from the village, the furnace puffed and belched its angry black smoke. They experimented with first one wood, then another, to raise the temperature.

The computer engineers no longer swaggered. They walked hunched forward with their abacus's almost a part of them, clutching slates scribbled with constantly altered equations.

The Captain became grimmer and grimmer. He lost all interest in keeping his hair and beard neatly trimmed. His beard was long and wild, and his tangled grey hair fell over his shoulders. He looked more like a gnome than ever, or with his measured tread and upright bearing, like one of the village Elders.

It might have been his increasing resemblance to the priests, or his age, but one morning two of the priests were waiting for him: a stern bearded old man, and an erect grey haired old woman. They spoke briefly to him, and he beckoned Bronwyn over.

'What are they saying?'

The priest stared at Bronwyn, and slithered through his speech again. Bronwyn stood and thought about it. Sometimes it seemed to her that despite the simplicity of the language, there were patches that just didn't translate.

'They are saying it is your,' she struggled for the right word, 'share of the vigil.'

'What's that supposed to mean?' demanded the Captain.

The priest raised his hand, and his black eyes glittered.

'You come,' he ordered. He added something else, but Bronwyn could only recognise 'the joining and the freeing.'

The Captain looked across at the beacon site, clearly visible since they had cleared away the surrounding jungle, and the belching smoke of the furnace, and towards the group patiently sifting sand by the river.

'Tell him I haven't got time.'

'I think you should go,' Gerard suggested, amending with a 'Sir' as the glare swung around to him. 'Everything is under control at the moment, and you might find out something that will help us. No one else has been invited to join the priesthood.'

It was a cogent argument and the Captain was quickwitted. Bronwyn slithered through a graceful approval, and he marched off, dwarfed by his two escorts.

They all watched as the three figures vanished inside one of the stone domes, and the long narrow doors slid down blocking the entrances.

Bronwyn nudged Jenny. All the tall skinny Elders were proceeding in a leisurely procession one by one to the large stone domes, with the doors sliding shut behind them.

Gerard went back to his tedious job of sorting out the pebbles. Some were silicon based, and some were not.

'If tonight is "Shower of the Gods" time, then the priests might be the only ones protected in those stone domes.'

'I calculate we're still two months off,' commented a tense and sweating engineer staggering past with his arms piled high with wood.

The two piles of wood were downed and the slates and abacus's came out as they argued.

'Tell you what,' advised Gerard. 'I'll back the natives calculations for whenever it is going to be.'

The two men scowled, and picked up their wood and staggered on downstream without a word.

'We've done it,' Jenny called, as she ran up.

Her face was flushed and sooty, and her kilt scorched, but her eyes were shining.

'If it doesn't crack when it cools,' Tim warned as he followed at a slower pace.

'The lens?' Bronwyn questioned.

'The lens,' agreed Jenny. 'It's a funny shape, but if it doesn't crack, and if we can get a second one made, and just polish and polish.'

'The Captain should know,' Gerard said.

They looked at the five stone domes towering over the village. With the doors sealed down they looked blind, and somehow menacing. It didn't seem to affect the natives, though. They chatted and laughed as they prepared food, or sat outside their huts at the small looms. None of them had the appearance of expecting any major catastrophe, whatever ceremony was due to take place in the

domes.

The next morning, they came out of their huts to the usual normality of village life. At some time during the night or early morning, the silent hermaphrodites had vanished, and the natives were busy demolishing the huts again.

There didn't appear anything sinister about it. They were merry and joking, burning the dried-up leaves of the roof and walls, and carefully placing the sentient moss mats and spiked barriers of door and windows by the river bank.

As Bronwyn went through the village on her way to khani gathering, she noticed some empty huts, and the native shrugged when she asked about their occupants.

'Meditating,' they said, and asked how the new patch of khani were ripening. The missing occupants were not a subject of interest.

The Captain arrived back about lunchtime. He was subdued, and very tired. He raised his hand in a rigid respectful salute to the two Elders who escorted him back. He appeared to be in one of his tight-lipped dictator-type moods.

The days drifted on - and the Captain became more and more irritable. The lenses were manhandled up the mountain to the high stone tower, and the frame built to hold them. A lot of care was given to the particular angle and slant of the frame, and one of the Elders supervised it all very carefully.

A sliding cover was built, and the wood collected for the beacon. The natives came up one day and helped them build a new settlement of huts on the mountainside. They were puzzled, and a bit concerned, but the priest said something short and terse, so they became very eager to help.

Several bags of quickberries were baked and crushed and mixed with the dried resin of a tree the Captain hunted down himself. The technicians at last agreed on an estimated time of arrival of the space ship, and the orbit of the radiation cloud.

'Do you think the Old Man has had it?' Tim asked Gerard, as they bent wearily over the lines of plants in the swamp.

Gerard shrugged. It was a topic they all whispered about these days, now they had finished their frantic experimenting and shifting of stones, and polishing the lenses. How did the Captain expect the lenses and their primitive beam to penetrate the cloud cover and the radiation field looped around the planet to reach into space?

'Some of the crew reckon Section 12b ought to be invoked,' Tim said, watching Gerard out of the corner of his eyes.

Gerard let out his breath in an exasperated hiss, and the native working near him looked up concerned. Gerard waved and smiled, so he bent over the fleshy little plants and kept tamping them down in the thick black mud.

'Look,' he said. 'Just supposing the Old Man has gone right off, and we are wasting time and energy, sitting up here with a primitive searchlight that won't even penetrate the first layer of clouds, even if we have calculated correctly when the ship is due. What are you going to do with the time you save when you demote him? Anybody got any better ideas?'

Tim flushed, but didn't stop the smooth rhythm of his digging. 'I know the Old Man usually knows what he's doing. It's just that some of the others think he's gone weird under the strain, especially since that night he spent in the domes.'

'Who hasn't?' Gerard grumbled.

He had taken to studying Bronwyn when she wasn't watching. Her body was shapely and wholesome under the scanty kilt, and her long hair silky and luxuriant. The trouble was when she looked into his eyes in that questioning way, she could see the yearning and aversion that left his stomach in a perpetual conflict.

It was an unnatural existence.

They arrived back before dusk, and put their implements on the pile with the others. The Old Man was carrying on again. They could hear his voice hooting orders, and roaring down the muttered protests. He sounded sense, demanding and bullying.

'God help us,' Tim gasped. 'He's gotten bitten by the physical fitness bug again.'

All the crew of space ships were supposed to exercise. Human bodies coped with a lot of stress with space travel. The weeks of free fall meant the need for strong stomach muscles to help the digestive system. Their bodies had to compensate for the heavier gravity on some planets, and the lighter gravity on others. Their reflexes were supposed to be lightning fast to cope with the interminable emergencies, and irregular hours of work when fatigue patterns built up.

It wasn't really eccentric of the Captain to take an active interest in their fitness. After nearly two years of the vegetarian diet, they were all a lot heavier. They seemed to have to eat a lot more to satisfy their hunger. They were all working a lot harder physically, so most of their weight was in muscle.

'You're a lot of cabbages, and fat cabbages at that,' the Captain snarled. 'Tomorrow you start training.' His eyes swept over Gerard's expansive curves. 'Everyone,' he stressed, 'is to be able to run from here to the plateau in fifteen minutes or less.'

'No stop watches, Captain,' interjected the mild voice of one of the overweight engineers.

The Captain's eyes flashed under his shaggy brows.

'Fifteen minutes is nine hundred seconds.' His voice became even icier. 'You can still count, can't you, Mr. Roberts?'

The next morning, the food planting and harvesting were put aside for the Captain's newest concern, physical fitness. They all jogged, groaning down the wide path they cut from the mountain that led downhill and around the other mountain, through the native village, across the shallow river, and up the slope to the plateau.

The Captain ran lightly beside them, like a demented Old English sheepdog, his kilt hitched up around his thighs, his hair and beard flapping.

'Move, you out of condition slobs, move,' he kept snarling.

Every morning, they skipped and touched toes and jogged under his fierce eyes. Twice a day he shepherded them across from the beacon to the plateau.

The natives lazing around the village gaped as they panted through, and splashed across the river and up the slope to the plateau. Greetings were called, and food and drink offered, and the miserable crew looked longingly, as their Captain, skinnier and fitter than any of them, hounded up the stragglers.

The mutterings grew louder, but no-one had the courage to stand up to the small Captain. Perhaps it was his distracted insanity that held their respect. He was obsessed at getting them from the beacon to the plateau in the nine hundred seconds, and as Gerard pointed out, it was physically impossible.

'I mean,' he whispered to Tim, as they skipped dutifully behind their huts, 'we have to belt down this steep mountain, around the side of the next one, across the village, the river, and up to the plateau.'

Tim nodded his agreement, but saved his breath. He didn't like his twice daily trip to the plateau. It depressed him. Across the top of it was a wide circle like a giant black scorch mark, which was the only trace of MERCURY 2. Exactly a mile away was a more vivid green tangle of jungle in a tell-tale exact circle, which marked the metal enriched soil where MERCURY 1 had landed.

It was midnight a few weeks later when Tim heard the Captain calling. He grabbed for his cloak in the dark, and slid his feet into his moccasins. No emergency was too great to risk moving after dark without shoes or protective clothing.

Sleepy figures emerged through the spike hedges of hut doors, lacing up cloaks and leggings. The clearing brightened as the flickering torches were lit. The shadowy figures of the Elders stood by the edge of the huts.

Bronwyn and Jenny struggled off the thatched cover of the lens, and Gerard was putting a flare to the kindling in the stone well of the beacon. The Captain's voice could be heard rousing out the rest of the crew.

'Up, you slob. I want a stoker detail on that beacon. Get those moccasins laced on properly.'

The special clay tamped cover was lifted on to the crude rails over the lens. The fire blazed hotter and hotter. Someone was feeding the yellow powder made from the quickberries into the hot heart of the fire, and a bright orange beam slanted up like a searchlight into the lowering black cloud.

The Captain started intoning his dots, dashes and pauses, reading from a slate. Sweating men slid the heavy cover backward and forwards over the rails by the long handles, and the orange searchlight blinked and jerked against the cloud cover.

They stoked the fire with the light fast burning wood, and poured the powder in, and worked the heavy cover in sweating relays. The Captain kept intoning the morse code symbols, his eyes flickering down to make sure the relays were keeping the wood coming. He finished intoning. There was a silence. One of the Elders came forward, and whispered something to the Captain.

'Right,' said the Captain, almost casually. 'Now pick up those flares, and let me see you make the plateau in under fifteen minutes.'

An ugly mutter rose. Somebody swore. The resentment, disgust and rebellion sat thickly across the clearing, lit by the orange beacon and the flaring torches. Section 12b hung like a tangible threat over the gathering.

'Move,' snapped the Captain, picking up one of the flares, and unlacing his cloak for movement.

His crew muttered again. An ugly low mutter that was taken up and echoed on the horizon. There was dead silence. The mutter became a thunder. It was the sound a ship makes when it hits the atmosphere on that first skidding re-entry.

'It's landing on the plateau,' the Captain said to the dead silence. 'It can't turn off its motors. It can wait five minutes to pick up before it had got to lift off again. You now only have twelve minutes.'

There was a wild pell mell rush down the track, with men and women unlacing cloaks, and snatching up their flares, with a complete disregard for the striped bats.

'What about the beacon?' Tim gasped, as he ran beside the Captain.

'The Elders will fix it. Move a bit faster, Tim.'

By the time they panted up to the plateau along the track they knew by heart, the ship was waiting, the whine of her engines high pitched, and her skin still glowing red through the darkness.

A graceful walkway with the floodlights full on had been thrown across from one of the side holds. One by one the crew threw down their flares and pelted across.

The Captain gave the labouring Gerard a quick shove ahead of him.

'Should be fifty-one of us. Request permission to come aboard,' he gabbled to the figure waiting in the decompression suit.

The muffled figure nodded his agreement, and saluted. The heavy shielding doors slid across. The crew tumbled into the soft mesh nets, as the motors screamed higher, and the ship pulled off the surface of the planet.

* * *

Tim and Gerard strolled into the mess together. They were resplendent in silver space uniforms, metallised boots, wrist gauges and chronometers strapped to their arms, and self conscious about their naked shaved heads and faces, even down to hairless eyebrows and eyelids.

'I feel like an astrophysicist again,' Tim remarked. 'God, aren't this lot an unfit lot of slobs. The Old Man will give them hell.'

'Not his ship, more's the pity,' Gerard answered with all the superiority of a fit human being.

The mess room was full of the silver suited crew of the MERCURY 2. The ripple of stiffened attention followed in the Captain's wake. Tim and Gerard straightened up to salute, flicking down with affectionate pride.

The Old Man looked like a space captain again, and no more like a demented old gnome. He was laced into his high heeled metallic boots, and his silver suit glittered with the epaulettes of rank. His clean shaven face and head shone under the bright lights. Even his eyes shone with an inner delight, and he was having trouble pulling his mouth down into its usual tight disproving lines.

Jenny and Bronwyn were close behind him. They both wore silver turbans to cover their freshly shaved heads. It had taken a direct order from the Captain to get the female crew members to part with their hair in the decontamination chambers, despite his terse explanations about what could be deposited in their hair shafts.

The girls smiled at Tim and Gerard, and both men smiled back without the apparent revulsion that horrified them so much back on the planet.

'We want to talk to you, Captain,' Jenny said. 'What about a round of drinks?'

The Captain's sharp grey eyes twinkled. 'I daresay my reputation can stand it.'

Gerard came back with the tray of drinks, and hustled them into a quiet corner. There was an accusing gleam in his eyes, and the Captain looked almost sheepish.

As tradition demanded, they drank the first round in silence.

'You look guilty, Captain,' Jenny accused.

'A medical diagnosis?' asked the Captain.

Jenny reached over and stroked his cheek.

'A daughter's diagnosis.'

Gerard opened the attack. 'I've been down in the lab collating information. It's got something to do with the life cycle, hasn't it?'

The Captain sipped his drink. 'Something.'

'Animal, vegetable, mineral?' Gerard probed.

The Captain looked around at their tense faces.

'Three stages,' he said. 'Childhood, reproductive stage, and maturity.'

'The Elders?' asked Tim.

The Captain smirked. 'The Elders are just ageing children. The radiation cloud is a collective mind, holding all the knowledge of the race.'

Gerard shivered, avoiding Bronwyn's eyes.

'What about the hermaphrodites?'

'Part of the breeding patters,' the Captain explained briskly. 'Male and female have to merge to become hermaphrodite, which merge into the sentient breeding machines that anchor themselves to the stone domes. They produce the full term male and female babies for the village to bring up. If they don't merge, they eventually become the Elders, probably by choice, or perhaps they are sterile. The domes aren't stone, but calcified tissue, which flakes off in sentient motes that drift up to join the radiation cloud.'

The Captain stopped. He still felt sick at the memory of his night in the dome. The huge pulsing coil that grew along the curve of the wall. The hermaphrodites marching in one by one and embracing the end of the obscene coil and somehow fusing with it. The fetid odour as the slits along the sides blinked open to reveal the wrinkled sleeping babies. The squelching noise as the Elders pulled the babies out, and tied off the umbilical cords.

'The radiation cloud is mineral hungry,' he continued to his attentive audience. 'When the planet passes through the radiation cloud, the motes need a high mineral content to be attracted to the iron in the bodies and help them merge. Otherwise their reproductive cycle weakens. They were very

happy about the bonus of MERCURY 1 and 2, and the extra gene pool of the crews.'

He looked at the tense faces watching him, and coughed.

'You were quite safe, really. It should have only affected the natives, but the crew living with the girls had an unusually high iron content in their bloodstream which would have pulled the molecules over.'

'The khani,' Jenny said suddenly. 'Abani stuffed Larsen with it.'

The Captain nodded agreement. 'It would have taken another twelve months before your iron content was high enough to cause a merging.'

'How did you get us out?' Bronwyn asked hastily, noticing the expression in Gerard's eyes.

The Captain stroked at a non-existent beard.

'The moles passed on to the priest the arrival of the ship. The cloud is sentient, and moved out of the way of the poisonous quickberry smoke, in the pattern of the smoke signals, all dots and dashes. The Captain of the MAYBELLE was old fashioned enough to be able to read morse code. They had an hour to get down and back before the cloud closed over again.'

'Did we really do the distance in twelve minutes?' Tim asked.

The Captain's face lit up. 'Fourteen minutes from leaving the beacon to the ship lifting off,' he announced. He finished his drink and stood up. 'I'm surprised and gratified at how fit you have all become.'

'I'm not,' muttered Gerard, but it was to his departing back.

It never did do to answer the Old Man back.

the end



THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #10

BY BUCK COULSON

One of the expanding recreations in the U.S. is the "re-creation". More or less literally, a group re-creates a historic event. Civil War battles are the most popular, but most of them were fought in the south and east; the only one that touched Indiana was Morgan's Raid, and that was a fast-moving affair that crossed several counties along the Ohio River. Not particularly suitable for audiences, though at least one of the skirmishes along the way has been made into an annual re-creation. Indiana has a better Revolutionary War battle, George Rogers Clark's capture of Vincennes from the British. The point of this campaign that's usually stressed, however, is Clark's troops wading across the flooded Illinois swamps in February, in icewater up to their chests, which may be too grim for participants and certainly is for spectators. I mean, they covered miles this way, from their jumping-off point at Cahokia, IL, to Vincennes. Besides, this is in southern Illinois and Indiana, as well.

For northern Indiana, we have to go to the War of 1812. Lafayette on the west side of the state has made a big thing out of the Battle of Tippicanoe, which rather unfairly made William Henry Harrison into a US President. (Orson Scott Card's depiction of Harrison as a drunken bully in a couple of his books is a trifle overdone, but not all that much so. He was a sharper, knowing how to turn any event to his own use.) Also, Lafayette has the Feast of the Hunter's Moon, a weekend event re-creating a rendezvous in the 1700s between French traders and Indians. At least 5 years ago, this event was drawing 50,000 people, and one booklet I got said that it took 4,000 people to put it on. (Presumably this includes all the performers -- there are two stages -- and traders and people handling exhibits, as well as the committee running it.) It's huge, well organized, and one can buy anything from a buffaloburger to a flintlock rifle there. One of Moonwulf's friends was complaining once that a customer wanted to know what was in the buffalo stew that his booth was selling. He started naming potatoes, carrots, onions.. "No, no; what kind of meat is it?" "Buffalo meat!" And being a salesperson for the day, he couldn't add "you turkey!" There are several farms in the midwest growing buffalo -- bison, if you're a purist -- to sell to pioneer re-creations and occasional church and social barbecues looking for something more exotic than beef or pork. Way back in the 1940s when I was a Boy Scout, the Scouts had a buffalo barbecue, and I thought the meat was absolutely wonderful. White meat; I probably got a piece of the "hump". (Buffaloburgers taste very little different from hamburgers.)

Anyway, the Feast is something to tell our friends they have to see at least once, but it's clear across the state from us, and while Indiana is a narrow state, that's still 80 miles or more one way. Moonwulf occasionally works the Feast as a blacksmith, but he lives over there. (Once he was talking about using the old-time tools, to a group of tourists, and I asked why he was using a steel tape. "Shut up, Coulson.")

The event in our area only got started 3 years ago, and we first went last year. It's called the Battle of Mississinewa, because "Skirmish of Mississinewa" doesn't look as good in the advertising. It's north of Marion, IN, about 20 or so miles from our house, in a reservoir area on the banks of the

Mississinewa River. At the beginning of the War of 1812, Harrison sent a few regular troops and a gang of militia to the area, to "overawe" the Miami Indians and keep them from joining the British. This was well north of the white settlements of the time, except for a few traders and a fort here and there. The expedition destroyed three small Indian villages, and then were attacked by an Indian force. This was on Dec. 17, with snow on the ground; for financial reasons the re-creationists stage their battle in October, when it's warm enough to attract people. The re-creation is held about a mile from the actual battle site, to avoid trampling markers and gravestones at the site; the entire area is state-owned, and used for hiking, hunting in season, and according to one group of hunters, for occasional functions by Satanists. There are open areas interspersed with the trees, which provide extra food for wildlife, and one of these is selected for the actual battle. In the real battle, 12 whites were killed, and an unknown number of Indians, and the whites lost nearly all of their hundred packhorses, and after holding the field long enough to avoid having the affair called an Indian victory, they retreated.

Along with two re-creations per day of the battle, the event features folk music, an Indian village provided by the Miami tribe, assorted sellers of primitive crafts and products, and food. This year I bought a hunk of roast rabbit, a piece of bread that tasted somewhat like non-alcoholic fruitcake (types of bread weren't identified, but I passed up what I knew was corn bread and Indian Fry Bread for something sweeter,) and a cup of cider. I passed up the sausages, buffalo stew, vegetable soup, apples, roast pork from "The Round Pig", and various other foods that I don't recall. (For one thing, due to digestive problems I can't eat a lot of strange foods at one time.) Oh yes, someone had pumpkin pie that tempted me, but I never got to the booth.

The battle went very well, and the regulars and the Indians both got off actual volleys of shots, which isn't easy with flintlocks. The idea is for all guns to go off at the same time, so it sounds like one loud shot. But with a flintlock, when you pull the trigger, the flint hits the striker, sending a shower of sparks into the powder in the open pan, and the fire runs down a tube from the pan to the charge in the barrel. All of this takes time, and usually a slightly differing amount of time in each different weapon. Assuming that it works at all, of course; sometimes it doesn't. (Last year, I watched one of the Indians carefully putting powder and patch down the barrel; no lead, since this is all in fun. Then he poured the priming powder into the pan and ran forward, holding his musket upright. Of course, the priming powder fell out, and when he pulled the trigger, nothing happened. I expect it happened frequently in the excitement of the real battle; the error made it look a bit more authentic.) In the real battle, regulars and Indians used smoothbore muskets; some of the militia might have had rifles. (Rifles are long-barrelled guns with rifling in the bore; muskets -- except "rifled muskets" -- are smooth inside.)

At any rate, I had a good time this year, took some photos of the battle and the Indian village and the river, listened to some of the folk music, and then went on to an orchard, bought a half-bushel of apples, stopped at a grocery and bought some cat food for our housecats, and came home. And discovered that my wallet with 15 credit cards in it was missing. (I carry two wallets, one with money, driver's license and the normal stuff, and one with credit cards only. That one doesn't have my address in it.) That's when things became exciting for me, personally. I even knew where I'd probably lost it; in one of the portable toilets that are brought in for these things. Just fell out of my pocket when I took my pants down. Okay, back to the Mississinewa. Originally, we'd had to park a half-mile or more from the actual event, in a rather muddy field, but by the time we got back most people were leaving and I got permission to park near by the entrance. Asked the people collecting admission if the wallet had been turned in. They didn't know, but said to try the "Trails End Tavern" at the other end of the camp, since "they're our people". Walked all the way back; quarter-mile, anyway, maybe more. Yes, the wallet had been picked up and the discoverer was looking for the owner, but he hadn't turned it in there. See if you can find Martin Lake at the military camp; he's the president of the Mississinewa Association. Military camp, of course, is back close to the entrance. Went there. "I'm looking for Martin Lake." "Oh, we're always looking for Martin Lake; haven't seen him lately." (Sound like a convention chairman?) Back to the entrance and admissions booth. Woman there went over to a booth selling Mississinewa t-shirts, sweatshirts and other souvenirs, with me trailing her. Wallet? "Oh yes, he was here; said he'd take it to the Turtle Trading Post booth."

Another Mississinewa Association member standing by the booth said "Come on, I know where that's at" and I followed him to Turtle Traders and there was my wallet, with credit cards. The bright spot of the day, for me. (Juanita, who had been with me in all except the final search, said smugly that she'd left her purse under the tailgate of our locked station wagon. Maybe next year I'll be smart enough to not take the credit cards at all; Indian traders don't use credit cards. Not invented in 1812, so they don't exist.)

One addendum; I mentioned the Miami Indian tribe. The government doesn't consider it a tribe; the Miamis are working to become recognized. The problem is that the Miamis split in the 1800s when the government put them on reservations. Before that, the idea was to turn the Indians into farmers who could co-exist with whites; farming didn't use up so much land as a hunting society did. A fair number of Miamis and Delawares and Pottowatomies in Indiana had become settled, stayed in the state, intermarried with whites, and did exactly what the government had wanted. So now the government says because they succeeded, they can't be a tribe. (The Indians did manage to pry something like \$7,000,000 out of the government a few years ago, compensation for the loss of their land, and good for them. I think they're still haggling over who gets what part of it, since they have full-bloods, half-breeds, quarter-breeds and down to sixteenths and probably thirty-seconds of Indian blood.) I suppose they'd be a disappointment to viewers of western movies; you can't tell Indian from white today in Indiana without going into genealogy. They aren't particularly dark-skinned, and aren't necessarily dark-haired.

Tepees, incidentally, were barred from the Indian village, because they were never used in Indiana. Indian houses were made from reeds or branches covered with bark, and once they began getting steel axes they made log houses similar to those of their white neighbors. The fancy Sioux headdresses weren't used either; they're fine when you're riding over an open plain, but not so practical when you're walking through a woods.

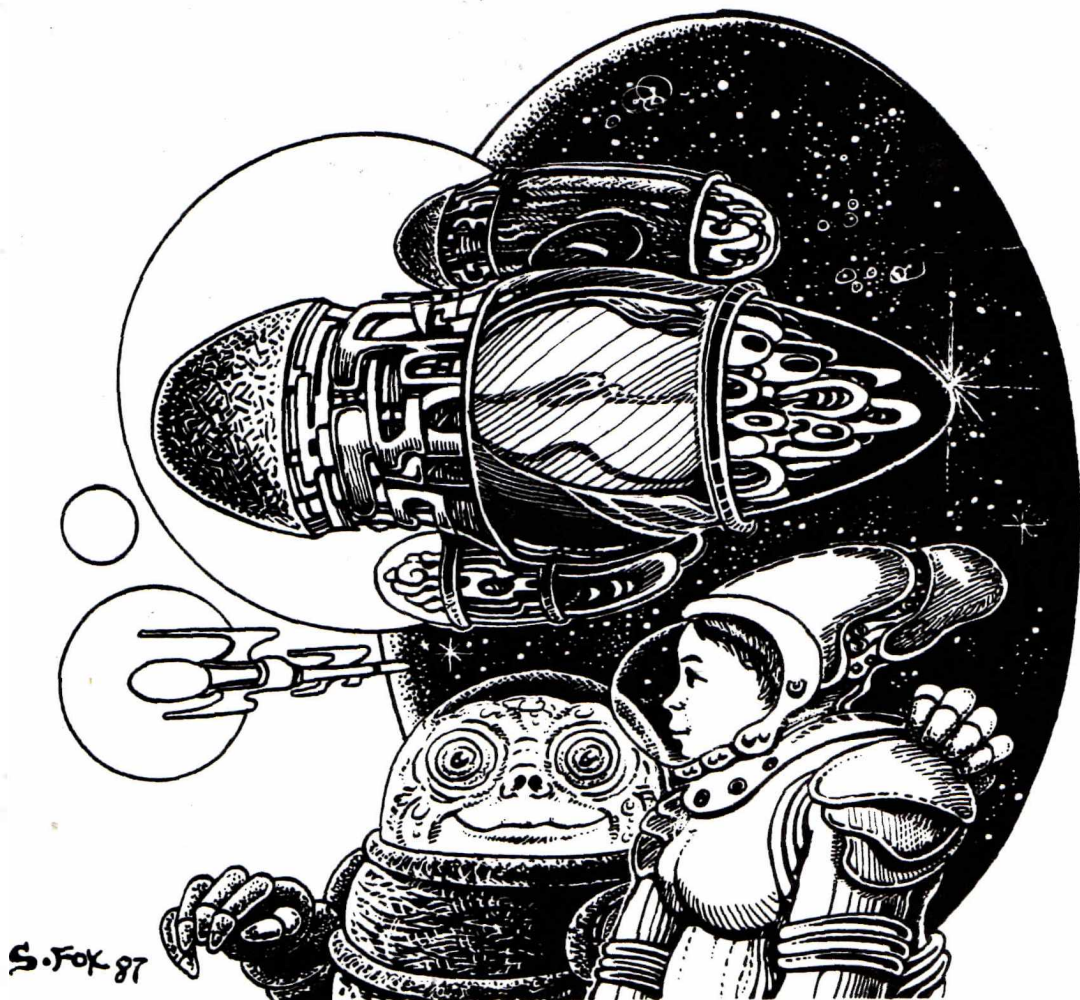
After all this ancient Hoosier lore, writing about Context will probably be an anti-climax, but I will anyway. It's a convention devoted strictly to written science fiction and fantasy; no media programming, no gaming. Filking is allowed, but there were no panels or other program items about it. Consequently it's a very small convention for the US; around 200 people or possibly a few more. It's held in Columbus, OH. Juanita and I were among the guests last year, so we go back the year after, if we can, to show our appreciation. Besides, Susan Schwartz was one of the guests this year, and while Susan and I have corresponded regularly and frequently for 10 or 15 years, we'd only met twice previously, since she's a dedicated New Yorker. So I wanted to see her. We shared a room with old-time Columbus fans Bob and Betty Gaines, and got to eat Saturday and Sunday nights with son Bruce and his friend Lee Swartzmiller. The arrangements for huckstering were ideal. If one entered the hotel at the south entrance (which, due to street repairs, was the easiest way to do it), you walked in the door, turned right and were facing the entrance to the huckster room. Small room; not all that much was required for a small con. We sold filk tapes, used hardcovers, and a few pulp magazines, though not very many of any of these. I guess we broke even on expenses, thanks to free membership and tables, a shared room, and a fairly short travel distance; about 120 miles.

Juanita and I were each on 5 panels, which I thought was a lot for a very minor guest. We're never on the same panel, because one of us had to look after the huckster table. Mine were "Alien Intelligence", "The Psychology of Fandom", "Fanzine Writing", "Do Heroes Do Us Any Good?", and "Humor In Fantasy and SF". Oddly, the fan psychology panel was the most interesting; odd because fandom as a whole doesn't really have a psychology. However, it developed into somewhat of a "fans are slans" panel. Renee Alper, mostly paralyzed and living in a motorized wheelchair, mentioned that about 35% of mundanes are rude to the handicapped, in her experience, mentioning store clerks who would refuse to answer her questions or recognize that she existed. Whereas only one fan had ever been less than helpful to her. Bill Levy pointed out different reactions to strength. When a table at work was being junked and he helpfully ripped it apart barehanded so it could be removed easier -- he said it had been built in the room and was too big to be carried out the door -- his co-workers were frightened of him. Sure, he can break people in two, but he doesn't. When he displayed strength for fans, they all wanted him to come help them move, or help on other projects. He also commented on

having been to a gaming convention where game companies were hiring people to "accidentally" spill food on rival company's exhibits. Fan's don't do that. Only Maia Cowan put in a few negative notes: "Come on, people, we're not all that great." Of course she's right in a way; fans do a lot of snide things to each other. But we seldom damage one another physically, which a lot of humans do regularly. I suppose some male fans beat their wives, but I don't know personally of any who do, and most fan fistfights seem to be of the Hollywood variety; one or two punches and it's all over. What we do is put each other down intellectually, and this is relatively minor compared to physical injury. I've seen dozens of newspaper reports of people minding their own business who were shot or stabbed by "a friend". I only know of one fan who was stabbed, and it was by an outsider he'd never seen before, and the only one who was shot, did it to himself. Fans aren't perfect, but there's still a difference in attitude.

For Mike glicksohn's information, Context had beer in the consuite on Saturday night, but it belonged to Dean Lambe; it wasn't furnished to ordinary fan riffraff (though I picked up a can at the tail of the evening when nobody else seemed to want it.)

- Buck Coulson



**VERTICAL FRONTIER/
PRISONERS OF MARS**

**Why that smile?
Why Now?**

These cat-tracks bite the
contours of Martian silence
spray black into blackness
along magma rill radiations
from lucite-shelled human warmth
through eight-k shadows of
frigid mountains

Why that smile? Why
that confidence now?
when Dometwo's implosion splinters
still glimmer with CO2 ice opened
to a radiation-hard Earthlight with
the luminosity of thermal-storms
more terrible than Jupiter.
And yet the old ones smile
that particular smile as
the young are cat-tracked
across the basalt-fields
in blind pilgrimage,
rill-crawling Martian silences as
each generation in exile must,
just once.

Why that smile?
Descending now through
these forests of night
in wells of void that
absorb all light
and the fusion-thrum
that trembles the tracks
is all that's real,
and still
that smile?

9000 alien colonists
where we don't belong,
Earth nuked to nova
for 1000 years to come,
and we live...
here...
just

Cat-tracks bit stone labyrinths
where lights shimmer a maze of
reflections in igneous caves
fused to glass, and here we
file from the fusion-thrum dance
across scintillations of pumice
to this place

no colour but your breath
no sounds but your blood
no movement now
but your smile

This man frozen
in volcanic glass
carbon-dated
50-million years old
shows
we've passed
this way before,

He points at
the Earth
and he
smiles
that same
particular smile

- Andrew Darlington

SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE

by Maria-Louise Stephens

When she let herself into the flat and called a greeting, there was no answer.

Since her illness and also during the time of her convalescence he came back later and later in the evening from work.

She wasn't afraid that he saw another woman, as their relationship had always been good and loving - but during the last week he had come home - elated somehow - but he wouldn't share the reason with her, as he had always done. There was something secretive in his behaviour towards her. Their marriage had now become a surface one, they lived together, that was all.

She had had a rather severe pneumonia some months ago but now their marriage should have resumed in all its intimacy. During her illness she had needed many drinks and medication in the night - so he never had had sufficient sleep. When she was getting better, she still was unable to sleep well - and then they decided to have separate bedrooms, so that she could read for long periods, when she wasn't tired enough to sleep.

But she was perfectly alright again and had intended to talk to him some evenings ago, but it was just as if he knew and planned to be out or pretended that he didn't hear her. He patted her hand and then worked on again checking some papers which he had brought home. She did realise that she was still tired after prolonged shopping, though the items were always delivered or when she had done a lot of baking or cooking. She also exercised by taking walks, but not with him - always alone. If this relationship of theirs continued as it was now - soon they would only be two friends sharing an apartment - she didn't want a brother - she wanted a husband.

Where was he tonight? It could be that he was doing some late shopping for her, to help her buy all the items for a party they planned. She hadn't entertained for such a long time and had not seen their numerous friends either. They were going to call it "I-am-well-party".

But it was now long after the shops had closed. She was restless and made herself a cup of tea and walked up and down, while she drank it.

Then she heard steps approaching their door and a key in the lock. She ran to open the door for him. He smiled at her but didn't kiss her. He was holding on with one hand to a parcel that was standing beside the door, a huge parcel. Whatever had he bought now? she thought - she didn't want presents, she wanted to be noticed, cared for - loved.

Carefully he eased the parcel into the corridor, after handing his leather-bag to her. She closed the door.

'Any idea, what this could be?' He smiled, still holding the parcel that was taller than he was and about as wide as her stereo-cupboard.

'No,' she answered, after walking part way around it. 'I can't guess, tell me.' He looked like a small boy someone had bought a big icecream for.

'Help me unpack, please.'

There were strips of adhesive to be pulled off, then, when one side of the parcel was folded back, some polystyrene pads fell out. She was working at the top of the parcel, he was taking the padding out further down. Suddenly a face stared at her and she stepped back, surprised, shocked that there had been a pad like a mask covering that face. She also felt slightly apprehensive. He had by this time removed all the padding and she saw a girl, a woman, as tall as she was, dressed in a national costume, standing stiff and still.

'A doll?' she asked - but when she ran her hands over the black bodice with the silver buttons, she realised that these buttons were knobs, which she was able to press, the one she had touched made the head move slightly, as that the big doll looked straight at her.

'Not a doll, darling. It is a household-robot, a social robot, they call it, not one for cleaning the flat, and for any of the dirty jobs - we have the cleaning robot for that - but for making tea, washing up, dusting a bit - all those little things you have to do, which still make you tired. The social robot is there to make you comfortable and do everything you cannot do so well as before your illness'.

'But I am fine, I launder your clothes, I dust, I cook.' She suddenly thought of the newest microwave-oven he had given her, which was the best on the market; instead of ringing a bell, when the time was up, it called her by name. A special innovation.

He held onto the robot and removed the packing from behind her, then gathered up all the bits and pieces, also the cardboard panels from the parcel, went into the kitchen and threw them down the garbage-shoot.

She was left alone with this beautiful doll. She had to get used to calling it a robot. It was so life-like. It was wearing the heavy skirt of the Norwegian National Costume, the white wide-sleeved blouse under the black bodice and even the fine filigree silver jewelry that belonged to it. She wondered why he had chosen the costume of this particular country, and then she remembered. Of course - they had visited Norway only a year ago. He had been very attentive to the young woman who ran the ski-lodge near Voss. Was this present - if it was a present for her - a reminder for him of the holiday, rekindling an old interest?

He entered the room holding a mini-vacuum-cleaner, sucking up the bits of fluff, which had fallen away from the packing and looked at his wife, who was still in the same position as when he had left her, facing the robot - looking at it with a serious expression.

'Isn't she beautiful? Look at the skin. They do a good job these days. Touch the arm,' he commanded her, and when she did: 'Doesn't it feel as if it's alive? It doesn't even feel as cold anymore as the earlier models did. Now I'll show you what she can do.'

He pressed the silver button just over her "heart", the same one she had inadvertently pushed before and the head turned around to him. The closed mouth with a dimple on the left side looked as if it would open to speak.

'Let me show you,' he said. 'This one makes her move her head, the one below moves her arms, the one above both of these activates the voice. Listen.'

He pressed this button.

'Master, what can I do for you?'

The voice had a slight accent, but was very pleasant to listen to.

By pressing the top button on the right side of her bodice, he released leg movement, the one below activated the joints of arms and made the spine move. The third one made her sit down, and

the big button on a black velvet neckband made her stop altogether. Then the whole process had to be repeated, for whatever action was required.

The robot was now fully mobile.

'Walk into the room behind you, please.'

The robot turned and walked into the adjoining room, their kitchen.

'You don't have to say "please" to a robot,' she said indignantly. 'It's just as if you treat her like a human being.'

'Don't spoil my fun,' he begged. 'She looks good from the back too, don't you think?'

She watched the robot going through the door. The factory had made a beautiful job of this particular model. The long blond hair, plaited, hung down the back. It had rounded hips, slender legs, shoes with low heels, but of fashionable shape.

Her husband walked in after the robot and called: 'Astrid, please, two cups of coffee, strong and sweet, no milk.'

Then she remembered, the woman in Norway had also been called Astrid.

She didn't want this robot in the house, she wasn't going to make use of her, he could. How insensitive to remind her of the Norwegian holiday, which she hadn't enjoyed. He had been talking to Astrid, skiing with Astrid, dancing with Astrid in the evenings. During the day she had been on the nursery slopes with a ageing instructor, who hadn't looked very nice either, just gnarled and leathery with a raspy voice.

All circuits were working perfectly - the robot came back with the tray, which she herself had put earlier beside the coffee-making-machine, thinking of them both relaxing in the evening after his day's work.

He took the tray, put it on the table and pressed the third button on the right and said: 'Astrid, sit down on the chair behind you.'

'Thank you, Master, is that all?'

'Yes, Astrid, thank you.'

He walked over to the robot, when it had sat down and pressed the button on her neckband.

The robot became quiet and lifeless.

Did she have to sit here all evening, opposite the robot? This wretched doll looked so lifelike, it felt as if she were being watched, though all movement had ceased.

She had to say "thank you" to her husband for this thoughtful present. It would be easy enough not to use the robot during the day, make it stand in the corner facing the wall - out of the way.

She had always enjoyed the small tasks she had to perform in their apartment - the robot make her feel useless, there would be nothing to occupy her during the day at all.

Discouraged, she went to bed early.

This apartment, like so many others, was situated in the tower-houses the town had built, now

years ago, after dismantling all the small two-storey houses. Now there were wide lawns between the towers. There were adventure playgrounds for the children. There was so much room for them to play - they enjoyed all this space. There were also small lakes and waterfalls and many benches for the adults to sit on.

She was glad that they lived on the seventh floor. It was not too far off the ground. She could sit on their balcony and watch the crowns of the trees or look over the railing and see the children playing. The birds also had come back to this part of the town, since the planting of so many trees and flowering shrubs.

Next morning, she sat on the balcony, after the cleaning robot had been, vacuuming the carpets and wall. Flies, mosquitoes and spiders were a thing of the past. When she looked at the cleaning robot, she always knew it was a machine, but seeing this "Astrid", this beautiful robot her husband had wished on her, she was sometimes shocked into speech, when she entered a room, noticing this motionless figure - she felt as if someone was calling on her and she hadn't realised that they had entered the apartment - she felt it was an intruder she would like to be rid of.

One night she couldn't sleep and thought, a hot drink might relax her. She crossed the loungeroom and noticed that the robot was not there, also not in the kitchen, where she had seen it last. Where was it? She looked around and saw a light under her husband's bedroom door, and she heard voices. Voices? She froze, then advanced cautiously, leaning against the wooden frame of the door. She listened. Was he talking into a tape, telephoning - or who was there?

Then she recognised the voice with the Scandinavian accent. He was talking to the robot in his room. It seemed the suction-pad on his door wasn't working properly, the door had not closed. She could see over to the corner where his bed was, and there he sat and "Astrid" on a chair next to him.

'Colin, I like working in your house.'

So, now she called him "Colin", when they were alone, not "Master" any more.

Her husband's hand was on the robot's arm, emphasizing something he was saying very quietly, then she saw the robot get up and sit down on the bed next to him.

She left her listening post and went into the kitchen and poured a small measure of her husband's whisky into a glass for herself. She didn't need a stimulant, she needed something to combat shock.

Did he pretend that the robot was flesh and blood, capable of emotions as well as actions? It was absurd to worry. But why did he always change the conversation, when she wanted to talk to him about sharing the main bedroom again? She went back to bed with a feeling of rejection and revulsion and didn't sleep for a long time.

Next morning she overslept, her husband had left and "Astrid" sat in one of the loungeroom chairs. She went over to the robot, punched the buttons for action and then touched the one for speech. She had been told just to touch the buttons gently and had to force herself to do that - she wanted to punch them hard and drive them deep into the pretty machine.

"Astrid" stood up. 'What can I do for you?'

Never had the robot addressed her properly yet, only her husband was "master", no courtesy title for her.

The glass eyes looked at her.

'Make me a strong coffee.' She was not going to say "please" either to this insolent machine.

The robot came back with a small tray, on which stood a cup of coffee.

She touched the appropriate button and told her to sit, then punched the button on the velvet necklace with a little more force than necessary. She would love to put this machine out of action completely.

She walked up and down, after she had drunk her coffee. What could she do, she thought and thought. Of course, she could play the game too. She still had the telephone number of the firm advertising social robots.

Later on in the afternoon a large package was delivered. The two men carrying it into the apartment wanted to unpack for her, but she only asked for the information sheet which accompanied each delivery and then told them she would open the package by herself.

Will all the packing removed - there he was, a social robot in a dark lounge-suit, crisp cream shirt with a wine-red tie, dark socks and highly polished shoes. It was a newer model that "Astrid" she had been told by the firm manager, their latest model, she had been assured.

The robot had dark hair, wavy and a moustache. His black eyes had long lashes, his hands were white and slender.

He looked perfect. As she had specially asked for a model with a French accent, he would have to have a French name. She would call him "Jean-Marie". The buttons on his double-breasted suit were the release buttons for all his actions.

She had been assured that his manners were those of a French aristocrat; they were sure she would be very pleased.

'Jean-Marie, come and sit here, beside me.'

He bowed and sat down. She was not sorry that she had overdrawn her husband's account. What he could do, she was equally able to do. She would show him.

'Jean-Marie, give me your hand, please.' She held his hand - and the firm had been right in saying that the so-called skin felt really warm. They had told her that lately they had put a small heating element into the circuitry. She touched his face and the hair, which was beautifully lifelike and she felt pleasure in having him sitting beside her.

"Jean-Marie" then took her hand into his, bent over it, touching it lightly with his lips and asked: 'Who is that female sitting there on the chair?'

He had a perfect Parisian accent, rolling the "R" in the back of his throat.

'Oh, that is my husband's robot, called "Astrid".'

'A very inferior model, Madame.'

She was pleased when she heard that; she had done even better than her husband.

Colin could talk and have his "Astrid" in his room as much as he liked.

She would not let "Jean-Marie" into her room, she would program him so that he would watch her bedroom door. Not even her husband would then be able to enter. That would annoy him, but she didn't care any more. She would behave circumspectly, tell her robot that he had to knock at her door in the morning, then bring her a cup of coffee, something her husband hadn't done for a long

time.

"Jean-Maria" would always be there, for her alone, answer her commands. And there was another innovation: there was a thought-circuit built into him, so that he could answer questions as well. They would have lovely conversations, she would not be lonely any more.

She adored his voice with the French accent. If she should get tired of it, she could always exchange this model for another, newer one, one which might have a South American accent, have olive skin, could sing in Spanish and teach her to dance the latest Latin-American dances. You never knew what other things the scientists discovered and would build into the robot's circuitry.

She looked at "Jean-Marie", a robot? She couldn't quite believe it. He looked so real, the slightly less than smooth movements would surely be absent in a newer model.

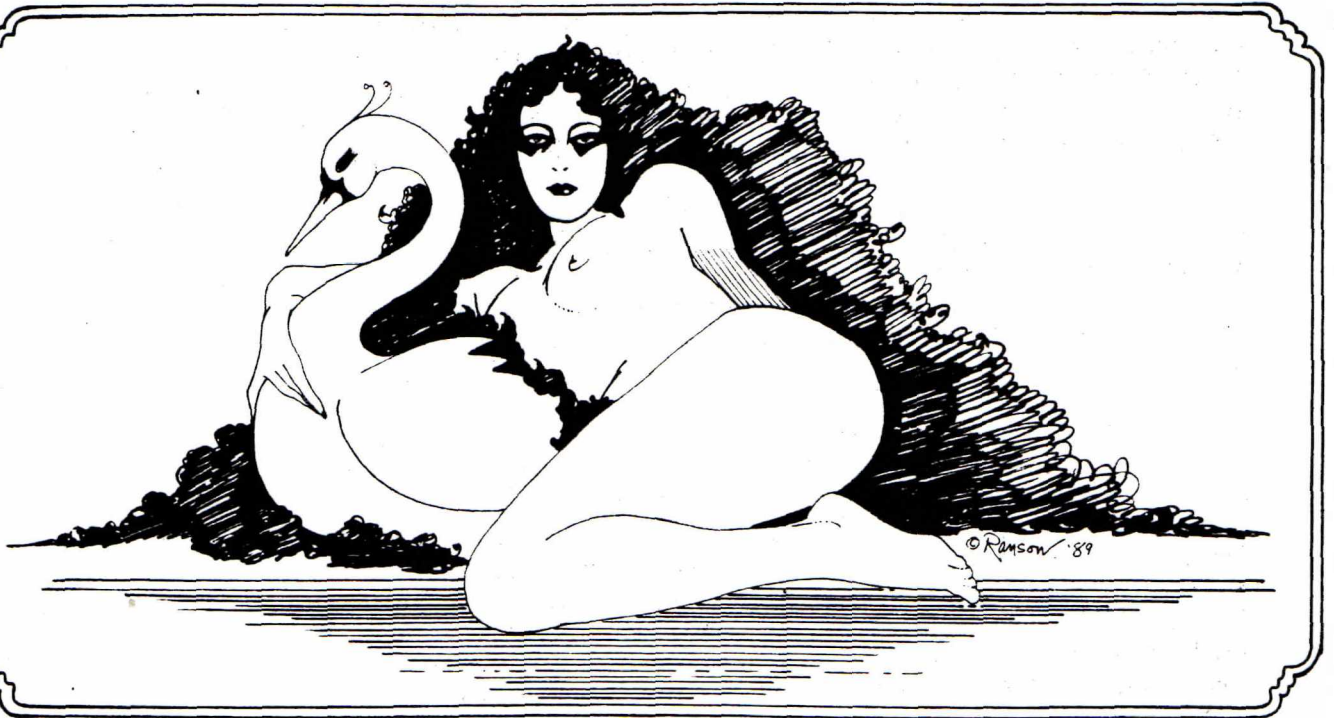
A whole new life opened up in front of her. Her husband could keep his old model "Astrid".

When he came home, they would have to have a talk, she would make him listen to her. He would find out that she could stand on her own feet again, and if he didn't need her any more, she didn't need him either.

She smiled at "Jean-Marie", who bent attentively towards her.

She would see her lawyer in the morning and ask for a trial separation.

- Maria-Louise Stephens



FOR ME THE MENTOR 67 OPENED AS DRAMATICALLY AS A SHAFT OF LIGHT ILLUMINATING A DARKENED STAGE. AS YOU MAY KNOW I WAS FAFIA FOR SOME 15 YEARS FROM THE MID-SIXTIES, AND WHEN I CAME BACK WHOLE FANNISH ERAS HAD COME AND GONE, LEAVING ONLY TANTALISING TRACES. ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING OF THESE TRACES WAS A CASUAL REFERENCE TO A DOUBLE DECKER BUS LOAD OF FANS SETTING OUT FROM AUSTRALIA FOR EUROPE. EVER SINCE SEEING THIS REFERENCE I HAVE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THAT JOURNEY, AND NOW HERE IT IS EXPLAINED IN YOUR EDITORIAL, LIKE SOME STARTLING REVELATION BY GLEN CHAPMAN ABOUT PRE-HISTORY. IF THERE IS SOME PUBLISHED ACCOUNT OF THIS REMARKABLE TRIP I WOULD LOVE TO READ IT. IT HAS THE QUALITY OF MYTH, WHICH I FEEL THE MORE STRONGLY THESE DAYS ON ACCOUNT OF JAMES WHITE AND I HAVING JUST COMPLETED A SEQUEL TO THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR - WALT WILLIS.

BY FOOT AND BUS THROUGH THE HINDU KUSH - RON CLARKE

THE ASIAN CAMPAIGN

In 1969 I was twenty three years old and had been working for five years. I had driven to Cairns on the Tropic of Capricorn twice (a distance of some 3000 miles return) and overland to Perth (to see sf fan Brian Richards) once, a distance of some 4,000 miles return, alone. I had thought about going to Europe and I discussed this with Chris Guy, one of the other founders of this fanzine. He had a dream of starting a group up ("The Australian Expeditionary Society") for driving around Australia. He liked the idea, but said that it would be better driving overland than flying or going by sea. It seemed like a good idea to me also, so we advertised in the SYDNEY MORNING HERALD for young people willing to go with us, on a equal basis, sharing the costs and labour.

Perth fan, John Brosnan, had moved to Sydney and he joined the group. Another of my high school mates, David Rollason, went also. None of us was an engineer or had much mechanical skill. We all put together five hundred dollars and bought a second hand bus from the NSW Government. It was an old double-decker government transport bus which had had a fire on the top deck which had burnt the top out. The government did have the engine on it overhauled for us, and we had the diesel injectors refurbished.

It took over a year to refit the bus. We had to strip off the melted aluminium on the upper story, unbolt and straighten the twisted girders, and coat the timber floor with lino. We then bought rolls of new aluminium and riveted on a new aluminium skin. Instead of single opening windows we fitted the holes with ribbed opaque plastic to give diffused light. The idea was to have a spacious feeling, so we bought 2 inch steel pipes and hessian mesh and built steel framed bunks. We bought and installed upstairs at the head of the stairs a new plastic lined 55 gallon steel drum for water and fitted it with hoses to the taps in the sink downstairs. We bought a gas fridge and gas stove, powered with butane gas. We set up four tables downstairs with steel pipe and pressed wood tops, with seats, curtained the windows and painted the interior with bright colours. The outside of the bus was painted a sky blue and in a short ceremony it was christened with a bottle of champagne, "Pegasus". We

purchased canned food and cereals and medicines and loaded up with Bardahl oil additive - from our sole sponsor.

In the twelve months it took to rebuild the bus, people joined, and then left for various reasons. We ended up with some nine young men (all under 25) and five women when we finally departed. The bus was shipped as deck cargo to Bombay on a cargo ship, departing from Sydney on the 7th February 1970. Four of the bus crew, one being Chris Guy, went with the bus to look after it as far as Singapore. The other members of the crew, including myself, flew out of Sydney on the 14th March by MSA (Malaysian Airlines). We stopped off at Singapore for three days, Bangkok for several days, and then went on to Colombo, where we visited the Kandi Mountains. We found the food in Colombo cheap - a four course meal cost about \$1 in a good hotel. The group found a hostel for 4 rupees (40c) a night for a bed, and washing and shower facilities. It was there the group got it's first taste of what Asia was really like. A cup of Ceylon tea was made with condensed milk and tasted, to our thirsty palates, beautiful.

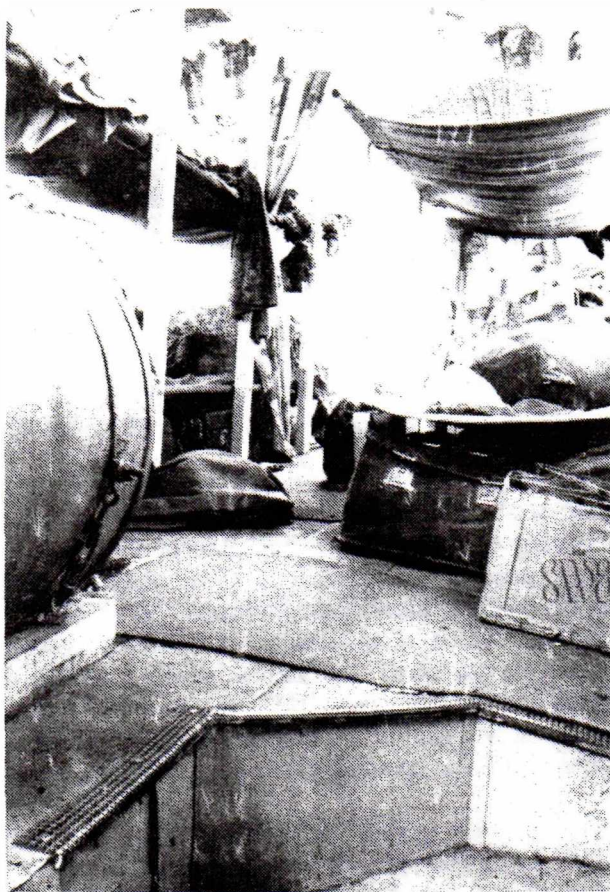
After spending two days in Colombo we flew out at 1 pm for Madras, India, where we descended from the plane into scorching heat. There was a half hour wait for Health, Customs and Immigration to even start clearing us. Then our group plan paid off. The people ahead of us were being frisked and their baggage searched by Customs. When they saw us they grimaced and, after some minutes talking among themselves, motioned us through. After getting all our baggage together we got the airline bus into Madras, where, after spending three hours sightseeing, we settled ourselves in at a "tourist hostel". Apart from the smell, the narrow winding streets, the food in the hostel, the dust, the pastel coloured rivers and the beggars... well, they tried; it wasn't really as bad as it could have been. I have a shot on my movie film of a group of three of the men running off down the dusty street, with red-headed Englishman Brian standing out in the drab scenery.

We had a funny incident at the hostel. At breakfast the staff would put toast and a bottle of marmalade on the table. This particular morning they put a full bottle of marmalade on the table. Everyone was so ravenous that when the staff came to clear the table there was none left in the bottle. Well, after all, 14 people. The waiter had a peculiar, unbelieving look on his face.

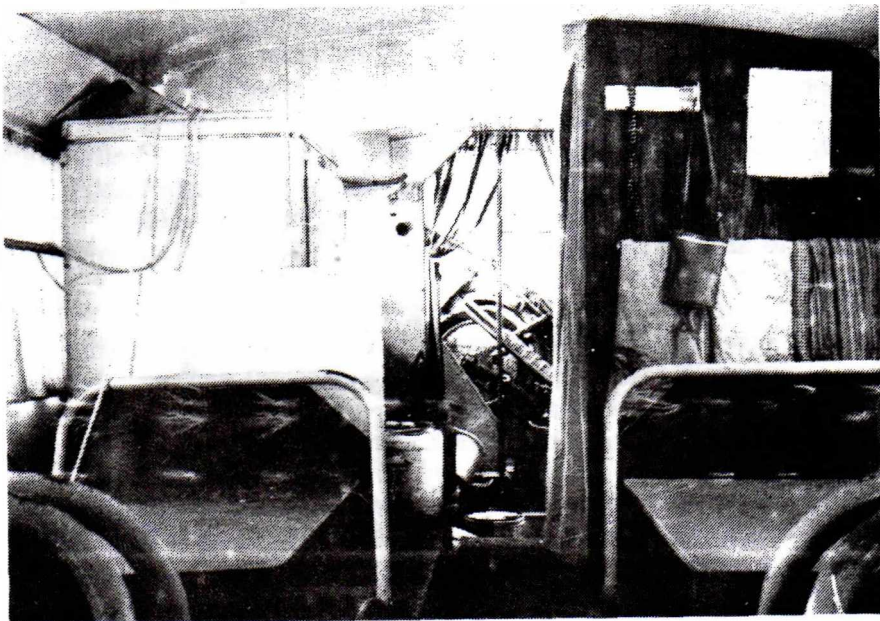
It was in Madras that Chris Guy announced, to an incredulous crew, his engagement to Elaine, one of the two women who had accompanied him on the ship to Singapore with the bus.

Our first taste of dust was in the train trip to Bombay, eight dollars for about 800 miles. We travelled Second Class which actually had padded seats (Third Class didn't). The trip was hot and unbelievably dusty. The fan did not work and the light couldn't be turned off. We were covered in dust when we arrived in Bombay, where we stayed at the Salvation Army Hostel. It had clean rooms and was \$1.30 (90c on the black market currency) a night including meals. By the time I reached Bombay I was down to \$200 personal spending money. The bus group had its own kitty for food and expenses.

Shortly after arriving in Bombay the ship with the bus arrived - with only three windows and one headlight glass broken. At last we got it cleared through Customs and were about to set out north. We had spend seven days at the Hostel and sightseeing around Bombay. We used to change our US travellers cheques and cash into rupees on the black market. I was walking back one day to the hostel when I was accosted by an Indian and offered the services of a "clean" young Chinese girl. This hurried me on a little faster. Across the road from the hostel was the Stipples Hotel where a group of hippies hung out. The climate was cooler in Bombay than Madras and cleaner. I stuck to Western style food; some of the others, who didn't, developed diarrhoea. About half of the bus crew came down with the "Bombay wog" - sore throat, cough and diarrhoea. I had caught a cough in Ceylon which I only got rid of when I reached England. Antibiotics couldn't shift it. It was in Bombay that Chris Guy fell off the motor cycle and spent about a week laying in his bunk on the bus recuperating.



THE BUS UPSTAIRS, LOOKING FORWARD



THE BUS DOWNSTAIRS, LOOKING BACK FROM THE FRONT

All the people with Bus driving licences had a go at driving - one of the best was one of the women, Kay, who had driven trucks at one stage in Australia. She, along with Vicki, was one of the two nurses on the trip. At one stage we had paused for lunch about 45 miles south of Agra. the countryside had been getting drier and drier and the dress of the Indians was changing from sarees to a more Arabian like dress. We arrived in Agra in the midst of a dust storm. We passed the Taj Mahal, veiled in dust. We were finding water fairly easy, though boiling it took time. We had had good weather till then, and still didn't have all the hammocks up as we didn't have any wood to put between them. The crew were taking turns sleeping on the floor. We had met an English double-decker bus which was on its way to Bombay and Australia. There were nine men in it and was much better set out as far as accommodation, though ours was much more airy.

The women were doing most of the cooking (being the better cooks), though one of the men made good curries. The fridge had been cutting out frequently - apparently the dust was getting to the interior.

A day started at 5 am when we got up and had a light breakfast (Australian Wheaties and coffee/tea). We drove off at about 6 am and drove in the cool till about 12, when we rested for about three hours and then drove until 5.30 pm. This way we had been driving about 180 miles per day, at 30 mph. Dinner took about 1-2 hours and we were usually in bed by 10 pm as we didn't want to drain the battery with lights.

We arrived in Delhi on the 14th of April. The clutch on the bus had been slipping a bit, but seemed ok. We went to a restaurant which had asparagus soup, fillet steak, orange juice and ice cream with cream and a cherry on top. It cost about \$2.40 (including tips) but it was worth it. We had been living on rice and eggs (at 1c each) and I felt like splurging once. We got our visas for Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan there and Graham, the sole New Zealander in the group, lost \$800 worth of traveller's cheques when he changed them on the black market. The man he gave them to didn't come back with the currency. We had been going through water fast and had been drinking gallons of soft drinks (Coke, and Fanta when the taste of Coke proved too much. A bottle of Coke or Fanta cost about US45c. I went to the movies with John Brosnan and saw BEDAZZLED. The theatre was airconditioned and looked new.

We stayed in the Boy Scouts Camping ground at Delhi. There were a lot of ancient tombs there and we slept in one of them - it was the coolest place around. The nights were cooler than the days - sometimes it was 107F upstairs in the bus. The area had swarms of ants and mosquitoes. The flies came in at 7.30 in the morning and woke everyone up, buzzing outside the mosquito netting.

The group crossed the India/Pakistan border on the 19th April. I showed my Australian Customs id to the officer in charge of the Indian Customs who arranged a cup of tea and biscuits for everyone in the group. I discussed the seeming high degree of official corruption with her and she said it was widespread.

The bus was getting really dusty inside. In the front upstairs the carpet was covered with dust and tree leaves. In Lahore the clutch played up and a bus company fixed it as well as the sheared exhaust and welded a sealed beam light to the front bumper bar, about three hours work, for nothing. We then drove about a hundred yards up the road and the engine stopped. The engineers came out and fixed it - clogged fuel lines. On the other hand in cities when we stopped the people milled around the bus and start banging on the walls and even threw rocks.

We passed under quite a few low bridges, sometimes scraping under them as we drove along one of the gutters, as that was the lowest part of the road. The potentially worst incident I saw was when the bus was going about 35 mph along a road and one of the men, Peter Millers, had his head out of the front observation hatch and I was filming out the rear hatch. I saw something he missed - a low telegraph wire. I yelled out "Duck!". He did, and when he came down the ladder he had a red mark on his neck under his chin where the wire had run down his neck and clipped his chin.



THE KABUL GORGE, AFGHANISTAN



THE BUS PAUSED HALFWAY UP THE KABUL GORGE, WITH NATIVE TRIBE

It was in Pakistan at a UN mission near the border that we heard, from the Australians stationed there, of the tribesmen who held up the food convoys and stole the medicines for their own use. They told us to be careful.

It was at the Kyber gates that we saw our first hill tribesmen. They were carrying both .303 rifles and long black-powder guns. All along the road leading up to the Kyber were scores of forts, about a couple of hundred yards apart. The Kyber itself was crumbly, just a windy road up a rocky valley. Food was fantastic up to the Afghanistan border - \$1 for a three course meal.

We reached Kabul in Afghanistan on the 28th April. The bus went well up the Kyber Pass and the more scenic Kabul Gorge. It was while we were camping out between these two that we woke up one morning to find a tribe of natives camped around us. They had horses and were wearing their tribal costumes. One of the young women came up to us when she saw us coughing and taking cough medicine for it. One of the bus women, Vicki Cather, who was a nurse, said not to give them any, as they probably had TB and when the cough medicine wore off their attitude to us might change for the worse. They were staid, but friendly people. In fact there were always people around - if the bus stopped by the side of the road, even in the most desolate of places they come - from over the hills, up the road, mostly on foot, sometimes on donkeys or camels.

The bus boiled several times going up the Pass, and we were surprised to see the tunnels through the mountains that the road cut through to avoid the high places. The highest crest we went over had slopes of ice on the sides, though none on the road.

Kabul was a fantastic place - life was slow and the food cheap. When one looked down the main street the visitor could see a big range of snow covered mountains a little way off in the clear sky. We bought suede coats with wool inside for the cold. They stank because they hadn't been cured properly, but then we weren't too clean either, not having had a bath since Bombay. The most we had had was a wash in rivers along the way. Other leather goods on sale were fur gloves, hats and boots as well as fur rugs as wide as a double bed. Further on we passed about ten camel trains. The people seemed more European, though their clothes were still Arab looking.

The going was still rough for the bus, with it boiling every fifteen minutes. The climate was a lot cooler there and when we crossed into Iran it became flatter. It was there that we came onto about 400 miles of dirt road - the road up till then had been bitumen and concrete and though narrow, was good. One of the scenes I can still remember twenty years later is walking across and sitting in the midst of a field of red opium poppies in the early morning, with the mist wreathing the surrounding hills.

It was while driving across to Tehran that we saw Mount Ararat in the distance as well as other single, snow covered peaks. We paused by the Caspian Sea and walked the black sands amidst rain squalls. We didn't stop at the Black Sea for although it was brilliant sunshine we wanted to reach a village before nightfall. I had been taking Super 8 mm film with my movie camera all along and sending it back for Australia for processing. In the whole trip I sent about 25 films back and none got lost. The country in Iran is physically much like Afghanistan, though food was dearer, but petrol cheaper (about 30c a gallon).

One night, about 28 miles east of Erzurum in Turkey we noticed one of our rear tyres was nearly flat. We drove 4 kilometres the next morning to a garage where we took the tyre, a retread, off. About a foot of the retread had lifted and one of the Turks stuck his hand in. When we got the tyre off we found that there was a six inch slash in the tube. We bought a new tyre for \$100.

We arrived near Tehran on the 12th May while a festival of some sort was on, and stopped at a camping ground to enable sightseeing. I went into the city and bought a pair of black leather boots with thick rubber soles for \$2. There was a big bazaar where one could get almost anything.



CHRIS GUY



JOHN BROSNAN

THE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN

The bus left Trabson, Turkey, on the 21st of May and drove along the Black Sea coast for a hundred miles or so. We arrived at the ferry that linked Asia to Europe at Istanbul. It was about a 15-minute round trip. To take us on, the ferry had to load up with cars, go out, turn around and come in backward, have the bus drive on, cross the sea, unload the bus, go out, turn around, and unload the cars. About three ferry captains told us to "wait for the next ferry". We spent about three hours waiting to load. Reaching Istanbul on the 26th of May where we drove around the streets lost till we found the bank, the GPO and visited the British Consul for our mail. We spent a great time in the Bazaar and the leather shops (dearer than Kabul) and bought some Turkish "puzzle rings" - which consist of a ring of four or more bands fitting together to form a single ring - and spent a couple of hours practising fitting them together. In the last 20 years they have become popular in the West. We were delighted with the food there also - chocolate and vanilla puddings were a treat, although the steaks were dear and small.

We were staying at a BP Mopark which was a caravan/camping ground. It was 64c per person and 80c a night for the bus. There was a restaurant and the toilets were nice and clean (and European - you could sit *on* them!) and free gas. We spent \$82 on canned food, but were still unable to get canned meat or powdered milk. The last powdered milk we got (2 bags of 5 lb each) was from CARE (an American relief organisation). Our Australian breakfast cereals had lasted till the beginning of May - the Wheatbix were the last to go and we had been having eggs (fresh and/or powdered) for breakfast. We also had been putting liquid Sugarine on the cereal and in our tea. Since that trip I have not had, and cannot stand, artificial sweeteners.

We changed \$120 dollars in Turkey, intending to buy enough food in bulk to last us to England. That left us with about \$70 in Turkish lira. The rates of exchange were so ridiculous at the Turkish/Greek border we didn't change much back.

About 25 miles from the border we met a man and his wife on a single-decker bus heading south. Being low on cash we sold them our fridge and he bought \$50 worth of lira. The rest we got rid of a few miles further on.

It was about 75 miles east of Thessalonica (350 miles from Athens) in Greece that, on the downward slope of a range of hills, the motor gave out with a series of horrible bangs, and stopped. We brought the bus to a halt and looked over the engine. No oil in the fuel pump. Definitely *not* good. Having no oil we poured Bardahl oil additive into it.

Leaving the motor to cool for half an hour we started it again - it went, but with a knocking noise. About three hours later the oil pressure dropped. We stopped for another half an hour. And proceeded. Twenty six miles from Thessalonica the engine stopped - and would not start. A couple of Army engineers from a nearby army camp looked at it. The drive from the fuel pump was not turning. The bike was driven into Thessalonica to a garage and a mechanic came and looked at the engine. The bus ended up being towed into Thessalonica to a garage where the sump was taken off and the crankshaft examined. Instead of being of a round cross-section the crankshaft was oval. And some of the big-end bearings were gone. We were quoted from \$300 to \$700 for fixing it, depending on what was found when the engine was taken out.

It was at this point that I left for Athens to pick up some money sent from Australia for the bus. I went down by bus (cost \$3.75 one way for the 360 miles) with John Brosnan and two of the women, one of whom was going to fly back to Australia to marry. After booking into the local Youth Hostel (75c a night) I spent two days walking all over Athens on business, then on Sunday the 7th June, I saw the Archaeological Museum and the Acropolis (they being free admission on Thursdays and Sundays).

Arriving back in Thessalonica at 4 pm, I called in at the Australian Embassy Information Service, found where the bus was parked (at a camping area 30 kilometres out of town) and learned that Chris Guy and Elaine, who had left two days before I had (by bike) for Athens, had not arrived back. (They arrived two weeks late - Chris had been sick with concussion which he had received, and not known about, when he came off the bike in Bombay).

I had posted off the bus Carnet to Australia to get a refund of the Security before leaving for Athens and we decided to wait it out. After a week we received a telegram from Bardahl in reply to a wire for help, offering a loan of \$200. This bucked us up so we drove the bus to the local bus depot and, after looking it over, they did a temporary repair, "enough to get you to England and around it", for \$50.

The Carnet money still hadn't arrived, and with three weeks sitting in one place, having parties will 4 o'clock in the morning complete with threats to throw us out, we decided to get the refund money transferred to Milan when it came, and we left Thessalonica on the 22nd - three weeks after we had entered it. We left with nine people - two women having gone to Athens, then Rome and later met up with us in Italy. One of the other women had gone home, the other to Crete (and subsequently, we heard, to London). John Brosnan had stayed in Athens a few days, gone to an island with the girl going back to Australia to get married, and then gone on to London by train.

We reached the Greek border on the 23rd June and took our bus up to the Yugoslavian border. The Australians got their passports stamped, but those with British passports were refused entry. Completely. Seems with the South Africans around, all Europe was closed to people with "D" series passports - like those issued in Australia for Britishers. So we were stuck between the Greek and Yugoslavian borders for a day and a night while the three Britishers went back to Thessalonica for Emergency Passports. Having gotten these we carried on. That night we camped with four Australian women going a European tour in a large American convertible. The next night we parked near a road-restaurant and the night after in a farmer's field on the outskirts of Belgrade. We arrived there in a rainstorm and parked on a side road. A farmer came up to us and said we could use his field. He then pulled down the fence to let us in and plied us with plum brandy.

We arrived in Belgrade on the 27th June and spent two days there, since the Australian Embassy was not open till the Monday. And when we did get to it we found the mail had been sent on the previous Monday to Australia House in London.

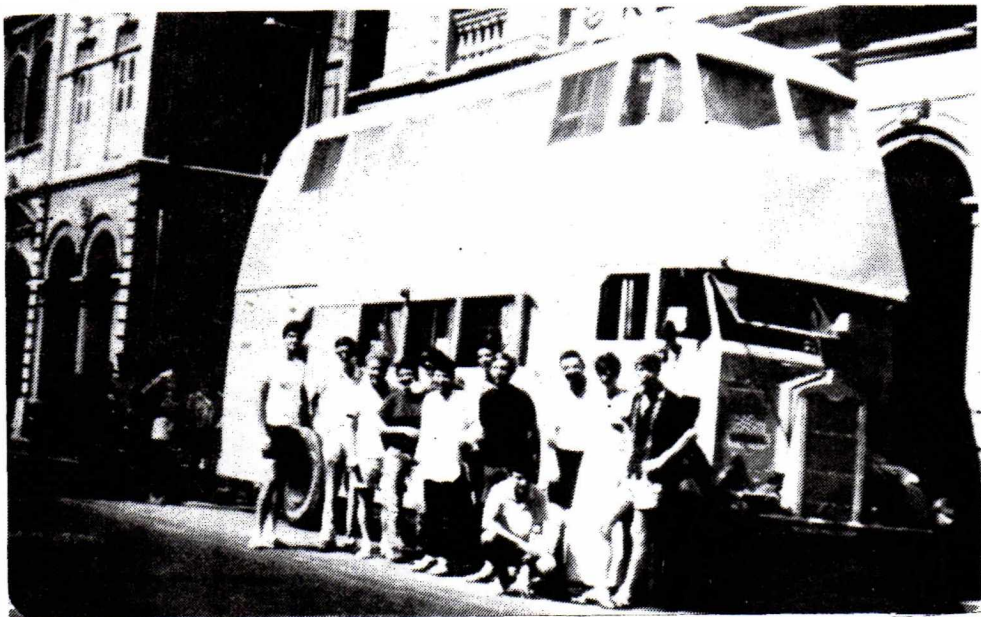
Passing through Ljubljana we stopped off to see the Grotto - the roof was 100 metres high and sloped 80 metres down to the river flowing through it. There is a meeting of two underground rivers in it - the only such then found in the world.

The bus was going great guns on the Autostrata, though we kept to 30 miles per hour. As we were going through the tollgates at Venice the engine stopped and there was an enormous hiss and a great cloud of smoke went up from the engine. We got out. There was oil everywhere and the oil filter cap had sprung straight up. The dipstick was lying on the road - the pressure had blown it out. It appeared the bearings had gone again.

We sat at a garage near the tollgate for a half day in the rain while one of us phoned Bardahl in Florence. In the meantime the two representatives of Bardahl who had met us at the Italian/Yugoslavian border and shouted us to a beautiful lunch pulled up in their car and got a quote from a mechanic in Venice - it would take ten days to fix. Bardahl wanted us in Florence by the 7th;



L to R: CHRIS GUY, JOHN BROSNAN, CHARLES and RON CLARKE



THE FULL CREW OF THE BUS, IN BOMBAY

Bardahl himself was flying in from the US for a look over their European Operations. And Bardahl were willing to give us between fifty and one hundred dollars towards the Florence detour. We said, what the hell, Bardahl may fix the engine for us - at that point we were going to dump the bus through lack of finance.

We started out on the 3rd of July and the banging got worst. The engine was giving a kind of rattling noise now. The bus was doing 35 mph on an Autostrada designed for speeds up to 140 mph! At 2 am that night (it was doing better at night - half hour driving, half hour stopping for engine cooling), going up a hill, the engine gave a deep KTHUNK and stopped. Hell! The driver let the bus coast backward to the side of the road and jumped out and chocked the rear wheels. We were so tired we trooped up to bed and went to sleep. We woke at 8 am; it was still raining. It had been raining since the Venice breakdown. We were probably the only people ever to sleep on an Autostrada. You were not supposed even to *stop* on one!

After cooking breakfast, we started the engine and drove about twenty yards when the engine seized. We waited about twenty minutes for the police who got us a tow. The tow was thirty kilometres and cost 50,000 lira - \$83!

When we started being towed we went about 8 kph and stopped at a garage where we met the Bardahl rep. again. (The other rep. had stayed with us on the bus as an interpreter.) The man with the car took myself and two others to Florence to see the boss. He heard us out, gave us 50,000 lira and threw us a table lunch (chicken, spaghetti, etc.), and then said that a tow to a garage in Florence would be arranged and the engine looked at on Monday. So we all caught a local bus back to the bus - parked about 20 km from Florence - and waited out the weekend.

At 2.30 pm on the Monday, a tow truck took us to the Bardahl factory and parked the bus at the back - being unable to get us into the local garage because of our height. Bardahl threw us another table lunch - chicken, spaghetti, fruit, etc, and went about arranging for a mechanic to look at the engine at the factory. The boss, de Bedin, had to go to Rome to meet Bardahl himself, and he left instructions for us to have lunch served at the factory.

The mechanic turned up Tuesday afternoon and took off the tappet covers and then pulled off the sump cover. At that point a whole lot of pieces of metal, springs and shafts fell out. Great. The pieces consisted of the remains of the sixth piston and the flywheel. Not the bearing, apparently. Unfortunately, the engine was of the dry-sleeve type, which meant it would take time and money to fix, if the parts were available. This *really* looked like the end for the bus. We decided to wait till Saturday when de Bedin would arrive with Bardahl with the last say.

I had a quick look around Florence. The inside of the churches make it plain that this is Europe - the sheer size of the interiors and the beautifully painted murals in the domes really are outstanding.

On Friday the 9th of July we had several visitors making offers for the bus. Apparently the grapevine works well here. The first offered 100,000 lira (\$120) and then went off to phone his mates and sew the market up. The second offer was \$80. Another of our crew left for England Thursday night, leaving us with eight on the bus and two in Rome sightseeing.

The two came back just as we were dividing up the US\$1237 of Carnet money - I had a fistful of American dollar bills, mostly ones (some of which stated they could be redeemable for gold). One of the other men left for London by train on the 12th (Sunday) and I decided that same morning to try booking for the Sunday night train to England. "Booked out" - so I booked for Monday. Forty-two dollars for a sleeper - the trip supposedly taking 24 hours - off the train at Calais and on again at Dover. I'd be getting in at Victoria Station at about 7.30 pm on the Tuesday night - with nowhere to go.

On the thirteenth of July at the Central Railway Station in Florence it was hot. It was only an

hour previously that the three of us going on the train to London - Peter Millers, David Rollison and myself - were standing by our luggage alongside the bus in the Bardahl factory grounds. We shook hands all around and then helped Peter load the fifteen pieces of luggage (we were taking Chris and his fiancée's bags with us as they were going to drive to England on the Yamaha motor cycle). Peter went off with the first small fiat, packed to the roof with suitcases and David and I walked to the bus-stop.

A couple of minutes before the bus was due two of the crew and a gaggle of Australian women who were staying at the bus for several days, turned up. We said goodbye and, after the women kissed us farewell (Australians really stick together overseas...) we left them standing in the sun by the bus-stop.

When we arrived at the railway station after the usual lurching ride, Peter, Chris and Elaine had already unpacked the car. We set out to carry the bags halfway down the platform. The train would be in Florence only ten minutes and we had no intention of missing it. We then sat down and waited. The train arrived some half minute before Peter returned from a nearby shop with some cordial for the trip. Our carriages being (we found) at the far end of the train, we grabbed all the luggage we could carry and hurried up to the door of our carriage and pushed the suitcases through it madly, then clambered on. Puffing, we waved to Chris and Elaine as the diesel-electric engine pulled the train smoothly out. Soon we were cruising at about seventy miles-per-hour through the Italian countryside.

Stacking all the heavier bags and suitcases in the narrow corridor, Peter and David found our compartment and stuffed some of the smaller bags into the luggage racks between the suitcases of the other occupants already there. They hadn't left much room for us. We then moved our heavy baggage up the corridor closer to our compartment and settle down.

Italy being one hour behind Standard European Time, it did not start getting dark till around nine thirty - and that was when our troubles started. The guard came into the compartment to make up the Sleepers for the night. This necessitated letting down the Sleeping bunks. Unfortunately most of the luggage was stacked on these. Another problem was that there were six people in the compartment - and only five Sleepers. The guard thought about this for a while and then told us that there was an empty carriage a few cars down that a travel agent had not taken the option on. He suggested that one of us go there with our luggage and stay there the rest of the trip. David lost out and we carried the luggage to the empty carriage. After dumping the lot in one compartment we looked at each other. Why not?

David elected to say in the compartment with the bags and Peter and I took the adjoining one. The carriage was Third Class and had folding car-type seats. We unfolded them and, after spreading out sleeping bags, switched off the lights and settled down.

The train roared through a miles-long tunnel and into Switzerland. After some gazing at the well lit villages and black etched mountains I attempted to get some sleep. I probably dozed about two hours that night. Some two hours after we put the seats down the sliding door to the compartment was flung open and light dazzled us. Through my bleary eyes I could make out a bloke in uniform peering in.

"Tickets?" he asked and muttered something unintelligible.

"Passports!" he repeated.

I was fumbling for my passport when he asked,

"Nationality?"

"Australian", Peter replied.

"O.K." the officer said, and slammed the door shut. I threw the proffered passport and ticket I had dug out back into my suitcase. This happened several times during the night, or near variations of it; one such exchange consisted of:

Officer: "British?"

Me: "Australian."

- SLAM! -

We "woke" at about 4 am as the train rattled through a freezing German dawn. At least, we presumed it was German. After spending a thirsty night drinking water from taps marked NOT DRINKING WATER after adding water purifying tablets left over from India, we were glad to get a "Continental" breakfast of tea and pastry shortly before Calais. David paid for his in US dollars. It cost him 50c. Peter and I paid in our last Lira. It cost *us* the equivalent of 25c. *Moral*: don't pay in US dollars unless on the Black Market or in a bank. And when you *do* - count your change!

The train pulled into Calais and we piled out. It took us three minutes to unload our luggage. It took thirty seconds to shove it back on again when we found that we were supposed to get off at the *next* stop - Calais Harbour.

Eventually we started across the Channel in driving rain. We passed through Immigration and there, through the rain, saw the Grey Cliffs of Dover.

We landed in England on the Fourteenth of July, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy, at four in the afternoon, exactly four months after leaving Sydney and Australian soil.

Customs were no problem to us and we caught the train for London and arrived at Victoria Station at 7.30 pm. Placing our bags in Left Luggage we enquired at Tourist Information at the station about accommodation and a room was booked for us in a hotel in Paddington. We found our way there on the Underground, signed in and went and had a steak at a nearby restaurant.

The following morning we woke to rain, but by the time we had had our breakfast it had stopped, though it was windy. After sending a telegram to Gosport (near Portsmouth) where we were to be boarded by some of Chris's relatives (none of us had close relatives in the UK) saying we would be there that afternoon, we spent the remainder of the morning looking around London. We didn't see much - mostly the Thames banks and the Houses of Parliament (from the outside). We left for Gosport on the three-thirty train and arrived at Portsmouth Harbour at five o'clock. After staggering down to the small ferry with our bags in a giant railway baggage cart, which almost proved too much for us on the steep causeway, we boarded the ferry and then caught a taxi to the Hoods, whose place I would use as a base for the next two-and-a-half months.

The following week passed quickly and consisted of lazing around the house and short jaunts into the local High Street. I was spending most of my time and having meals with the Hoods and sleeping at her niece's. The things that struck me most about English houses was the sameness: identical structures stretching for miles. The only good thing was that you knew where the bathroom was. It was during this first week of convalescence that I visited HMS Victory, which was in drydock at Portsmouth Harbour.

Shortly I decided to see a little more of London and conduct some business at Australia House. Leaving David at Gosport, I journeyed by train to London. At the time I did not have John Brosnan's address and I found a card waiting for me at Australia House from him. I called in to the Commonwealth Savings Bank a block away from the House, pickup up my passbook and withdrew some money.

I spent that night in a rented room at Kensington and the following morning I walked around London and at 5 o'clock called in at John's Earls Court flat. I found him in his bed/sitting room.

Now, that flat was something. It measured some ten feet by seven feet by eleven feet high. Along the main wall was his bed, which, because it had a large paper-stuffed hole in the middle, had two mattresses to minimise the agony. At its base was his "cabinet", which consisted of a wooden shelf some seven feet off the floor, tacked to which was a heavy curtain which formed the door and one side of his cabinet (the other two sides were formed by the walls). In the bottom of this John kept his electric stove/oven. This device had a number of applications, from boiling water for coffee to making toast - all on the versatile hotplate. On the opposite side near the window was a white enamel washbasin with two taps - the hot water one was a dummy. Bolted above the sink was a small electric hot water unit with a red light which winked on when the hot water was turned on. Very efficient. The sink was attached to a permanently closed door - the other side of which was another flat. The thinness of the door was testified to by the sounds (mostly groans, shrieks and giggles) which issued forth during the later part of the night.

Alongside the sink was a rickety wooden cupboard crammed with jars of coffee, biscuits, sliced bread and half empty evaporated milk cans. Strewn over the top were film and sf magazines on which rested plates and empty cups with dregs of coffee in the bottom. These usually piled up until John or myself decided to have another cup of Nescafe, when they got a quick rinsing out and a wipe around with the peculiarly coloured dishcloth (a kind of yellowish-grey) to get the encrusted sugar out of the bottom. Next to *that* was another shelved box filled with books - mostly paperbacks among the pots and larger dinner crockery. These two cupboards did not leave much room along that wall. On opening, the door (on the back of which was hung John's US Army combat jacket with added hippy scrollwork) missed the corner of the nearer cupboard by about 1/32 of an inch at the most. When John was seated on his bed cooking, he couldn't open the door.

The two of us naturally had a good chinwag about the happenings since John had left up and the Bus in Salonika and we later went out to dinner at the *Golden Egg* - a relatively cheap (for Earl's Court) restaurant in Earl's Court Road. I found that a good, cheap and filling meal in London consisted of an omelet of some description followed by apple pie and a cup of (naturally) tea. After dinner we were walking down Earl's Court Road to a wineshop when I bumped into a girl who lives two houses up on the opposite side of the road from me in Normanhurst! She was in England for her sister's wedding (whose new husband, three months later, fell off a cliff in Devon and was killed).

On returning to John's flat with the wine, it being dark, John turned on the ceiling light. The room was lit with a lurid red glow.

"The previous occupant put it in," John explained to me. There was a swivel light on a wobbly extension-arm over the head of his bed that was the more normal white light.

"Probably suits the neighbourhood," I observed, grinning.

After about 2.30 pm when we had exhausted for the moment our various travel experiences and I had drunk three cups of coffee (very good coffee, too) and John half a bottle of wine, we prepared for the night's repose. John pulled off the top mattress on his bed and placed it on the floor alongside his bed. He then handed me a sheet and a couple of blankets which I placed on the mattress, which filled all the floor space in the flat, leaving just enough space near the door to squeeze out through the partly opened door if one stood in the corner near the leading edge prior to opening it. For three pounds a week it wasn't bad for one person in Earl's Court, which is practically in the centre of London and *was* of the activity.

The following day being Saturday John was off work and we decided to do a wander around the Sights. We had risen too late for the Changing of the Guard (I never *did* get around to seeing that) so we went to the Post Office Tower instead. Then we saw Piccadilly Circus, Carnaby Street, Soho and the sf bookshop *Dark They Were, And Golden Eyed*, which had the biggest overall selection of sf

and fantasy of any bookshop I had then seen. Too bad it was raining most of the day.

I returned to Gosport on the Sunday afternoon and spent the next week resting up and wrote several letters to fans in England. I received two replies - from Beryl and Archie Mercer and one from Mary Reed (now Legg), saying that if I came near them in my travels, to visit them.

It was at this time that I decided to get on with seeing the rest of the British Isles. I decided to make my way around Scotland and back to London. I penned a reply to the Archer's letter, thanking them and saying that I would accept their offer. Mary Reed had invited me to a meeting of the Hertsfordshire S.F. Group and I decided to attend before going north. The meeting was to take place on a Saturday morning through till Sunday. I arrived at John's flat on the Friday night, as he had offered his flat as accommodation when I was in London, and asked him did he want to go and meet them. John replied in the affirmative and we set out by train from Kings Cross Station on the Saturday morning.

John and I arrived well before the proposed commencement of the meeting and gave the couple in whose house it was to be held a hand in carrying the provisions they had bought, back to the house. The fans began to drift in about ten o'clock in the morning and there was the usual crisscross of lively group talk. Throughout the following day and night the blonde three year old daughter of the couple would wander in wearing a shift which came down to her navel and nothing else, and would climb onto my knee clutching her teddy bear.

The discussions and talking went from ten on the Saturday morning, right through till eleven the following Sunday morning, punctuated by such things as mowing and raking the back lawn. John and I thanked and said goodbye to the fans who were awake and, stepping over those who weren't, we left for London.

I rang Beryl Mercer at her work number in Bristol and she arranged to meet me on the Friday afternoon at Temple Head Station in Bristol (John having to work). Beryl was at the station to meet me and, after examining the flag glued on the flap of my blue haversack to ensure it was Australian, she escorted me to their flat where she introduced me to Archie, who was waiting.

In the following two days I saw much more of England than I had previously. On the Saturday we spent a quiet day talking about various topics of mutual interest and I remarked that fans all over the world were the same in their interests, including hospitality. Peter Roberts came over that evening and we had some interesting things to say about HEICON, that year's World Convention in Heidelberg, and Australia's proposed Rule changes and '75 bid.

Archie had won a red Austin 1100 in a raffle ("proves that people do win them!" commented Beryl) and on the Sunday the four of us set out to see the Grandeur than is South West England. During the course of the day we visited (and walked through) the ancient druid works of Stonehenge and Avebury (at the time Stonehenge had not been cordoned off) and I took some excellent movie film. Fighting our way back to the car through the crowds of German tourists and flies we drove on to Bath, where we visited the famed Roman Baths and drank of the warm mineral waters still flowing from the hot springs under the edifice.

The Mercers showed me the most wonderful hospitality and I thanked them again for their spontaneity of offering help.

I bid farewell to the Mercers on the Monday morning only to have Beryl return fifteen minutes later to tell me that there was a bus strike on. She phoned for a taxi and we waited. And waited. Eventually she persuaded the owner of the shop underneath their flat to drive us to the station. I missed the first train to Glasgow and also, because of it, two other connections.

The train pulled into the main railway station in Glasgow at five o'clock. I staggered out of the station to the taxi stand with the pack on my back getting heavier with every step I took. I joined the

queue and rested the pack and encased movie camera on the footpath. When I eventually reached the taxi stand I gave the address of the local Youth Hostel to the cabbie and sank wearily onto the opulent back seat. Glasgow cabs are the same type as London ones.

The cab dropped me at the door of the Scottish Youth Hostel Association, which when I asked for a bed at the desk, was full up, sorry. Seems that it was the hitch-hiking season. I was directed to the "overflow" hostel, which address was some half mile away. The flat number given was the top flat of a five story block. A German woman appeared at the door and asked me to wait, on hearing of my state. The hostel itself was a further quarter mile on, and she was just finishing dinner.

By the time we set out for the hostel there were three other hikers who had come puffing up the steep stairs and we followed the woman to the actual "hostel", which was three rooms on the fourth floor of an old building some two miles from the centre of Glasgow. There were no beds in the rooms, though mattresses on the floor served as substitutes. Unfortunately for us they were all occupied. The woman told us to pick a piece of floor and handed out blankets. I chose a corner near the door of one of the rooms and, letting my pack drop, sat down on the blanket and rubbed some circulation back into my shoulders where the straps had cut in (there was no padding on the straps). I had not brought my sleeping bag with me as it was rather bulky and I was travelling as light as possible.

I was advised where I could get something to eat and, after finishing the fish and chips I returned to the rooms and lay down on the blanket with an old pillow under my head and my waterproof ex NATO combat jacket spread over me. I slept surprisingly well. The next morning I walked around Glasgow and through the main shopping centre. There were several tours advertised and I booked on a coach tour of the Lochs and Trossacks for the following day.

The tour was well worth the fifteen shillings it cost, as we spent the full day driving around the thirteen Lochs - which included Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond. During that day I saw some of the most beautiful countryside I had ever seen in the world. The next day I booked an express coach to Edinburgh, where although I arrived in the late morning, was very misty. In fact, Edinburgh Castle was shrouded in mist from the lower battlements up.

I left my pack in the Left Luggage at the railway station and walked around the town and climbed up to the castle, though I didn't go in. I decided to leave my pack at the railway station and take only my movie camera and coat to the hostel. I arrived there as it opened, at four pm. There was a queue of some fifty people waiting outside, which I joined. It was announced just as I reached the booking window that the hostel did not have any beds left. A map of the overflow hostel was handed out to each person still waiting.

The youth standing behind me was German and he said that he had stayed there some years previously and that there was plenty of bunks. An Australian motorcyclist went on ahead and we walked. When we arrived we found that the bunks were all taken but we were allowed the usual floor space. I wondered if I would ever get used to sleeping on a bed again!

I was to be on the train the next morning to London, as there did not appear to be all that much to see around Edinburgh. I walked over the castle in the morning and marvelled, as had thousands of others, at the austere appearance and at the great gun Mons Meg, with its two-foot diameter stone cannon balls. On the way back to the station I bought myself as a treat a pair of zip sided boots for 79 shillings and 11 pence. They had a thin padding inside of nylon coated foam plastic. Great for winter wear. Dress boots, of course.

The train did not take long to reach London and I called in on John again. During the next two days I visited the Tower of London, Trafalger Square and saw the Horse Guards. There was a Globe Tavern sf meeting scheduled for the last night and I went to that. It was a pre-HEICON meeting for fans, and I saw John Brunner, Mike Moorcock, Larry Niven, Astrid Anderson and Ted Tubb among the fans gathered there.

Having some plans for buying a cheap car and, after going to HEICON, doing a tour of the Continent, I asked around for interested persons. I had had a letter from Peter Roberts saying he would like to go, and a friend of the Aussie girl whom I met in Earls Court said he would not mind going as far as Germany. No-one else was really interested.

I returned to Gosport and began looking for a car. I missed a van which went for 50 pounds. A friend of one of the women living opposite heard that Chris had bought a car for 95 pounds and exclaimed that he could have had her old one for 30 pounds. I took her up on it and found myself in possession of a 1960 Ford Anglia 105E.

Peter Millers left for Sydney by air a day before I left for the Continent. I picked up Peter Roberts at Southampton and proceeded to Dover and picked up the third man. We only waited two hours to catch the 9.30 pm ferry and arrived at Ostende at 10.45 pm. After some discussion we decided to get out into the countryside before stopping for the night. As it was raining, we did not stop till we were well into the Netherlands. We ended up in a field some four miles after crossing the Belgium border at 2 am. I had a few hours of fitful sleep before starting off at 5 am. We drove through and around Amsterdam and in the afternoon crossed into West Germany. We searched for two hours for a Youth hostel, in a small German town, which was crowded with swarms of school children, who ran around shouting for half the night.

On the twentieth we reached Heidelberg, having dropped our third passenger off at Frankfurt.

Heidelberg is situated a couple of miles up the Neckar river valley from its junction with the Rhine. I drove around trying to locate the Town Hall; Peter asked two people in German for directions to it and they replied: "Ah, the HEICON!" Eventually we found it and attempted to register - and struck the only real note of disorganisation at HEICON. I saw an Australian fan, Robin Johnson in the queue ahead of me. He mentioned that he had a hotel room relatively close by and that I could use it if I weren't found out (this was what I had hoped to find - accommodation). Peter, in the meanwhile, had found some of his English friends who had tandemed as far as Luxemburg before breaking down and who were staying at the local camping ground.

The Registration closed when only about half the people who were lined up had registered and there were naturally some disgruntled people. The events of the Convention have been told many times and I have no intention of going into it exhaustively.

In the ensuing days I met or saw more of authors and fans than I actually thought I would. These included Ethel Lindsey, Bob Silverberg, James Blish, John Brunner, John W. Campbell Jr, Jack Vance, Forrest J. Ackerman, Walter Ernsting, Elliot Shorter, Larry Niven, Poul Anderson, Ted Tubb, John Carnell, David Kyle, Frank & Anne Dietz and countless others. One of the highlights of the Convention was, I thought, the Bavarian Night, which gave a real air of joviality to the whole evening. I really enjoyed myself at that convention.

It was in Germany that my money really began to run out. Buying the car (30 pounds) and getting it and myself across the Channel brought my cash dangerously low. I discussed this with Peter Roberts, as he had expressed interest in coming with me around the Continent and sharing costs would cut petrol money. I had intended driving up from Heidelberg through to Denmark and visit Copenhagen, then down along the East German border and through Austria to Italy, down the East coast, across to Napoli, up the West coast, through Geneva in Switzerland and then to Luxemburg and Belgium to Ostende.

Peter offered to pay for the petrol used by the car, but his cash was limited also.

We decided to eliminate Denmark as a visiting spot as it would actually mean driving a thousand miles out of our main area of travel - five hundred miles to there from Heidelberg and five hundred miles back, almost retracing the route taken to get there. Instead we decided to do the

second stage - through Austria and Italy.

Leaving Heidelberg on the 24th of August we drove through Germany to Switzerland via Bern and on through Zurich. We reached the pocket-handkerchief state of Liechtenstein in the late afternoon and drove on into Austria looking for a Youth Hostel. We crossed Liechtenstein in fifteen minutes and then crisscrossed the Austrian town until, by the process of elimination ("It's five miles on...", "It's a mile back..." "It's three miles up that side road..." etc ad nauseam) we found the Hostel as it was darkling.

We had purchased a loaf of sliced brown bread in a "supermarket" in the town and we took out our usual cheese and tomatoes and made sandwiches. The bread was stale and was like old thick tire tube rubber. In the morning we had a Continental type breakfast - supplied by the Hostel - of jam and coffee and bread. Brown bread. It was fresh, though. And tasted like thick sponge rubber. At least one could swallow it, which was more than we could do with the stuff we attempted to eat for dinner the previous evening - which we had ended up throwing out. And nearly up.

The next morning we crossed back into Liechtenstein and looked over its capital and continued on into Italy that afternoon. We visited the outskirts of Venice the following day (after a peaceful night off the side of the road) - but there was some sort of festival on and the traffic was so heavy the police were waving away vehicles ten kilometres out on the main roads - and sitting for hours in boiling heat in a jam of cars inching forward. I gave it up as a bad joke and we continued south, though not before getting trapped between the barriers on a level crossing in the car with a train coming (and it went through, too).

We reached San Marino (another small State) late that afternoon and after the car struggled pinging up the 45 degree slope to the tip of the mountain the capital and castle were perched on, we looked it over with a nonchalant air. Chiefly because we did not have any Italian Lira and we had had to hand in one of our petrol coupons to pay for the parking fee, the change from which we promptly spent on postcards and stamps.

We camped out that night in what we thought was a deserted field. It turned out to be a road used, at infrequent intervals, by cars. Their headlights would be visible at least twenty minutes before the car came into view. We managed to change some money the next morning - the first time since crossing the Netherlands/West German border. Deuchmarks saw us as far as Austria and we had bread, tomatoes and cheese with us as well as petrol coupons (which the traveller had to purchase at the border of the country which they were to be used them in). I had bought a one burner portable gas stove in England for 34/- which went on liquid gas cylinders. We used this for boiling water for coffee - which I had also bought from England. Coffee was really expensive in Europe - a cup of coffee in Belgium cost A17c.

It took several days of constant driving to reach Naples but early one afternoon we pulled into a parking space in the City. Shadowed by a Vesuvius wreathed in haze we looked upon Pompeii. To get in to see the ancient city cost us 150 Lira (about 25c), which was cheap, considering that entrance to the Vatican would cost us 500 Lira.

The most noticeable thing about Pompeii and the evacuations, apart from the obvious lack of continuing restorative work (there were small bushes and scraggly trees growing wild in the exhumed courtyards) was the sheer size of the city. The sunken streets run for miles straight through the crumbling ruins. Which one appreciates when trudging down them in the dust and blistering sun. The fact that my left ankle was sending jabs of pain up my leg each time I placed my full weight on it did not help much, either.

Pompeii is well worth visiting. It has, along with several other places I have visited, a certain fey atmosphere. There are several exhumed natives in glass cases and the expression of agony on the face of one such figure is really gruesome. Another female body has the lower part of its right foot snapped off and the white bone protruding from the middle is a grisly proof that this grotesquely

twisted grey shape had once been a living woman.

We attempted to drive to the top of Vesuvius but took the wrong road. It was only when the car was nearly stalling crawling up a precipitous cobbled lane in first gear, that we gave up. On the way down we stopped and picked up some small pieces of lava before passing back to Pompeii through the back streets of Naples in pouring rain, and set out for Rome.

Reaching the Eternal City in early morning we called in at the Vatican, but the Pope was not in to receive us. Successfully hiding our vast disappointment we did, however, wander through the maze of branching corridors and halls and wondered at the immensity, the intricateness, the futility of it all.

Pisa we entered on the 1st of September and spent a leisurely few hours walking around the famous tower and church. Peter took various snapshots - my movie film had run out in the Vatican and I had no money to purchase any extra.

We reached the Italian officials at the Italian/French border at 9 o'clock on a starless night. We were waved through after the Italians had ascertained we had no petrol coupons and we camped for the night on a small plateau some quarter mile wide in sight of the French Customs and Immigration further up the mountain pass. The next morning was freezing at 4 am when we started off. The battery was starting to play up and while Peter knocked at the loose terminal with a heavy spanner I pushed the starter button. After the fifth attempt the engine started. We were waved through the French border by an official standing in a glassed-in guard room with his elbows pressed to his sides for warmth.

Figuring that Paris would be a little too hectic for us in the car as it was, we bypassed the French capital and headed for Calais. Fifty miles from Calais the engine suffered a sudden loss of power. We had been in a half-hour-long traffic jam and we thought the engine may have overheated. The power loss continued all the way to Calais. We boarded the ferry to Dover with no further trouble and passed through British Customs and Immigration. I kept a straight face when the Customs asked if I had anything to declare and get through without a search. The Immigration officer had a silly grin on his face after he had looked at my passport and checked a notebook when he asked how long did I intend staying in the UK. I babbled something about being booked on a ship sailing at the end of the month and he let us through. Peculiar people, these English.

The original battery had given out and I had to purchase a new one for £4-15-0. I set out and reached Gosport safely some eight days after arriving in Bristol, during which visit I saw the Mercers again and said farewell. I cleaned up the car and while doing so I cleared out the carburetor, in which I found a bird feather! This is what had been causing the loss of power all the way back though France.

I had booked and paid for a cabin on the Shaw Savill Line ship Arawa before setting out for the Continent - for which I was glad, the way my money was spent so fast there. I was down to my last 8 pounds and it was then two weeks till the ship sailed for Sydney. I had packed my heaviest items into a seaman's duffle bag and into a army hold-all which I had taken to London to an agent to be forwarded to the ship in London, as I had no intention of hauling three heavy bags around London Docks on departure day.

The Arawa was scheduled to depart on Wednesday the 30th of September. I had placed two advertisements in the Gosport Evening News in an endeavour to sell the car. The first one went in on a Thursday night. I had asked £50 for the car and I got eight callers who, when they heard of the rust, said "forget it". The second advert I asked £45 and it went in the following Friday. There was no response at all. I took the third advert to the paper on the Monday for inclusion in Wednesday's edition - the day the ship was leaving. That afternoon there came a circular saying that the sailing would be delayed until the Saturday and that it would sail from Southampton - which was a mere twenty miles away! This news effectively wiped out my planned three days in London prior to a London sailing. I wrote to John Brosnan thanking him for his hospitality and explaining the change in

plans. The luggage previously sent to London, I was informed, would be sent to the ship in Southampton.

I had asked for £35 for the car in the third advert (£30 for the car and £5 for the new battery). I got at least sixteen phone call and four callers. The first caller bought it. At least I got my money back.

Saturday the 3rd of October dawned bright and sunny. Chris Guy and his fiancé drove me and my remaining baggage to the wharf where I boarded the Arawa at 10 in the morning. It eventuated that the ship did not sail till 6 o'clock the Sunday evening, so I settle down in a deck-chair and re-read THE WEAPON MAKERS. Which is what I did a lot of on the voyage (I didn't have many books...)

The Arawa was what one would call a medium sized passenger/cargo ship of 18,000 tons, carrying about 570 pax and 276 crew.

The passage was rough for the first four days and the weather blustery. Life settled down to eating, sleeping, reading and dozing on deck and in the cabin. Every four to five days a movie would be shown to a packed lounge. It sounds like a good idea for a rest - it ought to be, at £245 for a little more than a month at sea. The food was well cooked and varied but the service was pretty lousy. The first two courses took twenty minutes to serve. And they were only soup and fish!

The first port of call was Bridgetown, Barbados, and I had a taste again of high humidity and high temperatures. A friendly island and people.

I managed to sprain my left foot a few days after leaving Southampton, going down a ladder. I felt something tear and, though it was took five days of careful walking before the twinges slowly faded away, the sharp pain that I developed after taking long walks was gone. Time flows differently on board ship. Days are twenty-four-and-a-half to twenty five hours long.

The next port of call was Willemsted on Curacao - Dutch Anchilles. The same heat and humidity. Caribbean style houses and gaily dressed people. Cleaner streets than Bridgetown but the natives seemingly less friendly. American presence was noted by the high prices (quoted in US dollars) and the big American cars. I bought several accessories for my Canon 814 movie camera. Curacao is a major ship bunkering port and we spent five hours ashore whilst the ship was refueled.

Balboa, on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal, was our next stop. The Canal itself was something - it reminded me more of a river than a canal. It took eight hours to steam through it. We passed an RN frigate going the opposite way and the sailors lining the deck of the warship cheered as we swept past.

Balboa was a very commercialized city and very Americanised. It's streets were narrow and dirty. Whilst in a duty-free shop a flash thunderstorm with torrential rain kept us inside for an hour. There was not much activity that night and the ship sailed without anyone being left behind.

The second day out of Balboa a male passenger of 82 collapsed and died. He was buried at sea early the following morning.

We crossed the Equator on the 21st of October. The "Crossing the Line" ceremony was held at 2.30 pm that afternoon. The impression it left me with was very fragmentary. I have memories of buckets of white liquid being splattered over bystanders as well as participants (who were in swimsuits). Waves of water were periodically flung up from the pool as Neptune's Court consigned victims to the deep. There were shrill screams from a bosomy girl when tomato sauce was poured into the bottom half of her bikini. All in all a farce enjoyed by everyone present. Several days later there was a Fancy Dress Party. Two winners were a man and his partner in a bed ("Bedtime Story") and another man dressed up as "Randy Mice Davies". He was a real hit with the boys.

When we reached Tahiti it was raining. Papeete was conspicuously commercialized. I went on a three hour tour of some of the island's highlights, which included a fruit dish and a bevy of Tahitian hula dances for £2-0-0 (the dance was, that is). It was drearily overcast during our entire stay, though when I spent the afternoon walking around the city the colourful shops and markets brightened it up considerably.

The bad weather continued all the way to Sydney, and as the sun rose spirits fell until the ship came closer to the shoreline. The entire coast was grey with overcast - except for the towers of Sydney city, which were illuminated by a great beam of sunlight. They sat glowing like an enormous jewel.

I had lost a stone in weight (I was nine stone when I left Sydney) getting to England and on the ship I put it back on. All in all I had spent eight months travelling overland to England, driving around Europe and coming back on the ship. The whole trip cost me A\$2,000. At the time I called it an "Experience" and was glad to be back home. Much of the trip was like a dream and even now, twenty years later, it still seems that way. I am glad I did it - it was part of maturing - and because of events in the countries we drove through it will be years, if ever, before such a trip could be done safely again.

- Ron Clarke.





BALLOONS OVER MARS

there,
when I was ten
I asked a gang
of construction workers
what they were building

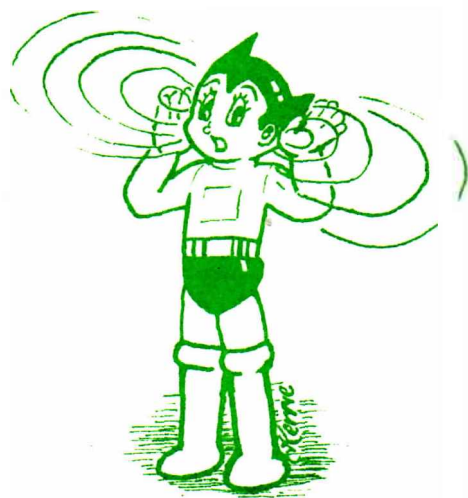
they told me
the launchpad for
a spaceship project

now,
everytime I pass
this auto-showroom
I see giant spacecraft
straining against the
gravity

like the power
of dream and myth
straining against
this drabness

- Andrew Darlington

The R. & R. Dept.



PAMELA BOAL, 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights

Oh dear, betime I'm well enough to do justice to the excellent issue of THE MENTOR (#67) which arrived today comments would be hopelessly dated. I must just comment that the standard of writing in THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM and in THE JOURNAL is the highest (in my seldom humble opinion) yet. Though I feel sure I have read THE JOURNAL elsewhere? I can't manage more comment as I'm recovering from my holiday.

Having enjoyed a weeks cruising on the Thames we tried the same thing on the Norfolk broads. Unfortunately we misinterpreted the specifications of the boat (not that there were others available betime we booked up) there was no space to set up my wheel chair and the saloon bunk bench had no back support. So a weeks intense physical discomfort ensued and from where I mostly had to stay (in my suffocatingly hot cabin, sort of propped up on the plastic covered bunk) all I could see were reeds. Then the change of diet, or something, caused a severe stomach upset leaving me too weak to climb on and of the boat, which was difficult enough from the beginning as the shape of the deck well made it hard for Derek to help me.

Not that my experience should put even reasonably fit people off taking such a trip. From what I did see and from what Derek and our friends who went with us say the pubs are all great, everything is so clean and the people so pleasant. For nature lovers and those with an interest in architecture there is much to see.

For me though it means that I'm desperately trying to catch up with a backlog of mail in between periods of utter fatigue.

RICHARD BRANDT, 4740 N. Mesa #111, El Paso, TX 79912, USA.

...Congratulations on enduring (perhaps prevailing) through to your 25th anniversary. (Before commenting on 67, a response to a remark of yours in 66 that I never managed to fire off to you: Poul Anderson's TAU ZERO did not, alas, win the Hugo award, although it was nominated.)

Ian Lennie's THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM is head and shoulders (ahem) above the other fiction this issue. At first blush it seems straight-out fantasy, despite all the rigorous extrapolation of Chris's predicament, since there's no explanation of his fantastic circumstances. However, at story's end, Ian has postulated an evolutionary motive for the happenings, which lifts this piece into the rarefied realms of science fantasy, at least.

Then, on the other hand, we have Margaret Pearce's THE JOURNAL - this might be taken as a flat-out parody of Well's assumptions, since the narrator is so narrow-blinkered, bleedingly dim - with all the heavy-handed foreshadowing, Margaret couldn't possibly expect anything in the story to come as a surprise, could she? Her hero persists long enough to make one wonder. Lorraine Cormack's story, I wager, left the readership expressing a collective 'Huh?'

One wonders at John Tipper's qualifications to judge the current crop of sf and fantasy books,

since he seems to claim to have stopped picking up anything new some years ago. In any case, one might assure him that some contemporary fantasy writers put a great deal of research into their work, particularly those who hope to realize a plausible historical setting. John's feelings for the genre are a bundle of contradictions; he's willing enough to "excuse" the old pulp pioneers for flouting research, and the Fifties films he's so fond of were certainly no models of scientific rigor. He doesn't mind works whose first purpose is entertainment, so what the hell? (Good write-up on Hammett and the flicks, though. Speaking of movies, *THE DARK CRYSTAL* and *WILLOW* are recent fantasy movies that have made a tidy profit, even if the latter wasn't the critical and financial megahit that its producers must have hoped. If John wants to look at fantasy movies that have reaped monstrous profits, though, how about the three Indiana Jones films?)

Nice nostalgic write-up on Fifties films by Glen Chapman; he might have mentioned that the forgettable script for *PROJECT MOONBASE* credits Robert Heinlein as co-author. I'd imagine sf fans find that trivia as interesting as film scholars find that pioneering German director E.A. DuPont was obviously at the end of his tether when he wound up directing *THE NEANDERTHAL MAN*.

C.F. KENNEDY, Suite 424, 280 Dundas Street East, Toronto, Canada M5A 3W1.

I should have written to you months ago as you keep faithfully sending *THE MENTOR* to me, but *DRIFT* has been unavailable for some time and I've had to resort to reading in onto tape cassettes after my printer threw the artwork out (he said). After I'd started putting the copy I could salvage onto tapes the artwork mysteriously was returned. Too late. But the tapes turned out to be only a little better in quality than this typewriter.

So here we are still puttering around with tapes, trying to have authors read their own works onto it. Of course mailing is more expensive than mailing the zine was. And right in the middle of all of this, I find an AB Dick tabletop press, same as yours... and a friend with a computer who will eventually be typing copy so *DRIFT* can return to normal.

Whatever that is.

Actually, the first press I had was a tabletop AB Dick, but it couldn't handle the blacks I needed for artwork (having only one inking roller) so I ended up selling that and buying a reconditioned 360, which has two inking rollers and sits on the ground... - Ron.

I wanted to say I think *THE MENTOR* is quite the effort - packed full of interesting notes, letters, observations and information - not to mention artwork & stories. Have you ever considered trying to obtain a grant to publish, or is Australia similar to Canada in that (mostly) only "trendy" and/or the same people keep getting the available funding? (I once tried the Canada Council concerning a grant for *THE BLOTTER*; if I remember correctly, they wanted two copies of the last 8 issues, the mailing list and the colour of my socks... it seemed at the time one had to be in a position of not needing a grant in order to get one! Anyway, it's only a thought!

I haven't really thought about it. It's only *A Way Of Life*; I don't want to be stuck with a schedule I don't want. Though I may try it when I retire... - Ron.

Instead of sending you a tape of *DRIFT* #6 or #7 (waiting on a batch of new ones to reproduce) instead I'll tell you there was little SF or fantasy in these two issues anyway. When it returns to print I hope to include more; of course this depends on submissions.

PETER BRODIE, 15/16 Waratah St, Cronulla, NSW 2230.

It's a pity that Shane Dix is a mindless neanderthalic excuse for a human who must resort to absolute vulgarities when faced with honest criticism. Then again, his childish outburst gives me a good excuse to avoid all stories and Loc's by him in the future; thus saving myself a great deal of eyestrain. Poor baby, Shane, you bruised little petal. Ron can affirm that the above comments from

me show a *great deal* of restraint.

Now onto something worthwhile. I'm quite stunned that my poor translation of an old folktale should result in Jozef Szekeres' beautiful cover and interior illo. What can I say? Domo arrigato gozaimasu, Jozef-san. Absolutely floored. I'm glad to see we're still being graced with his work. Should make a nice story when Jozef is famous. 'Yeah, I remember when he illo'd a cover for one of my pieces, etcetchbullshitbullshit....' Koff.

If John Tipper expects me to insult him then by all means. Sorry I said anything nice about your article. Write something else as equally vacuous as the previous item and I'll give it a real serving. I aim to please.

Is Grai Hughes hoping for an award for the single longest paragraph in fan writing? The HOPES OF AUTUMN sound more like the DIRGE OF WINTER. I hope Grai is comfy in her ivory tower, and that her hair shirt is keeping her so nicely, uncomfortably warm. Sigh.

As always, enjoyed the book reviews. Glad to see that a sequel to DREAMPARK is out. One of the few "good fast reads" I've had in years was the first book. Seems this sequel will be up to the standard.

Didn't think much of the fannish activities, but when do I ever? What a bunch of dorks.

Pity no one commented on the pro feel of #67. Maybe I'm just a wounded fawn seeking shelter from the vicissitudes of life, caring, but never being cared for? Sob. Sorry. Must stop reading these fantasy books.

ANDREW DARLINGTON, 44 Spa Croft Road, Teall St, Ossett, W. Yorks WF5 OHE, UK.

Congratulations on your 25th - here's to the next quarter century. Loved in particular the fine Margaret Pearce story THE JOURNAL: brilliant stuff writing past histories in new configurations. Something I've been particularly fond of recently.

This week they're rebroadcasting Jet Morgan's JOURNEY INTO SPACE (from 1954) on Radio 2 - set on the moon in 1972! Then there's Dan Dare in EAGLE ANNUAL 1953 on Mars in 1988. It's like the future came and went and no-one noticed. It's 1990; I should be exploring the jewelled jungles of Titan with the incandescent constellation of Saturn rising over the mile-high mountains of methane ice instead of here - clocking on, watching Thatcher close factories and wondering when they're going to get to me. But hey nonny-nonny-no, I'm melting in furnace heat and hells bopping in the real world.

JEAN YOUNG, RR4 Box 47, Decorah, IA 52101, USA.

It has taken me a long time to getting around to reading the copies of THE MENTOR you sent me, because they are so *massive*, and so relatively... do people still say "sercon"? Is it still a dirty word (alas - foolishly, to my way of thinking)? I didn't know there were any fanzines left that printed serious sf/fantasy by fans. I'm going to take the liberty of sending these issues on to Larry Stark, my old friend of 30+ years and erstwhile partner. He was one of the last die-hard supporters of serious stories (and other writing - and, indeed, serious artwork) in fanzines back in the days when I *was* a fan, at the old Ivory Birdbath in Cambridge.

I was most impressed with the quality of the fiction in THE MENTOR; I certainly didn't know material of this quality was being printed in the fannish press these days. I have to confess that I somehow didn't quite get the point (the joke? I'm lost) in UNDER PRESSURE. LETHE was too down-beat for my tastes. Someone in your lettercolumn accused you of preferring "undemanding reading" (which you denied); I myself admit to preferring undemanding reading, for the most part, and stories with upbeat endings. It is rather embarrassing - I "should", I suppose, be above that, if I care about Art and all that good stuff. But I'm afraid I read for escape - the grim reality of the Real World is something I have to deal with all the time, and during my reading time, my relaxing time, I *don't* want to deal with it. I'm perfectly capable of thinking up the grim possibilities of both present and future all on my own. I'm glad there are people writing works that deal with this. I just don't want to read them. I insist this is not a matter of having "intellectual blinders", of *refusal* to "face reality" (though it certainly reflects not *wanting* to "face" - that is, dwell on, without relief, some unpleasant

aspects of reality). I must want a break from time to time - in fact, I want a break when I get into LaCrosse, Wisconsin, after mail run (I make a living hauling mail from Decorah, Iowa to LaCrosse, Wisconsin and back again), around 9:30 to 11:00 pm 6 nights a week.

What a digression! In any case, I found LETHE competent but too depressing for my taste.

Jozef's portfolio shows enormous competence at drafting, though his subjects are a hair on the conventional side - lots of "adolescent male fantasy" there. He's fortunate to be able to master a variety of styles, which as one of your correspondents indicated, will surely serve him in good stead in the world of professional illustration. I particularly like the stipple on the one on page 31; though the subject was not all that strikingly original, it was a pleasing composition, and I very much liked the treatment of the ghostly ship, and the tails of the mermaidish naked ladies. I don't know enough about current sf artists to recognise copies of particular works or particular styles - someone in your lettercolumn mentioned the "sexy robot" one on p.43 as being a copy. It's certainly well-done, whatever it is. I, too, do rather like the "Alice" picture, and the wings of the Naked Lady in the fold-out.

The article on FIRST EPISTLES seemed to have generated some - mmmm, "corrective feedback" already. My own thought is that it seems easiest to scratch shapes - images, pictographs, whatever - in something soft with something a bit harder - stick, stone, whatever - than to find something which would make a mark only on the surface. In these parts, petroglyphs appear to have preceded painted pictographs by a very, very long time - petroglyphs - the ones that survive - are 1000 or so years old, I believe; known paintings on rock date after the arrival of the Europeans. Howsome e'er, earlier rock paintings may have weathered away - as may have still earlier petroglyphs. For sure, petroglyphs described in the late 1800's - perhaps a bit earlier, 1860's and 1870's - are now either gone or almost invisible except when the light is just right (and could we be imagining them? Only too easily...), where they were on exposed rock faces. Most petroglyphs here (all but the ones that I know about) are in a soft, poorly cemented sandstone, which weathers and crumbles easily, and also "spalls" off in big fat flakes, inscription and all). I know that rock is easier to carve *in* than *on* - I've tried it. So has everybody in the country, it seems, from the looks of some of the rock-faces. Anthropologists and archaeologists decry the "despoliation" of the aboriginal carvings - and so do I... But - BUT - the people who, since the 1870's up till yesterday, have carved initials and dates in "The Elephant" and other sandstone bluffs in Allamakee and Winneshiek Counties, have been doing near enough the same thing as those long-ago folk, wuncha say? Why shouldn't JR 1937 be inscribed for posterity and some future archaeologist as well as thunderbirds and fertility symbols? What about GH [heart] AC?

I enjoyed THE ALPHA EXPERIMENT, light though it was, but then, I'm lite, rite?), even though it did telegraph its ending a bit. *Of course* it was a bit "deus ex machina" - that was the whole point.

Much discussion in your lettercolumn about Means of Reproduction (all the old jokes come to mind). I have no nostalgia left for old mimeos - I do still have my old ABDick sitting rusting away in my basement. Though it might still have the potential for artwork (that was my speciality, back in the Old Days), what I remember was mostly frustration. Yes, a certain amount of pride in producing something that looked "better than the medium allowed" - but on the whole, it was a pain. I'd be delighted to take anything I do to someone to be printed. I do, in fact, use xerox for my artwork, since I don't do any one original in enough copies to make off-set financially feasible. I do hand-color everything that I attempt to sell (except - sorry - the picture notebooks), and the pens I use, one way or another, usually fix the black sufficiently to avoid rub-off.

It's interesting to see book reviews in a fanzine, too... not common these days, I think. I don't know how useful they'd be to me - I've been reading mostly mysteries lately - but who knows.

I liked THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM in TM 67 a lot. The idea struck me at the right moment, on the kinky-bone, so to speak, and the progression of events seemed fairly convincing. And I thought THE JOURNAL was a pleasant, interesting departure on a particular time-travel story; a limited sort of genre, but competent enough to hold my interest, even though there were few surprises after the first one. But then, that's the way I like them - *few* surprises. Not "NO surprises" - just "FEW surprises". I like surprise handled about the way I like spices handled - present, but with a light, very light, touch... because I'm (too?) sensitive to them to want very much.

I don't share John Tipper's nostalgia for '50's sf movies (THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL and the later FORBIDDEN PLANET are notable - and for me, only - exceptions). Likewise, early - well, earlier - sf does not strike me as better than today's. There are a few things that hold up

- some of Simak, most of Hal Clement (sort of); and there are some things that i thought were "awful but fun" when I first read them and still occasionally find fun (thought even awfuller), like the LENS MAN things. I myself *like* "heroic fantasy" (or "sword & sorcery", whatever); I regret that the current taste for them has resulted in fairly trashy (look at me judging!) ripoffs, too much "more of the same" - but I like the medium. i'm boggled by John's claim that a dragon is easier to draw than a realistic space ship. I'm not at all talented at representational drawing, but I'd certainly find it easier to draw a space-ship than a dragon - and I *like* dragons, and would *love* to be able to draw them. Castles and futuristic cities seem about the same level of difficulty... I seriously doubt that the artwork has much to do with developing the taste for fantasy. There seems to be plenty of all kinds of sf-fantasy around d- more than I'll ever read, that's for sure. I'm not exactly *quarrelling* with John's tastes - his tastes are, after all, his tastes. They just aren't mine - and it's the put-down of mine I don't care for. I don't think my taste for heroic fantasy is so much a desire to escape from a "dreadful future" (though there may be an element of that) just to escape. I like the images it uses, although I prefer my little soupcan of surprise - some little variant on the Quest for Sword, Cup or whatnot. No objections to the Quest - it's a powerful and recurrent mythic theme; I just want a little, little shading on it.

THEY LEFT seemed excessively short for its theme, and was (predictably) a bit downbeat for my taste.

Did I say I was rather taken with the cover of #67.

JULIE HAWKINS, 26 Third Ave., North Katoomba, NSW 2780.

The last issue of THE MENTOR I have is number 67. I was thoroughly enjoying THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM when I turned to page 8. Where is it?

The idea of the story was great and I was smiling as I thought of how mankind would cope with this idea, especially the greenies. It was very annoying to find a page missing, the most important page, I might add.

I read THE JOURNAL and wondered how Mr Wells would react if he saw it. I also read the article by John Tipper and have to agree that many of the older movies are better, even with their dated special effects and ideas.

As for those readers who read fantasy, I'm one. I read both fantasy and science fiction. It is true that I read fantasy as a form of escapism, especially if the book is good and I can really become involved with the characters and story. This is probably because of a subconscious yearning for adventure and a change from this everyday routine, only a psychoanalyst could probably explain it. I find that with some science fiction stories the reader has to concentrate harder and the feel of escape isn't as easy to achieve.

Many fantasy movies came to mind, LABYRINTH and WILLOW to mention two, perhaps not monetarily successful but certainly enjoyed by many. As for fantasy stories not needing research there is more to a castle than its walls and more to the type of sword used, goblins or fairies mentioned and wars fought. Celtic legends are full of stories of heroes and devils, not to mention the traditional Irish story of the Leprechaun. If a writer wants to make his story at least part way believable he must make his background authentic, unfortunately not all writers do this. I hope I have helped you with your research.

SUE THOMASON, 190 Coach Rd, Sleights, nr Whitby, North Yorks YO22 5EN, UK.

Congratulations on your 25th Anniversary issue! I was glad to read in your editorial that despite many changes you have maintained an essential continuity in THE MENTOR's purpose and content - suggests the presence of growth, maturation. I'm also delighted to know that the thing that really motivates you to continue publishing is because it's satisfying - fun - you feel it's an essentially good thing to do. Very often fanzines seem to lose their sparkle when the originators write or publish "to have something to trade with", or "to get another issue out on time". I wish you as much success, pleasure and interest with your next 25 years of THE MENTOR! On to content comments:

THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM struck me as an interesting and competently written story, well

visualised (particularly the scene where Chris-the-tree is airlifted from the gorge), logically extrapolated, and sparking an number of thought-provoking musings about the relationship of humans and trees after I'd finished reading it. My only negative criticism of the story is that I feel the first scene (Chris' dream) - although a good piece of writing in itself - clutters the story's structure. It doesn't explain Chris' transformation, nor did it focus my initial attention on the strangeness of Chris-the-tree (which was where the rest of the story firmly kept it). My preference is for metamorphosis stories in which the shock of the unfamiliar is not cushioned by attempted explanations, but simply given.

Major attention-grabber in Buck Coulson's conreports was the "oldfashioned hand-operated washing machine". If he means a dolly tub or poss-tub, I can remember my gran using one; I think some old people in this area still use them. However, the mental picture Buck's phrase conjured up for me was of a standard front-loading automatic: white metal box with porthole window at the front and a big crank handle sticking out the back... next to a treadmill-powered tumble drier...

My mother was using a gas-heated copper with a hand-wringer mounted over it in Sydney in the early 1950's... - Ron.

THE JOURNAL struck me as a neat, interesting and very readable alternative reinterpretation of Wells' vision of the future endtime, very plausible, sticking closely to wells' description, and following the conventions of "message from disappearing person" fiction.

John Tipper's article provokes me to a defense of fantasy fiction. I read both "fantasy" (hereafter F) and "science fiction" (hereafter SF) with great enjoyment, and would describe my reading preferences as for imaginative and/or non-realistic fiction, regardless of marketing genre. A number of my favourite authors have written both F and SF work: eg. Ursula Le Guin, whose earthsea trilogy (definitely F) and novels THE DISPOSSESSED and THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS (definitely SF) are among my regular re-reads. Ditto John Ford's excellent novels THE DRAGON WAITING (F) and THE FINAL REFLECTION (SF, pulp space opera, and set in the Star Trek universe to boot). My own understanding of the artificial distinction between F and SF is that in fantasy milieux, the explanation or underpinning for that which is marvelous, inspiring of awe and wonder in the book, is "it's magic", whereas in science fiction, the explanation is "it's science."

I don't agree that in *good* fantasy writing "Anything and everything goes, with logic and believability thrown out of the window". Poor quality fantasy and poor quality SF use very similar devices to cover up their deficiencies of imagination. Replace magic swords with phasers, flying carpets with spaceships, spells with technological doubletalk, and dragons with Centaurians and the books become almost identical. It's as easy/difficult to create a *plausible* rationale for FTL travel as it is for effective magic use. Good fantasy novels have backgrounds of considerable depth, complexity and coherence, just as good SF novels do. They are convincingly and movingly plotted, with believable characters and a satisfactory resolution.

In fact, I think that instead of being polar opposites, fantasy and science fiction are partly-overlapping areas in the field of imaginative fiction. I see more similarities between them - and their readers - than between, say, "crime" and "historical", two other popular genre classifications.

THEY LEFT - an eerie piece, this. Not a "story", not enough information given to construct an explanation or context for the scene described.

Can't say much about the pieces on films as I'm not a great film watcher, myself.

Artwork: I particularly liked the front cover illo, which had a pleasant, relaxed feel to it. The style reminded me of architectural drawing, in that the building and street features are the main foci of interest, followed by the trees. Then the relaxed people, a rather subdued element of the composition. The overall impression is of uncluttered space, leisurely tranquility. Does this building really exist somewhere?

MIKE DECKINGER, 649 16th Ave, San Francisco, CA 94118, USA.

I was very impressed with the longevity of THE MENTOR, and puzzled that I hadn't encountered it before, during my previous incarnation as an active fan, which would have been about

1958-1971. Following that date, I moved from the East Coast to the West Coast, became more involved in other activities, and slowly drifted away from fandom.

Nowadays I receive an occasional fanzine, invariably published by someone I never heard of, and filled with the names of complete unknowns. So while I like to keep in touch, I no longer feel any strong attachment to the fan-world.

In the early sixties I received a few Aussie fanzines on a regular basis. I was in touch with John Baxter and exchanged some long and stimulating letters with him. He sent me BUNYIP and also something from John Bangsund (I think). Whatever became of them?

I met John Baxter in the middle of 1964 and talked over the mechanisms of fanzine production. He helped me pick my first typewriter (a old office manual) and a electric Roneo mimeo, as well as giving my hints that ended up with the first issue of THE MENTOR. Another Sydney fanzine fan I met at that period who was active in the 1960s was Bob Smith, and of course, John Foyster. John Baxter went to the UK to make his fortune, Bob Smith Chaired the first Syncons (late 60's - early 1970s), John Foyster is now editing the newszine DOXY! and John Bangsund has retired to Adelaide. - Ron.

I am more than a little astonished that you are publishing a fanzine devoted to "fan-fiction", that is, fan-written science fiction. The old rule used to be that if it was good enough to be written, it should be published in the prozines, if not, then it didn't belong in print at all. This, I always felt, created too strong a demarcation between the efforts of amateurs vs. the skilled professionals. It just seems an unlikely premise to sustain a fanzine for such a length of time.

Australia doesn't have any resident prozines, and the US and UK ones are too parochial - they won't accept fiction with Australian characters. - Ron.

As I recall, most of the fan-fiction that I read (and wrote) was wretched and was printed more to fill space than exhibit a new talent.

In reference to the letter about mail delivery from R. Laurraine Tutihasi; I can recall when we received ~~two~~ mail deliveries on Saturday, during the Christmas season. The Post Office found that this was the only solution to cope with the flood of holiday-generated mail. They willingly paid the overtime costs, because it was cheaper than allowing the mail to accumulate. It's unlikely this method will ever be revived.

JOHN TIPPER, PO Box 487, Strathfield, NSW 2135.

Strike me pink, stone the crows and carry me home to die! How boring life would be, Pamela Boal, if contributors to the loc column only commented on the contents of THE MENTOR rather than "bickering about the critical comments". Where do most of you readers turn to, first? Lemme guess: The R&R Dept, surely.

Peter Brodie - has greatly disappointed me in #68. Hardly a harsh word to speak or write of about anybody. Still, I expect you'll have to put Peter's next loc in a sealed section, judging by what Shane Dix has included in his loc. Here's hoping SILENT VOICES won't be your final contribution to THE MENTOR, Shane. Writing of which, this story was a little strange but I liked it in an unexplainable way. Possibly it's a portent of things to come...

Jozef's cover in support of Peter's item is another stunner, which brings to mind criticism of Jozef's work to be found in this issue. Mike Glicksohn's passing remark "...from some minor flaws in some of the drawings..." is what I for one see as destructive criticism of the nastiest type. Just what are these "minor flaws" which you have condescended to note? I'm sure Jozef would be quite happy to take note of any constructive criticism, but exactly what is your point apart from attempting to assert some self-imagined superiority over Jozef? You may imagine yourself as being the centre of your universe, old fellow, but I doubt if anyone else does. Perhaps an injection of much-needed brain cells would instill some humility in your rickety old frame!

One of your happy souls also criticised earlier work by Peggy Ranson but I think she's quite talented. The little filler on p.41, for example, just fits the bill. Alan Stewart's DANSE MACABRE

report has to be the most comprehensive con report I've read. And, wonder of wonders, it's actually readable, unlike most other reports I read of that same event. THE KING AND SON from Mr Brodie; what can I write about this? I have to decline. As the chook flaps, he lives only forty minutes from my doorstep. Being two metres tall, weighing in at around the same avoirdupois as a brick dunny and fitted out with more hardware than most third-world countries, I don't wish to upset this wonderful fellow any more than I already have so: well done, Mr Brodie, Sir! Ron went so far as to insert two copies of your item into my issue, so he must have loved it as well.

THE HOPES OF AUTUMN seems to be saddled with an unnecessary paragraph: the first one. Apart from that, I thought this story was well-written, if a mite unexciting for my strange tastes. Do any readers collect those fridge magnets? I could relate to the couple in this story: been there, done that. James Verran's essay is very illuminating and goes a long way to explaining why this chap is going places. A clear, concise report using simple language. It should be required reading for all future writers of Worldcon reports.

Back once again to the R&R Dept. I was going to compare the temperaments of the loc writers in this issue to those of the writers in my own zine, but that's probably pretty pointless. Oh, what the hell; why not? The old-timers, the ones who drop remarks like... "15 years ago...", "I remember..." and so on, seem generally pompous, condescending and self-opinionated. None of them are what Oz fans would call "fans". They aren't writers or artists, simply sf reading socialisers who attend conventions purely for the pleasure of getting smashed in company with others who at least have something in common with themselves. No doubt they've been banned from their own local bars! Good grief, maybe Pamela had a good point. Anyway, while I do admit to having one or two loc writers who could fit the bill, most are only too happy to laugh at themselves. Criticism, personal or whatever, is welcomed with open arms. Or so it seems...

On the other hand, it's good to see Sue Cartwright welcoming criticism in her letter. I can't recall any of my loccers actually thanking people for criticising their stories. Good move, Sue. Alan, thanks for the info. Others have contacted me with information on the subject of invasions of Oz from the north, so I'll keep a lookout for books on this subject, which fascinates me. Unless it eventually happens, in which case you will find me in Tasmania. THE BEAST FROM 20000 FATHOMS in that ad didn't bear much resemblance to the movie version, either.

I agree with Terry Jeeves regarding Wodehouse. I've only one of his books, PICADILLY JIM. Any opinion of that, Terry? I always enjoy the tv adaptations of his work but again, I'm the bloke who has produced two Sherlock Homes zines without ever having read one word of Doyle's stories. They sit here on my shelves, unopened yet loved. One day, one day.

The remark I made about 2001 being a boring film was originally done to stir up some lettercol action in my own zine. I just thought I'd carry it forward, Shane, and you took the bait. I do find it boring on the box, but was quite fascinated by it on the Cinerama screen, upon which it was presented here in Sydney, over 20 years ago. The spinning bone fading into the depths of space kind of blew my mind at the time, but the film really is ponderous without the benefit of the big screen. If you want to discuss one of Kubrick's more interesting films, I nominate DR STRANGELOVE.

Mr Brodie did miss something. Ron didn't print my last short paragraph, not that I was worried. Just wouldn't want Mr Brodie to think that he was wandering in his mind. Does that explain the bang of an ending, Peter? Pamela Boal, who was mentioned earlier, gives David Tansey a hard time over his last story. I think David uses these short tales to test out scenarios he devises for far longer stories. Am I correct, David? although I didn't particularly like LETHE, Pamela's remark that she "can see no justification in the story for it's telling" leaves me scratching my head. Eh?? You'll have to excuse me for being stupid. Oh, no... another condescending dismissal of Jozef's work. Don't worry Jozef, an artist has to be dead (or living on the proceeds of their talent) before critics simply admire their work.

Coulson (I'd call you "Buck" but you haven't given me the courtesy of a first name, young fella. A charge PB will direct at me, no doubt) seems amazed that his memory was in error regarding THE ALIEN MACHINE. Just goes to prove you're not perfect, after all. Mike Glicksohn comes forth once again and seems a little peeved that someone of whom he's never heard has the hide to write an article which disagrees with his own opinions. Sorry you've never come across me before, Mike, that's your good luck. Although I like the early 50's sf movies for the reasons I outlined, it doesn't necessarily mean that I don't enjoy poking fun at them. The thing is, they were made as B movies with no pretensions of being anything special. Articles I've read in FILMFAX (the only really

good US prozine on 50's media) indicate that the makers of these movies without exception are amazed that anyone actually remembers them, let alone still gets enjoyment out of watching these oldies.

I had to laugh at your remark "... a realistic space ship is a hell of a lot easier to draw than a valid dragon...". Let me know when you come across a "valid dragon"! I should thank Glen Chapman for sending me a list of box office takings for fantasy films. Thanks, Glen. The list kind of proved my point. As for Mike's earlier statement, "Current writers are orders of magnitude better as stylists, artists, imaginers, than most old timers...", I'll just substitute your name into your earlier sentence and write: "There's no point in arguing with Mike etc, etc..." Still, fantasy has its place. I'm quite happy to flog off such material in the huckster's room at conventions. Fantasy readers are (subjectively!) more friendly, and a lot more fun than hard-core sf fans. And, they don't mind actually spending money.

MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Juju, Argentina.

THE MENTOR 66 is very elegant and interesting. I enjoyed all the stories. The portfolio by Jozef Szekeres reminds me of the work that used to appear in Bill Bowers' (and another Bill's) DOUBLEBILL, and later in Bill's OUTWORLDS. Same style and execution. I'm trying to recall the artist's name... something with "Foster" in it? Anyway, Jozef is a skilled artist, obviously, but careful to adhere to the styles expected in fanzines. His self-portrait shows him handsome, too.

Thought-provoking: Margaret Pearce's THE ALPHA EXPERIMENT. Very sad, Grai Hughes' LETHE.

Yes, as John Alderson says, scratches on bone and stone are the oldest forms that survive of human attempts to make meaningful marks. (Of course, natives know how to leave messages by the way a stick is left pointing, and they read much in a mere footprint, too.)

Terry Broome still hasn't got it right: English ~~was~~ my native language. (Father British, mother American). But my mother spoke to me simultaneously in Chinese from birth, so I was equally fluent in it all my life till leaving China. Then came Russian, (parents-in-law), Latin America's Spanish, and finally the study I began in the early 60's comparing archaic Chinese with what I found here of native tongues. (I spent a year also memorizing the roots of Arabic, for instance; and even Maori - one winter, too). Hence the muddle, maybe, if muddle it is... or just another form of seeing things?

Nice of Steve Sneyd speaking of my "amazing worldwide exedesis". I feel a tremendous responsibility towards all this material gathered, but who knows whether it will take final shape - whether I'll manage it yet. The news from the Middle East is dark indeed, and the entire world's outlook may darken, and less interest may exist in facts per-se that illuminate the realities of our beliefs and behaviour. With human survival in the balance, what counts is "better arms, etc.", not deeper understanding of why we're such fanatics in our opposing camps still. Nobody has time for that!

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

THE MENTOR 66 - Jozef Szekeres seems to have a promising strong clean line. I hope he continues to experiment and learn and will enjoy watching him progress. At the moment however he has obviously been copying and analyzing other artists styles and techniques - nothing wrong with that - the Asians and other cultures believe in learning thru copying *but* don't forget to acknowledge your sources! Remember we Elfquest readers are far outnumbered, alas. Still I hope you're enjoying Kings of the Broken Wheel!

THE MENTOR 67 - I found Ian Lennie's THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM quirky and delightful. Overall the quality of fiction continuously has improved over the years.

THE MENTOR 68 - concerning how African were the Egyptians? I'm afraid the "experts" change their minds every time they discover a new graveyard. The "golden" rule is that there was always a strong core of "Copts" in the North and the central delta and the further south you go the more African things get. We don't always know if the Africans show in Egyptian art were slaves, captives or mercenaries, etc.

Just to complicate things bear in mind there was a megalithic stone building culture in eastern Africa that made wells, terraces, etc, but not in the Egyptian style. This seems to have been disrupted by the migrations of the warrior nomads who were cattle herders. I suspect the archaeological evidence lies elsewhere, either under the sands of Nubia, now the Sudan, or up in the highlands of Ethiopia.

MARC ORTLIEB, PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Vic 3131.

I guess it'll come as no surprise to you that the piece that caught my attention (in THE MENTOR 68) was the throw-away page filler on the Ditmars on Page 3. I realize that you've been on the fringe of the National Science Fiction Conventions for a while but I hadn't realised that you'd so totally misunderstood the way the Ditmars were run which hasn't, as far as I know, changed since they were first awarded in 1969.

As for the origin of the name, I'll quote from the programme book for the 10th Australian Science Fiction Convention, held in Melbourne in 1971.

"The Australian Science Fiction Awards, or "Ditmars" were instituted at the Eighth Australian Science Fiction Convention in Melbourne, 1969, through the generosity of a prominent Melbourne fan, Dr Ditmar Jenssen."

They have always been awarded by the Committee of the National Convention - never by the Australian Science Fiction Foundation. (If you want to be picky, the committee for the 1984 NatCon was, in the most part, also the Foundation Committee but the Award was put through the standard procedures).

Let's look at your claim that "For the past twelve years or so, these awards have been awarded by fans in Melbourne." Running through that twelve years or so, one finds the following:

1978 - Unicon IV - Melbourne	1979 - Syncon '79 - Sydney
1980 - Swancon 5 - Perth	1981 - Adventon '81 - Adelaide
1982 - Tschaicon - Melbourne	1983 - Syncon '83 - Sydney
1984 - Eurekacon - Melbourne	1985 - Adventon '85 - Adelaide
1986 - Swancon II - Perth	1987 - Capcon - Canberra
1988 - Conviction - Sydney	1989 - Swancon 14 - Perth
1990 - Danse Macabre - Melbourne	

By my count that means that, over those twelve years, there were four occasions when the Ditmars were awarded in Melbourne. In fact, in the entire history of the awards, they have been presented at Melbourne Natcons eight times, in Sydney five times, in Adelaide four times, in Perth three times and in Canberra once. (There were no awards in 1974). That, though, is irrelevant, as anyone who is active in Australian fandom is permitted to nominate people or works for the ballot and any member of the national convention is permitted to vote.

Certainly the Foundation is interested in promoting the Ditmars, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with the running of them. I'm afraid you are miles out in your editorial, and I think you owe an apology to the Awards Committee for each of the non-Melbourne National Conventions at which the Ditmars were awarded.

As for your statement on the composition of the Foundation, you are closer to the truth. Currently the Foundation Board has members in Sydney and in Perth. The reason for that is that the Foundation is incorporated in Melbourne and so must comply with the local laws. Besides, the Foundation does not have the money to fly board members from every state each time it needs a quorum for a board meeting.

In order to allay your fears about the Melbourne domination of the Ditmars, I include the following - a list of nominations for the last twelve years or so. (The winners are underlined). I can't tell you the states from which each nominee comes, but I think you'll find that they reflect the degree of activity in each nominated area. In art, for instance, you'll note that Sydney has taken the award eight times, Perth once and Melbourne twice. While it's true that I have seven Ditmars, I won all of them before moving to Melbourne.

One of these days, I intend to do some more work on the raw information I have on the Australian Science Fiction Achievement Awards, and for the added impetus to do so I thank you, but I do wish you'd check your facts before holding forth. The Australian Science Fiction Awards are

Australian Awards. Even in that area you pick out - fiction, you'll note that your conspiracy theory does not hold water - looking from 1978 to the present you'll find seven to New South Wales, eleven to Victoria, two to Queensland, one to S.A. (I think) and two for which I'm not certain. Harly crushing evidence for Victorian domination!

If your contention that Melbourne fans are more likely to nominate in the fiction awards than do fans from elsewhere, then that says more about the interest of Melbourne fans in Australian sf than it does about the awards.

Well, to take some of your replies to my points in order: what you quoted from the 1971 programme book was exactly what I had said. I had thought that the idea behind the Foundation was that it would oversee the awards and make sure they were awarded properly - my mistake. My contention that Melbourne fans awarded the awards was taken from comments from fanzines at various times since the 1969 convention (primarily newszines) and in personal letters and conversations. That Melbourne fans are more active in nominations and voting is why I said the Melbourne fans gave the awards, since the ones nominating and voting say to whom the awards go. As you know the controversies re nominations and votings between 1969 and the early 1980s concerned this.

I also said that Sydney fans were more concerned with zines and clubs (the SSFF) than Melbourne fans, who tended in for different activities. I suppose Melbourne fans were more into organised *fannish* activities than Sydney. I take it you aren't saying that Melbourne fans didn't create the ASFF and are and were the driving force behind it? And who are at the moment trying to make it *the* driving and controlling force in Australian science fiction fandom?

Mark sent me ten pages listing the Diltmar's since 1969. I haven't the space here to reproduce them; however if readers want a copy, send me a SSAE and I'll send you one. - Ron.

BUCK COULSON, 2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348, USA.

Alan Stewart has a very thorough account of DANSE MACABRE, though I don't know enough Australian fans for it to mean as much to me as it does to more local readers. I liked ISOTOPIA, too, which is unusual, since most fan and pro poetry leaves me cold.

I wonder if the error in Mae Strelkov's quote from Graves was his or his publisher's? "...so short a stem as to prevent it from being spliced to admit an arrow-shaft...". One doesn't "admit" an arrowshaft to a flint point; one splits the shaft and admits the point to the shaft. Not that it matters in context. Then there is "Irish fir-tree arrow-head", since he immediately makes it clear that the arrowhead is flint. No wonder people still argue over what Graves meant; the man didn't know how to write clearly.

I particularly liked the Szekeres art on page 17.

Verran was obviously subject to over-praise of Hubbard during his workshop. "...few people remember him for his work as one of the world's most prolific and successful writers." This is mainly due to the fact that he wasn't one. During his more ethical writing career, he was regarded as a very good writer; not in a class with Heinlein or Sturgeon or Bradbury, but a good solid practitioner with some excellent novels and short stories to his credit, along with some mediocre ones. He was also no more prolific than the Kuttners, or Murray Leinster or several other writers of the period, and considerably less so than John Russell Fern or detective writer John Creasey. His "success" as a writer came after the formation of Scientology; founding a religion (or cult) in which all members are required to purchase one's books is a practically guaranteed way of becoming a successful writer.

Joe Sanders (not Saunders as Mae had it) is still working on his book about fandom. He contacted people to write various chapters, and of course, in the way of fans everywhere, some produced and some never sent anything in, so he had to get replacements for them and wait on their contribs. Then his publisher said the book was too big and he had to cut it. I expect it to appear some time before THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS, however. Joe was an Indiana fan whom we met when he was still in highschool. These days he's an English prof; and we hear from him irregularly.

The problem for non-Australians in Braddon's YEAR OF THE ANGRY RABBIT is that one needs to know more about Australia than I do before the satire is very intelligible. I was a bit disappointed because I couldn't figure out what some of it was all about.

Mike G. really does go to different cons than Juanita and I do. Lessee. This year we were at Confabulation (no alcohol), Continuity (no alcohol, as I recall), Wiscon (I'm not sure about alcohol; I don't remember any, but they may have beer), Millennicon, (no alcohol), Marcon (usually beer and hard liquor, but I think only beer this year), X-Con (no consuite alcohol, but one of the committee members has the best-stocked bar I've ever seen at a con for his private room party), Inconjunction (don't even recall the consuite; maybe beer, maybe not), Rivercon (beer, I think), and Context (no alcohol). Still to come are Ohio Valley Filk Fest (no alcohol), Windycon (beer), and Chambanacon (beer). I've seen Mike at very few of these cons, to date, and I certainly don't expect to see him at OVFF. I'll see Mike at maybe 2 or 3 cons a year, out of the dozen we attend. Stewart has a logical reason for the lack of beer at Australian cons; it's usually the smaller US conventions which don't serve liqueur or beer, though all of them do have consuites stocked with soft drinks, which are of course much cheaper.

I don't recall the stories Peter Brodie mentions, but the one about the universe-girdling spaceship sounds a lot like the stuff in the pulp AMAZING, or maybe IMAGINATION. That business of Egypt being black that Brian Earl Brown mentions is the latest bit of black propaganda in the US, which is now experiencing black racists as well as white ones. (Just what we needed...) *Name* of North Africa is black, or ever was. The people are more akin to the Arabs and other Near East peoples, except that they were never overrun by Mongols as the Near East was, and so have no Mongol genes in their ancestry. Egypt, Carthage and other early North African civilizations were probably semitic.

I swore once to not bother with Alderson's idiotic pronouncements, but what the hell. To try and make this simple enough for you to understand, John, libraries stack their collections on shelves, above ground. Burning the library causes the shelves to burn and/or collapse, depending on what the shelves are made of, and drops the clay tablets on the floor and/or ground, depending on what order floor and shelves are destroyed. Clay tablets are brittle. Falling frequently breaks them. The Nile floods annually, or did before Egypt got the big dams put in, and I assume there's some rain in any area next to the Mediterranean, even though there isn't much. Water dissolves clay tablets eventually, if they aren't preserved under a roof. See? (No, actually I don't suppose you do.) Of course, the library was probably mostly papyrus scrolls which burn quite readily, but your response to the clay tablet idea was still wrong.

ED BURBEE, POB 509, Temecula, CA 92390, USA.

Your fanzine, THE MENTOR 66, fell into my hands a while ago. Immediately it struck me as something different. A delight it was that first moment picking up your fanzine. The cover looked clean and professional, and recalled fandom from the 1940's and '50's. In those days, fan magazines exhibited wild, fantastic artwork bespeaking offbeat viewpoints and unloosed imagination - or so my memory serves me.

Before going on, though, I salute cover artist Peggy Ranson for pleasing my senses and harking me back through the decades. And I especially enjoy her drawing of the pubescent butterfly girl with the flowing hair turning the leaves of an oversized magazine. This little drawing adds both winsomeness and a happy, light touch to your publication. Her cover drawing, of course, stands out.

The "Portfolio" of Jozef Szekeres impresses me. Shapely, young, breasty women pique the fancy of this artist. Nudity and semi-nudity abound. Quasi-human fantasy creatures, male and female, appeal to Szekeres; and he makes them appealing to the viewer. Lusciousness, sensuality, and an air of futuristic decadence suffuse much of the "Portfolio". Szekeres frolics in a time to come.

My interest particularly returns to the drawing of three women and a large male creature. Two of the women drape themselves on the naked, overmuscled giantoid, who gazes directly at the viewer with unmoderated hedonism. The two women appear as his playthings. In the background a third woman floats there like an otherworld entity with an undefined role. Maybe she represents women from the giantoid's home-planet, and accompanies him in readiness.

In fact, each woman expresses a unique orientation. The dark-haired enchantress radiates sophisticated, semi-whorish, celestial bewitchment. The goggle-wearing blonde blooms with trendy, sporty, boy-toy adolescence. The ethereal blonde drips feminine, man-devoted, elfin servitude. Yet, strangely, the giantoid provides a common focus for these beauties.

In addition, this giantoid conjures the half-world of homoeroticism, which recently has bedevilled popular Christian sentiment here in America. The presence of the women lessens this characterization, without reducing it entirely. Overall, though, manliness prevails. The skin of the giantoid being lined as if cracked also suggests alienness, but something more - maybe a reptilian quality. Of course women freely kiss dogs, horses, monkeys, and lizards, so this alien quality by itself cannot repel these assorted women. Thus the giantoid must have attracted the dissimilar trio by his many-sided personality, as testified by the examples joining him.

The drawing of the sexy cavalcade of mythic and quasi-mythic women stars a central humanoid female. All have firm, jutting breasts. Loosely linked, these dream-women string out like a necklace in to the sky, awaiting an ancient sailing vessel peopled with excited, gesturing men. The creatures below the humanoid are part fish, those above part bird, in varying degrees. Together they portray a bizarre variant of oceanic and atmospheric sex-objects which a seagoing man might imagine. The whole scene depicts a demiworld of exotic sexual longing. The sailor home from the global voyage could never ask for more eroticism than offered here.

However far and wide we travel in the future, though, I doubt we will ever discover creatures with nude female torsos revealing sexy breasts, flat stomachs, lovely arms, feathered wings, and alluring faces, while having lower bodies of birds and sea-animals. Instead, these two-part creatures have an origin in the fertile depths of human imagination. They reflect that fork between human and beast which lies in our psychological being. Here they take shape, melded, alive.

In another drawing, the fairytale subject of Alice watching the Hare hopping hurriedly across the stream ironically invokes reality. It does so, and with surprise, because the scene is familiar amid the other fantastic images. The fresh, naturalistic perspective on this tale further unveils Szekeres' artistic gift.

The fanciful mixture of beastiness and femininity in many of Szekeres' women amounts as well to a comment on the female sex. So be it. Each man sees women differently. Thankfully, Szekeres' vision includes distinction between the sexes instead of that odious blending, blurring, and leveling sought by today's politicians and aggressive feminists. Let us have a range of interesting women to look at and dream about, even if fantastically.

A peculiar warmth emanates from Szekeres' creatures. They hail from a self-contained realm whose bio-socioenvironment provides the ingredients for their own satisfaction - alien to us, perhaps, but natural to them. Szekeres dwells in that compelling world and has reported a handful of his findings. May he continue.

Let me avoid going too far. I end with a comment of the self-portrait of newcomer Jozef Szekeres. The direct, honest gaze of this amused young man, only 19 years old, shows intelligence and perception. This partial self-caricature, showing his unconventional haircut and the arty rendering of it, may contribute to his bemusement. Laughing gently outward in public, while encompassing others and himself, he achieves a special artistic connection.

Szekeres' few drawings here show promise of a view that could carry him far, if only he sticks with it steadily. Hence diligence, sobriety, and singlemindedness I take the liberty to recommend to Mr. Szekeres. In the face of today's pell-mell slide into stupefactive, distraction, and half-learning, one needs a clear, strong, dedicated mind to succeed. I look forward to seeing more artwork from this talented Szekeres.

LORRAINE CORMACK, 15 Gannon Pl, Charnwood, ACT 2616.

Ian Lennie's THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM was probably my favorite piece (in TM 67). I wouldn't say I liked it - the idea of something taking over my body for its own purposes was rather nasty - but the story was very well done. 'Specially effective because it was trees, something we see every day, and not aliens who were behind the takeover.

THE JOURNAL (Margaret Pearce) was quite well done, but I'm always a bit doubtful about time travel pieces. They inevitably sound familiar, as the theme is so well-worn.

I'd like to offer congratulations to David Tansey, whose work I first met though THE MENTOR - I notice he's had a story published in AUREALIS. It's nice to see him getting some recognition.

As usual, the first thing I noticed on THE MENTOR 68 was the cover, and I loved it. It's my

favorite of any I've seen. I wasn't terribly surprised to find that Jozef Szekeres was responsible again. I liked it better than anything else of his that you've featured, including the foldout in the same issue. I also quite liked most of the illustrations in this issue, which was a bit of a surprise, as there's usually at least one that I hate. Congratulations to all three artists anyway.

I was very interested in James Verran's report of his journey to America with the Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future competition. Of course I'd heard of it, but with the link with Scientology, you can't help wondering if it's for real... Although, of course, Hubbard was a writer before he was a Scientologist. Anyway, it was nice to get the impression that it was very much for real and a good experience for winners. Congratulations to James too.

As for the rest... I thought that SILENT VOICES (Shane Dix) had been done many times before. This struck me as a workmanlike rather than inspired reworking. I quite enjoyed it but it wasn't memorable by any stretch of the imagination.

THE KING AND SON (a translation) seemed a piece that would have been immensely better without its final paragraph. And perhaps it lost a little something in the translation? It seemed a little hurried in places, as though it had become oversimplified in translation.

I loved THE HOPES OF AUTUMN, though. Grai Hughes did a wonderful job of quietly infusing a note of hope into what was essentially a very sad story. I have a vague feeling that I've enthused about Grai's work before; whether I have or not, I can't help feeling that she still has potential to be even better - which is not to say I don't think she's good now.

BRIAN EARL BROWN, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA.

I don't usually read fiction published in fanzines, and didn't really read Ian Lennie's THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM, merely skimmed thru some of it but thought it was passable with an interesting if unlikely premise and some development of the idea - something often lacking in modern short fiction.

For a man who reputedly hates con reports, Buck seems to be writing a bunch of them.

Glen Chapman's THE SCIENCE FICTION FILMS OF 1953 reads like a school paper. Stiff, formal, with footnotes but I enjoyed it none the less and am glad he shared these thoughts with us. There is a certain naive charm to those early 50's SF films - not however that I've seen many of them. Perhaps they were in a cusp of history when movies still made good money, before the development of the blockbuster which resulted in the overproduction of special effects, the expectations of mega profits and the increasing desperate hustling for viewers that has resulted in frenetic bombs like TOTAL RECALL. Somehow it just seems that when the stakes are not so high writers and directors are freer to follow their own instincts, develop stories from original premises without trying to force things to fit into categories. Then, too, there was a much better appreciation of story and storytelling back then. Directors weren't "artists" but were expected to make things clear to the audience, not confuse them. In any case an era gone by.

GARY DEINDORFER, 447 Bellevue Ave., #9-B, Trenton, NJ 08618, USA.

It has been a while since I have received what is primarily a fiction zine, but I have no real objection to such a production. It gives new talent a place to burst out into print; and who knows that the next Asimov or even Shakespeare might not first find himself or herself published in the pages of your publication? As the American not-so-terribly-funny lady comedienne Judy Tenuta says, "It could happen."

Of course, you're also showcasing artistic talent. Peggy Ranson's cover for THE MENTOR #66 is well drawn, but it is hardly very original as an idea; that is to say, a Conan-type confronted by a dragon. Or maybe it is the Teutonic blockhead hero Siegfried about to slay the dragon Fafner in Wagner's opera "Siegfried" which I had occasion to listen to on a record borrowed from the library a few weeks ago, since I do things like that - that is, take opera records out of the library. I also buy used ones at record stores that specialize in used material, such as the great Princeton Record Exchange, since I am a big opera fan.

Incidentally I have to expand on what a great place that record store is. At a time when the big

chains are closing out their records and carrying just CDs and cassette tapes, the Princeton Record Exchange (Princeton is about a half hour's drive from Trenton) specializes in buying, selling and trading used records, and the owner, Barry, has over 100,000 of them in his store. I remember years ago when he started out of a hole in the wall; now he's in a whole barn-type building. This place is a record collector's paradise, and this is where I picked up, for instance, a few months ago a copy of Karl Berger Blomdahl's ANIARA, a science fiction opera that I had long despaired of ever finding a copy of.

Shane Dix writes a wee scrap of a story. Rather slight. Maybe he's a fledgling writer just testing his wordwings. The idea itself is good - I just wish he'd done more with it.

Illo for the story is well done.

Good to see Buck Coulson in your pages. I was taken under their YANDRO wing as a neofan in my teenaged days decades ago, just as you now take neo writers under your wing in the pages of THE MENTOR. Thus the tradition continues. What I like about Buck Coulson is that he tells it like it is. Believes in speaking his mind. A refreshing trait. And as a huckster he has got to be one of the most knowledgeable ones, to be sure. Right, alcohol shouldn't be necessary to having a good time at a convention. Or drugs for that matter. But try telling that to some people and you'd might as well address a wall. I don't know anymore, myself. I'm just an on-paper fan since writing is one of my favorite activities as long as I can do it when I want to and write to whom I want to and don't have to expect to make money out of it, which I never have, for that matter. Cons are not my cup of tea anymore. I have enough of a social life outside of fandom and too many con people seem to gung ho to me, old and tired fan that I am. Or am I merely rationalizing?

David Tansey has an interesting idea there, a planet with multiple moons orbiting around causing copious and extreme personality changes in the mind of the inhabitants of that world, but I am afraid I am at a loss as to the meaning of the ending of the story.

John J. Alderson's article seems rather slight. He could perhaps have done more with it. Or perhaps not, since he didn't.

LETHE is a rather ambitious story. Really, I think Grai Hughes was reaching for something here, and did a pretty good job of conveying to me, at least, what a really militaristic society's attitude would be toward peaceniks. I wonder if this story is prophetic of events in the mid-East? Hope not.

Jozef Sezekeres sure has a finished technique for a newcomer. Nice that you were able to showcase him in your pages. I like the creation on page 27 especially. And 31. Like the cutey on the right side of the drawing on page 35. The lass on page 37 looks like a Penthouse Pet of the Month trying to come true. (That's supposed to be a compliment, though somehow it doesn't sound like one.) Really like the Alice and Rabbit drawing - delightful. And we get a fold-out, no less, which was appreciated. I wish Jozef good luck with his music and visual art careers. He definitely has his own vision of things.

THE ALPHA EXPERIMENT seems too schematic to me, like an outline for a novelette rather than a viable short story in its own right. Just my opinion, y'unnastan, and since I've never sole a science fiction story or any other story who am I to say, huh? So much for that.

The letter column of #66 doesn't strike any comment chords in me at this late date, so I'll move on to the reviews. I plan to read Asimov's NEMESIS one of these days. At the moment am reading some of the stories in FOUNDATION'S FRIENDS, the collection of stories written in tribute to Ike. Some good ones in there and some not-so-good ones too. I imagine that book will end up being reviewed by you sooner or later.

I have liked the cyberpunk novels of William Gibson that I have read so far, COUNT ZERO even more than NEUROMANCER. So MONA LISA OVERDRIVE I will definitely have to pick up and eyetrack. Actually, Gibson's cyberpunk is the only cyberpunk I can stand to read.

Adolf Hitler a science fiction writer? Hey, did I get this fanzine from an alternative universe or something, where Hitler was a hack science fiction writer rather than the Teutonic dictator we all know and hate? Shades of THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE and that Spinrad novel I have heard of but have never read. THE IRON DREAM, was that the title?

Not Barrington Bayley - there is a science fiction writer. Ideas shooting off like sparks in all directions like early van Vogt. I really liked THE FALL OF CHRONOPOLIS. One of my favorite time travel novels. Makes Asimov's THE END OF ETERNITY seem rather undeveloped in its implications by comparison. COLLISION WITH CHRONOS I am now halfway through. Interesting,

but for me not up to the other book. Hey, I wish somebody would start up a Barrington Bayley fan club.

Nice cover on THE MENTOR 67 if one goes in for the architectural "kind of thing", which I guess we all do from time to time. I mean, good for what it is.

I think Ian Lennie's story shows an original voice. There is something in his style that says to me, "This man will make his mark as a writer." Witty, enjoyable story.

All I can think about reading Buck Coulson's column this time, speaking as a dog-lover, is poor Severian being shunted back and forth between home and kennel. Always good to see something from Buck in print, anyway.

I couldn't really get interested in this Margaret Pearce outing, though it is more of a story and less of an outline than her creation in #66. I like the idea of the *Eloi* being heavies rather than the Morlocks, for a change, though.

THIS ISLAND EARTH is notable to me in that it has one of the great special effects endings of any sf movie. THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL and FORBIDDEN PLANET - now, those were two of the movies with *substance*. I remember seeing the 3-D version of IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE when it first came out, as a young lad that I was then. Most sf movies have little interest for me. I prefer to read it than to see it on the screen.

THEY LEFT - apparently they did. As for who and why, this was never made clear to me; but maybe Lorraine Cormack wanted this left purposely vague.

Once again, the letter column doesn't have any comment hooks for me, though it's nice to see something from Harry Warner, the Sage of Hagerstown.

I have heard of THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE for years, but have never read it. Sounds as though Carl Sagan was influenced by it to some extent when he wrote THE DRAGONS OF EDEN.

SHANE DIX, 2/26 Diagonal Rd, Glengowrie, S.A.

Firstly to answer Alan Stewart's query as to the meaning of the title of my story THE WHEELING SYSTEM DARKENS: the wheeling part of it refers to the invention of the wheel, the cornerstone upon which our technological society was built. The whole title is pinched from Francis Thompson, though is by no means a reference to the poem it was taken from. As for the meaning of the title of my story in the last issue, SILENT VOICES, well, I'm afraid you're going to have to ask Ron about that one. My original title was GLIMPSES. Ron?

I'll blame the computer. If you look at the title of Alan Stewart's poem on page 34 of the same issue... Sorry about that. - Ron.

And the rest of issue #68: When I saw Peter Brodie's name attached to the story THE KING AND SON I thought, 'Oh joy!' My first glimpse of his glass house, and ready was I indeed to cast a few stones of my own. Unfortunately though, I enjoyed it. Not that I particularly like this type of reading, but his actual writing is very natural and competent. A couple of questions though: *was* it translated from something, or was this merely added to enhance the folk lore flavour? And if so, translated from what? Or was the tale inspired by Szekeres' accompanying picture, or was this a collaboration between the two? Or am I just being a bit thick here? As for Jozef Szekeres' art, again excellent, with my favourite being the cover illustration.

I sent a copy of the story to Jozef and he did the two illustrations (cover and p.15) to accompany it. As far as I know it is a translation from the Welsh. - Ron.

Grai Hughes has a nice writing style, often quite poetic, though I feel at times her sentences are overly long (as I believe Sue Cartwright mentioned also; sorry, not intending to steal comments). However, having said that I did feel the opening sentence was handled well. It was long and complex and delivered much, and immediately caught my attention. But four of these epic sentences later I was turning blue in the face from lack of oxygen. The idea itself was an intriguing one, though suffered by being rushed shortly after the premise had been established. Overall, a good read. My

wife enjoyed it, too. Better than sex, she said. So there you go.

Congratulations to James Verran. You must be over the moon, so to speak. And also to David Tansey. About time he broke into a prozine.

TERRY JEEVES, 36 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorks YO12 5RQ, UK.

I'm loth to use the word processor for fear of mains glitches and power spikes. Right now we're fourteen hours into the worst wind/snow storm in years. Five of our seven TV channels are out, power keeps flickering and some places are cut off - so to THE MENTOR 68.

Loved the cover and all those lovely interiors by Jozef. Terrific, pro quality. Layout and repro as superlative as ever. Sadly nothing outstanding in the fiction - all well-written but lacking in either a real point or proper ending. SILENT VOICES went very well, but instead of a suspense ending, it faded away. One possibility would have been for the wife to have collapsed and joined him.

KING AND SON (translated from what?). This one did a great (but drawn out) job of capturing the old style of "fairy story", but cried out for a punch or twist ending - instead it just died - superb illo, though. **HOPE OF AUTUMN** - sorry, but I failed to get the point of this one. Strelkov was erudite - and boring to anyone like me who isn't greatly interested in antiquity. Good stuff for those who are, I suppose. Verran's article on the Writer's of the Future was excellent and entertaining - re Las Vegas, when Val and I were there, we dodged the heat by casino-hopping - cooling off in one air-conditioned place before walking to the next - at Boulder, it was 120- degrees in the shade!

Excellent if uncontroversial (in the main) LoC col. Best of the issue for me were the Verran piece, Buck Coulson and the Conreps. Oh yes, final comment: "poetry" - UGH!!!

WAHF:

WALT WILLIS, who said (apart from his comments on The Bus): I tend to belong to the Buck Coulson school of thought about fmz fiction, but don't take it personally; I feel the same way about prozine fiction these days. I remember getting out from the public library an anthology called THE BEST OF ANALOG, and thinking that the number of stories in it which should have been published at all could have been counted on the fingers of one foot. However, Ian Lennie held my attention till the end, which is more than most pros could claim.

For me the best thing in the fmz is your letter column, which is original and literate and a credit to your editing.

STEVE SNEYD, who said: I've admired the sf/horror poetry of John Grey in Stateside Mags, but until an impressive set copy of his new horror poetry Chapbook arrived never knew he had a characteristic. Might make it worth a mention to yr readers - namely that though living in New England, his bio says he's Australian-born. Chapbook (v. reasonably priced) at US\$3.50 incl post) is DEVIL IN THE RIVER, illod by John Borkowski, from Nocturnal Publications, Ree Yding, Rt.2, Box 145-A3, Troy, North Carolina 27371, USA.

A trivial criticism on TM 67 - the "wrap-around" front/back cover, a lifeless-looking official building. The "Indonesian source" puzzle - I don't know if they've their own refineries yet, but as an oil producer/OPEC member they could surely do/raw/refined swops without difficulty with fellow OPECers in a way that concealed their purpose for long enough.

R LAURRAINE TUTIHASI who wrote: I recently attended the North American Science Fiction Convention in San Diego. I noted that the Sydney bid for the Worldcon in 1995 was not visibly represented. I was told there was someone there from Australia, but I never had the luck to meet up with him. There are two other bids for 1995 from Atlanta and Glasgow. If the foreign bids get split up between two sites, then Atlanta becomes a shoe-in. Many American fans are tired of seeing Australia on the Worldcon ballot. Also, many Americans won't distinguish between England and Scotland in deciding whether or not to support Glasgow. Atlanta put on a very good Worldcon in

1986, if I recall the year correctly. That makes their bid very strong. If Sydney is really serious, they have to work harder. Bid parties are a rigorous necessity. I don't know if you have any connection to the bid, but if you know anyone who does, you might want to pass along my opinions.

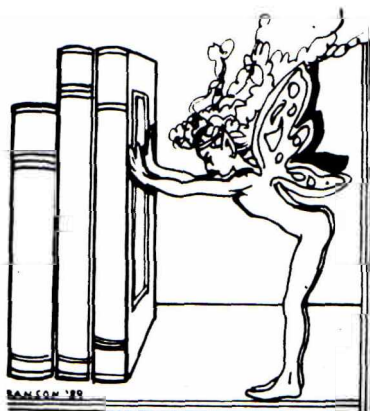
JIM VERRAN, who wrote: Further to my article **THIS MUST BE AMERICA**, it has become very clear to me that few science fiction people in Australia are prepared to accept L. Ron Hubbard's **Contest** on face value. I admit to having reservations myself and only accepted the rewards of my success after much deliberation. I was the first Aussie and had no one else's experience to fall back on.

The essay was intended to reassure prospective entrants that The **Contest** is exactly what it seems, nothing more. Although the L. Ron Hubbard Organisation make no secret of its sponsorship, they do not attempt to relate Scientology or Dianetics to The **Writers of the Future Contest**. I was told by the coordinating Judge and Editor, **Algis Budrys**, that he was assured, at the time he accepted the job, that the **Contest** would be run as a separate entity. In view of my experiences, it is!

MARIA-LOUISE STEPHENS, who wrote on a Xmas card: I was interested in hearing what people had to say about Margaret Pearce, as she is in my lit. group in the Dandenongs. **SILENT VOICES** by Shane Dix - an unusual subject, maybe only to me - as I mentioned I have come to the fantasy scene rather late - though as a child my mother "indoctrinated" me with the Nordic folklore, fairy tales and Greek myths - wonderful. There is also sometimes the necessity to look up a word in the dictionary - as I then envy the people born to the English language. Though it has become a second mother language, there are occasions when I must ask my all-knowing volume - but then, you see, as we learnt a lot of languages in Europe, I am hardly ever hesitating in pronouncing Latin, French and Italian words, so it evens itself out. I wrote a humorous article once about "my esoteric love life" - meaning the love I have for my Collins dictionary.

"Z", on behalf of, but not officially a part of, the **SunConDitSubCom**: Ron, although I have heard the gist of what it is you've said; I've also heard the gist of the reply sent by Marc Ortlieb to you. I hope that you will accept the enclosed form at its face value, and I assure you that I am currently nor have I ever been a part of a conspiracy of the Melbourne-based **ASFF** to control the **Ditmar** awards. Mind you if I *was* part of such a conspiracy then I'd hardly be likely to admit to this, would I?

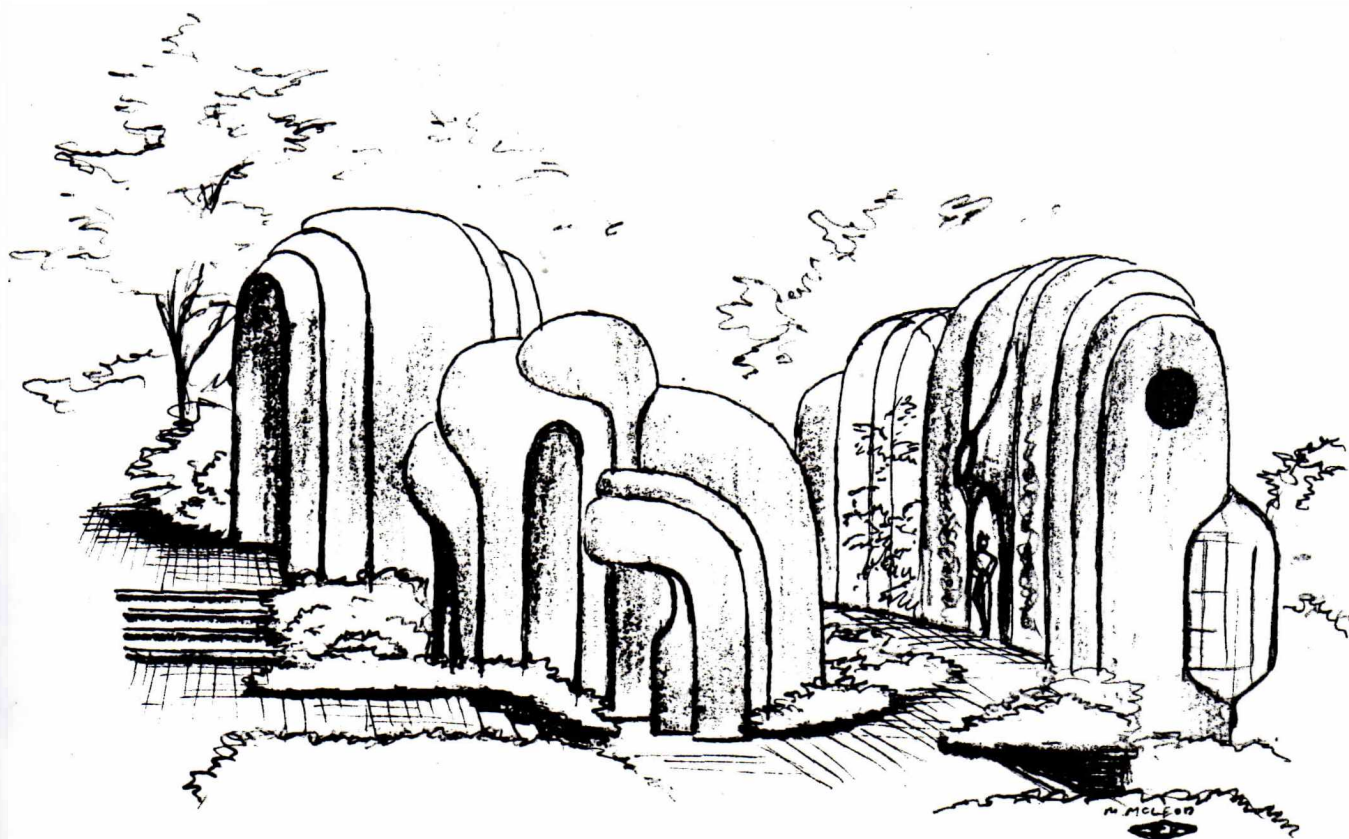
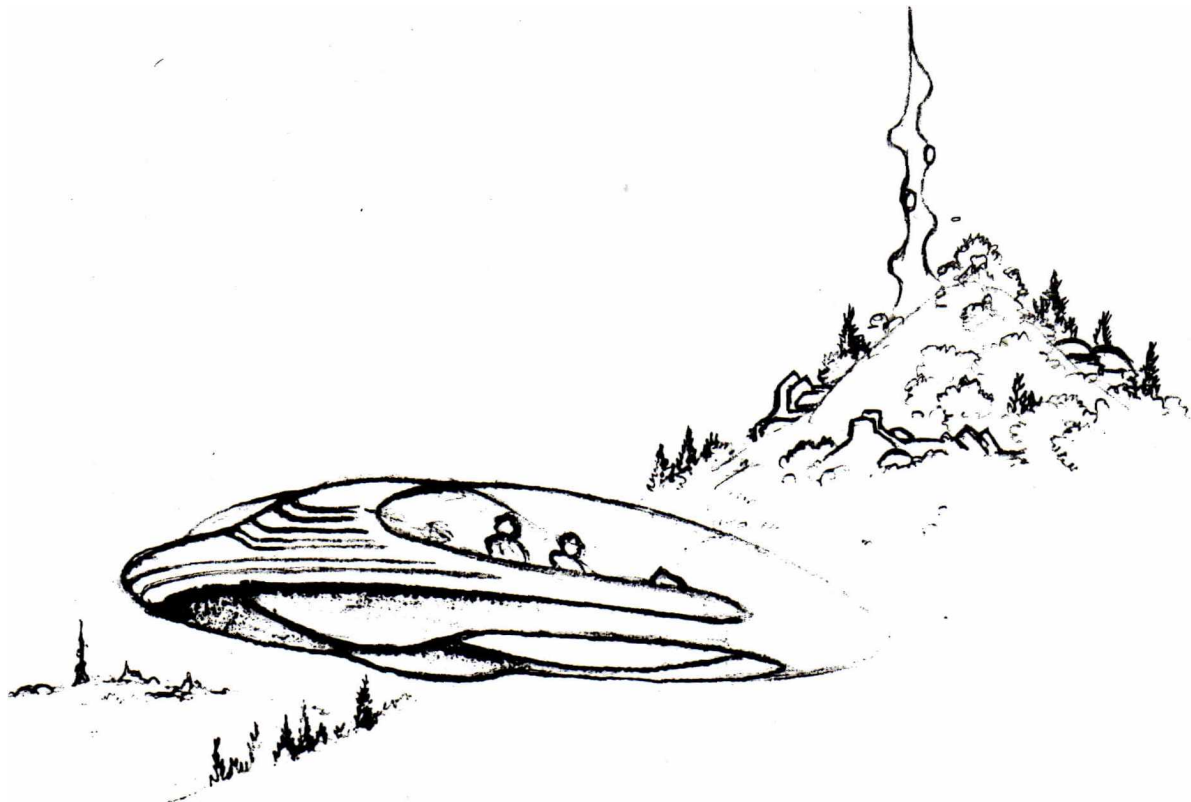
Others heard from were: Brent Lillie, Donald Franson, Mark Nelson, Mark McLeod, Margaret Pearce and Ben Schilling.

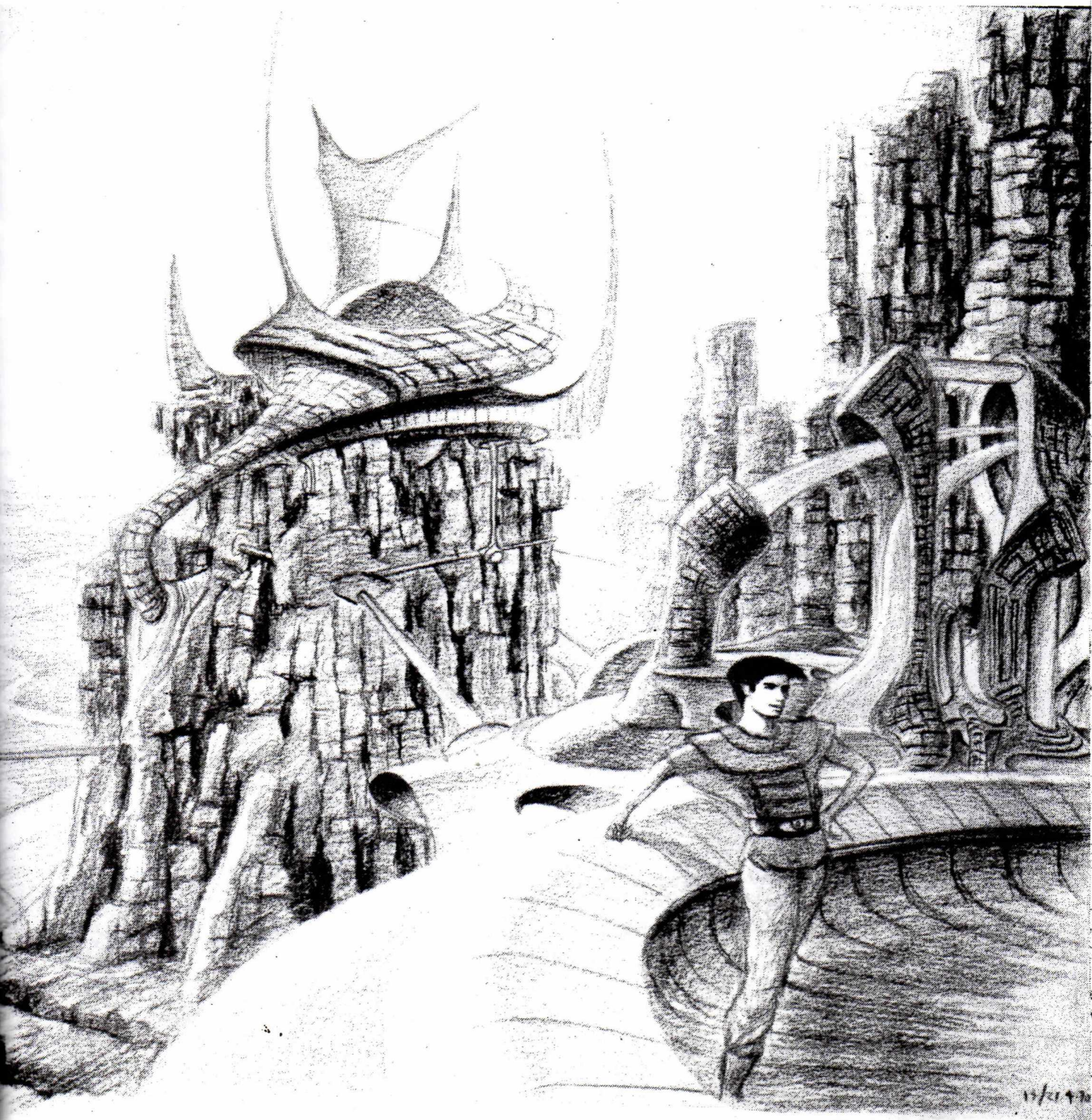


PORTFOLIO



- Mark McLeod





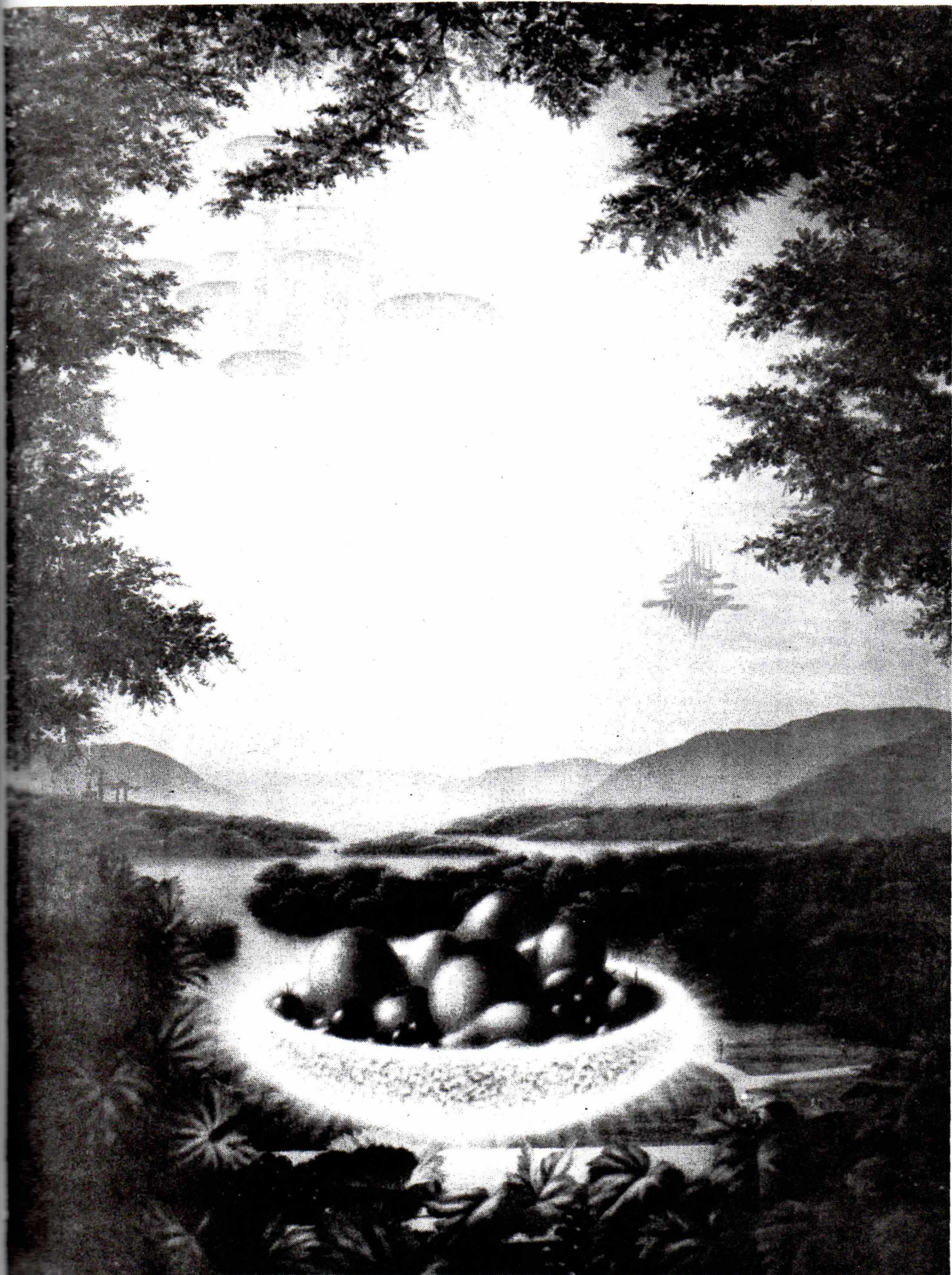


MAYLEO
10-11-78









BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE PORTFOLIO ARTWORK

I was born in Camden, NSW, in 1961 and I lived in Campbelltown till 1986, then moved to the Oberon Plateau for two years and Bathurst for six months. I am now a resident of Blackheath, in the Blue Mountains.

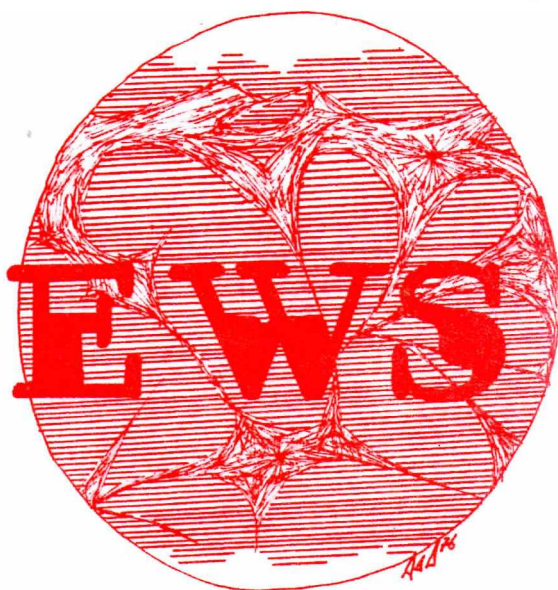
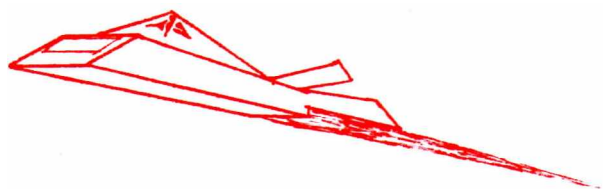
My higher education took place at Hurlstone Agricultural Highschool. I trained in Landscape Architecture at the University of NSW and studied Graphic Design at Liverpool Technical College. I cultivated an interest in drawing from an early age, but started painting seriously in 1980.

Especially commissioned work has been published in OMEGA magazine, SIMPLY LIVING, IMAGINE, and the ILLUSTRATED MACQUARIE DICTIONARY. My employment has previously been achieved through a combination of commercial illustration and garden design/labour. At the present time it is almost exclusively through freelance architectural illustration and privately commissioned science fiction artwork. My paintings have also been publically displayed through local art shows in the Campbelltown area, and they also appeared in a recent Darling Harbour combined exhibition.

The samples of my artwork reproduced in this issue of THE MENTOR are a mix of commissioned illustrations and works designed to my own ideas. The latter were created with the intention of communicating a vision of a future "utopian" lifestyle - a world where humanity is in harmony with itself and the rest of Nature. The society is a place of maximum freedom, a fertile ground for the evolution of the mind. All forms of prejudice and narrow-mindedness are extinct. The technology is self producing, self maintaining, derived from lifeless worlds beyond our planet and therefore able to co-exist with wild Nature on a revegetated Earth. Food is a combination of locally produced fruits and synthetic products as a conclusive mark of respect for the rights of other life forms.

A long term aim is to produce a book illustrated by these and other images, each portraying some aspect of the envisaged society.

- Mark McLeod
11.11.90



REVIEWS

CURRENT SF RELEASES:

THE MOTION OF LIGHT ON WATER by Samuel R. Delany. Paladin pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988,90. 581pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

The sub-title of this autobiography is "East Village sex and science fiction writing 1960-65". There is also included **THE COLUMN AT THE MARKET'S EDGE**.

This work is a book of memories and an expansion of notes taken at the time of the above period of time. It is not an autobiography as such, as Delany says in it that some of it is fiction written to fit the facts. The book follows the day to day happenings to Delany in his late teens and early twenties as he leaves home, gets married and goes to live in an apartment in the Village in New York. **THE MOTION OF LIGHT ON WATER** is a fascinating account of his life in those days and, for fans of Delany and of the 60s it is really a captivating read, as he builds in the background of the period and sketches in some of the characters he met (briefly), such as Einstein and Bob Dillon.

The book also gives some reason and depth of understanding to the perceptive reader as to why he wrote such books as **THE TIDES OF LUST**. It won the Hugo for best nonfiction title of the year.

BEYOND LIES THE WUB by Philip K. Dick. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1987. 510pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This book is the first volume of the collected stories of Philip K. Dick. At last Dick is getting some of the recognition he deserves.

There is an introduction by Roger Zelazny and at the end short notes on each story. The stories included are: **STABILITY**; **ROOG**; **THE LITTLE MOVEMENT**; **BEYOND LIES THE WUB**; **THE GUN**; **THE SKULL**; **THE DEFENDERS**; **MR SPACESHIP**; **PIPER IN THE WOODS**; **THE INFINITES**; **THE PRESERVING MACHINE**; **EXPENDABLE**; **THE VARIABLE MAN**; **THE INDEFATIGABLE FROG**; **THE CRYSTAL CRYPT**; **THE SHORT HAPPY LIFE OF THE BROWN OXFORD**; **THE BUILDER**; **MEDDLER**; **PAYCHECK**; **THE GREAT C**; **OUT IN THE GARDEN**; **THE KING OF THE ELVES**; **COLONY**; **PRIZE SHIP** and **NANNY**. Some of these stories are well known: **ROOG**, **BEYOND LIES THE WUB** and **THE SHORT HAPPY LIFE OF THE BROWN OXFORD** have been reprinted several times. Some of the others are, I would say, first time reprints, but worth the reading still. A good buy, as will be the other volumes when they are published.

BILBO'S LAST SONG by J.R.R. Tolkien. Unwyn Hyman h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1974 & 1990. 21x26 cm. 32pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

This is an illustrated (in colour by Pauline Baynes) twenty-four line poem by Tolkien.

The full title is *BILBO'S LAST SONG (At The Grey Havens)* and shows Bilbo's journey to the Grey Havens in the company of Frodo, Sam, Elrond, Galadriel and Gildor, and the start of the final journey. The illustrations by Pauline Baynes are from *THE HOBBIT* and *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* and her style suits these scenes admirably. It is a beautifully printed volume and is well worth purchasing as an item the serious reader's library.

THE WIZARD AND THE WAR MACHINE by Lawrence Watt-Evans. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1987. 285pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

THIS WIZARD AND THE WAR MACHINE is a sequel to **THE CYBORG AND THE SORCERERS**, reviewed in **THE MENTOR** 43, and in last issue.

In the first volume, Slant the cyborg had landed on the planet Dest in an effort to find out the source of the "gravitational anomalies" his ship had spotted on the planet. His ship was controlled by an advanced computer, which also had the ability to destroy the android by igniting a thermite charge if the computer thought the android was defecting. (And that is *not* a pun). Slant manages, with the aid of some local wizards, to destroy the ship and set himself free. The present volume commences some eleven local years later, when he calls himself Sam Turner and has a wife and family. Then another Earth ship turns up, with an insane cyborg pilot and a more rational computer. Both are determined to destroy Dest, however, and Turner must defeat them to save his family and the rest of the humans on Dest.

Not bad for sf adventure - if you liked **THE CYBORG AND THE SORCERERS**, you'll like this one. I did.

SADAR'S KEEP by Midori Snyder. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 362pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This is book two of *The Queen's Quarter* (book one is **NEW MOON** - reviewed in **TM** 66 - and book three will be called **BELDAN'S FIRE**). Why am I telling you the name of the third volume? Simple: so you won't miss it when it comes out.

Beldan was the capital city of Oran. Some hundreds of years before the Sileans had been "invited" in by Queen Zorah and had proceeded to occupy the country. Queen Zorah was only one of the four Fire Queens to survive to the present (she had killed the others) and was winnowing the population of magic to prevent herself aging. However, one of her "sister" queens - Huld - was still alive and was trying to create a new "queens knot" to destroy Zorah. Both queens were as bad as each other in their own ways and the three young women Huld had found to be the future queens - Jobber, Lirrel and Shedwyn - found themselves in the midst of a struggle between the two, as the queens tried to destroy the other.

With this series Midori Snyder has shown herself to be one of the top fantasy writers in the world. I couldn't put this book down (I told in **TM** 66 how I was lucky to read **NEW MOON**), and was cursing that I can't read **BELDAN'S FIRE** till it is published some time in the future. *Highly Recommended*.

THE QUIET PLACE by Richard Maynard. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C)1987. 283pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Maynard is an English writer now living in Queensland. The novel is a post holocaust novel set in France and England.

When a party of (British) astronauts returns from the first starflight they find a strangely quiet Earth. They land in the ocean and make the shore on a bleak French coast. Leaving one of their

number behind to guard the boat then set off through a storm to find help. They find instead deserted villages. When they return to the beach they find the boat gone and all that is left of the man left behind is his head. Two others who had set off to explore before hand are also missing.

I found that, except for the original idea of a British star expedition (out of the 1950s) the novel was quite able - characterisation and ideas well done. I think the only thing wrong with the cover and its full-frontal of a naked woman is that there is no blood showing. Other than that, it gives a clear portrayal of a final scene very well.

THE EMPIRE OF FEAR by Brian Stableford. Pan trade pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1988. 518pp. A\$19.99. On sale now.

On first reading of the cover blurb the reader could be forgiven for thinking that this is a fantasy. Even though the cover says "Nominated for the Arthur C. Clarke Award", still, the reader way wonder...

It is, of course, sf. Even though there are vampires and blood sucking, still this is straight sf. **THE EMPIRE OF FEAR** is an alternate world story set in the year 1623. The vampires, who had come out of Africa with Atilla the Hun, were spread over Europe and controlled many of the countries, including England. The nobility were vampires and the secret of how they "created" other vampires was a well kept secret. Their empire was one of fear, though scientific thought was beginning to crop up. One of its practitioners was Edmund Cordery, Mechanician to the court of Prince Richard. He had had as a lover a vampire lady and it fell on to him to try introducing a plague to London to see if it would, as legend had it, kill vampires - as well as Common man. It did. His son managed to escape and ventured off to Africa to try to find the secret of the vampire's longevity.

The novel is well constructed and thought out and makes a gripping read. It is slow in places, but a good read nonetheless.

TIDES OF LIGHT by Gregory Benford. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1989. 363pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

TIDES OF LIGHT is the sequel to **GREAT SKY RIVER** - reviewed in TM 68. In this novel the humans, fleeing in the *Argo* reach their destination, not without some adventures en-route, and find their target planet is being processed by a race of insect-like creatures. Killeen is separated from his crew and is taken prisoner by one of the creatures. He is thrown down at the planet at a speed he cannot escape and he is sure he will die. His 'aspects', though, have enough scientific background to help save the day, and he is later re-united with the others, including his son and mate.

This is great sf adventure - with action and well worked out. It is in the modern fantasy tradition, though, of being a trilogy - so there is one more volume to go. How the humans and the Starswarmers (the aliens) will get together to help attack the machines at the Galaxy's core and contact the nebula intelligence will have to wait for the third volume... Excellence reading.

A ROMANCE OF THE EQUATOR by Brian Aldiss. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1960-1989. 345pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This volume is a collection of Aldiss's best fantasy stories. They include **OLD HUNDREDTH**; **DAY OF THE DOOMED KING**; **THE SOURCE**; **THE VILLAGE SWINDLER**; **THE WORM THAT FLIES**; **THE MOMENT OF ECLIPSE**; **SO FAR FROM PRAGUE**; **THE DAY WE EMBARKED FOR CYTHERA**; **CASTLE SCENE WITH PENITENTS**; **THE GAME WITH THE BIG HEAVY BALL**; **CREATURES OF APOGEE**; **THE SMALL STONES OF TU FU**; **JUST BACK FROM JAVA**; **A ROMANCE OF THE EQUATOR**; **JOURNEY TO THE GOAT STAR**; **THE GIRL WHO SANG**; **CONSOLATIONS OF AGE**; **THE BLUE BACKGROUND**; **THE PLAIN, THE ENDLESS PLAIN**; **YOU NEVER ASKED MY NAME**; **LIES!**; **NORTH SCARNING**; **THE BIG QUESTION**; **THE ASCENT OF HUMBLESTEIN**; **HOW AN INNER DOOR OPENED TO MY HEART** and **BILL CARTER TAKES OVER**.

OLD HUNDREDTH is well known, having appeared in many anthologies. The others range over a variety of subjects and people - the business man and the aboriginals and others. Brian Aldiss writes of that is worth reading, as is his fantasy.

THE COSMIC TRILOGY by C.S. Lewis. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1938-45. 753pp. A\$14.99. On sale now.

It has been some time since a new edition of this trilogy has been released. The three novels consisting the trilogy are **OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET**; **PERELANDRA** and **THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH**.

The first of the three novels begins on Earth, then the three men go to Malacandra and Perelandra. Lewis is known for his moral novels and this trilogy is a classic of its type. It is scholarly written and follows the adventures of Ransom, who is captured by Devine and the scientist Weston in their attempt to get a third person to go with them to Venus. Ransom has set out on a walking tour of the countryside and because of a promise to a peasant woman, found himself meeting a old school acquaintance in his attempt to get the woman's son back home.

Well written fantasy - and one of the tales that lives on - that of good battling evil.

SECOND VARIETY by Philip K. Dick. Grafton trade pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1987. 489pp. A\$15.95. On sale now.

The stories in this second volume of the collected stories by Philip K. Dick were written between 1952 and 1955. There is an introduction by Norman Spinrad.

I hadn't read many of these stories before I read them in this volume, and I was pleased at the quality. The stories are: **THE COOKIE LADY**; **BEYOND THE DOOR**; **SECOND VARIETY**; **JON'S WORLD**; **THE COSMIC POACHERS**; **PROGENY**; **SOME KINDS OF LIFE**; **MARTIANS COME IN CLOUDS**; **THE COMMUTER**; **THE WORLD SHE WANTED**; **A SURFACE RAID**; **PROJECT: EARTH**; **THE TROUBLE WITH BUBBLES**; **BREAKFAST AT TWILIGHT**; **A PRESENT FOR PAT**; **THE HOOD MAKER**; **OF WITHERED APPLES**; **HUMAN IS**; **ADJUSTMENT TEAM**; **THE IMPOSSIBLE PLANET**; **IMPOSTER**; **JAMES P. CROW**; **PLANET FOR TRANSIENTS**; **SMALL TOWN**; **SOUVENIR**; **SURVEY TEAM**; **PROMINENT AUTHOR** and Notes at the end with comments on the stories. The stories are mostly pure sf, with only a hint of Dick's later preoccupation with the nature of reality.

If you like Dick, then these volumes are a must. Or just for the complet library.

TRUCKERS and DIGGERS by Terry Pratchett. Doubleday h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 190pp and 153pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

The Store was quite a large place for the thousands of nomes that lived under its floorboards. It all started out simply, with only ten nomes left in the countryside. They were forced out of their burrow by a climate that was becoming wetter and wetter. They stole on board a lorry and ended up in The Store, where they found a very strange thing about the Thing that had been handed down from generation to generation...

DIGGERS starts out when The Store was demolished and the nomes have to move on again. This time they end up in an abandoned quarry. They settle in, but events again catch up with them. Terry Pratchett's brand of humour pays off again with these 'young adult' books - what the hell, I like them too - anyone will. Get them yourself, or get your library to get them. Well worth it.

FARMER GILES OF HAM and SMITH OF WOOTTON MAJOR by J.R.R. Tolkien. Unwin Hyman h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 79 AND 74pp. A\$24.95. On sale 11/90.

One of a series of short novels by Tolkien, illustrated by Roger Garland. **FARMER GILES OF**

HAM is set in Britain, "after the days of King Coel maybe, but before Arthur or the Seven Kingdoms of the English". SMITH OF WOOTTON MAJOR concerns the Feast held in the village of Wootton Major when twenty-four children are invited to partake of a cake - a cake with some very strange ingredients that enable the eater to gain entry into the land of Faery.

Nearly each page is illustrated by a very fine-lined black and white illustration and the text is, of course, Tolkien at his best. If you loved LOTR and his other stories then these two volumes will make a welcome addition to your library. They are beautiful volumes and worth the money. And they read well, also.

THE WAR OF THE RING - The History Of Middle Earth Vol 8 by J.R.R. Tolkien. Unwin Hyman h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 476pp. A\$49.95. On sale now.

The History is a scholarly work by Christopher Tolkien and, in Volume 8, he takes up the story of the writing of LOTR with the Battle of Helm's Deep and the drowning of Isengard by the Ents. This is followed by an account of how Frodo, Sam and Gollum were finally brought to the Pass of Cirith Ungol, then the war with Gondor and ends with the discourse between Gandalf and the ambassador of the Dark Lord before the Dark Gate of Mordor.

The author goes through the book and sets out in the text the different drafts of the novel. The frontpiece are two colour sketches by JRR Tolkien. Throughout the work are scattered the original sketches by JRR Tolkien to illustrate his story.

For any reader who is interested in more than just a light read of THE LORD OF THE RINGS these volumes make up an excellent view of how a highly original fantasy author works.

THE GIRL FROM TOMORROW by Mark Shirrefs and John Thomson. Hodder & Stoughton pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1990. 215pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

This novel is based on a new TV series from Film Australia. It is about Alana, a fourteen year old girl who is kidnapped from the year 3000 by a savage man, Silverthorn, who also steals a time capsule and takes her back to the present. There she meets two other children - Jenny and Petey. Alana confides in the two and all three set out to try to find the capsule and get it back to the future.

The novel is fairly straight-forward in that it was written specifically for children and a TV audience. The two authors are graduates of the Victorian College of the arts and Swinburne Film and Television School. It shows in the short, sharp sentences used throughout the book.

Still, a entertaining read and shows what Australian children's sf can be when it tries.

THE EROTIC WORLD OF FAERY by Maureen Duffy. Cardinal pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1972. 401pp. A\$16.99. On sale now.

THE EROTIC WORLD OF FAERY is a well-researched work that delves into the origins of the faery myth. It starts well back in English history and continues through to the present day and into fantasy and sf. There are sixteen black-and-white plates illustrating the text. For some idea of the subjects covered, here is a list of the chapter headings: ST AUGUSTINE AND THE SATYR; THE COMING OF THE FAIRIES; THE ELFIN KING; FOLK AND THE FAERY; DRAMATIS PERSONAE; THE FAIRY QUEEN; RENAISSANCE: SEX AND VIOLENCE; THE ENGLISH WOOD NEAR ATHENS; THE ENCHANTER; WINGED CREATURES; PARADISE LOST; ENCHANTING SATIRE; GOTHICK HORROR; THE MATIC CARPET; LAMIA; THE BROTHERS GRIMM AND SISTER ANDERSON; GOBLIN MARKET; DO YOU BELIEVE IN FAIRIES?; AND EVER AFTER...

Maureen writes clearly and with depth, but also shows that she has a clear grasp of the subject. And also that she has read and likes modern sf and fantasy - something that many 'scholars' would do better to effect themselves.

THE ANCIENT SOLITARY REIGN by Martin Hocke. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1989. 439pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The Barn owls are the heroes of this novel. Not only the heroes, but the central characters.

Hunter was only a young owl, but he learnt quickly and ended up uniting the Little owls and Tawnie owls against the Eagle owl - a giant owl that terrorised the neighbourhood. This was not all the community had to face, though - the humans were encroaching on the woods and countryside and with their guns and games. The story is a little bit saccharin, so would do for a gift for almost anyone. Being in the company of novels about rabbits and badgers and moles it will probably have a steady selling point and should be around for some time to come.

For those youngsters who are just starting into fantasy (or animal stories).

DEATH DEALER by James Silke. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C)1989. 319pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Book two of Frank Frazetta's fantasy series. Frazetta illustrates the covers.

This is a basically sword and sorcery (and blood and guts) novel. It is in the "modern" tradition with lots of violence and fights and demons and men and nubile women (with Big Breasts) fighting for good. Death Dealer was Gath of Baal transformed by the Horned Helmet, who loves slaughter and death. There is much of blood drinking bats and vampires and much chuckling and laughing.

I can't really say much more about this one: though if you like basic fantasy stories this will probably do you for an hour or so.

FACES OF FEAR by Douglas Winter. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1985, 1990. 334pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

The sub-title for this volume is *Encounters with the creators of modern horror* and consists of interviews with practitioners of modern horror fiction. They are: Robert Bloch, Richard Matheson, William Peter Blatty, Dennis Etchison, Ramsey Campbell, David Morrell, James Herbert, Charles L. Grant, T.E.D. Klein, Alan Ryan, John Coyne, V.C. Andrews, Michael McDowell, Whitley Strieber, Clive Barker, Peter Straub, Stephen King, and Douglas E. Winter. There are three appendixes - A horror fiction buying guide, The best of horror fiction 1951-1990, and The best of horror films 1951-1990.

I am not really into horror, but I found this book very interesting - at least it puts these interviews into a more permanent form than in a fanzine. Some of the titles of the films are intriguing - **THE WRESTLING WOMEN VS THE AZTEC MUMMY** is no doubt a riveting film.

THE WISHSTONE AND THE WONDERWORKERS by Hugh Cook. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1990. 448pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The Hermit Crab was born in the fires of the local star, but it fled the encroachments of its fellows and found itself on Jod, where it settled down as a hermit crab. It made several modifications (size for instance) but after seventy thousand years it sort of fit in well.

Another character in the story was Shabble. Shabble was a fireball, and when an energy drain pulled in energy from Untunchilamon, Shabble found that it was after him also and he had to flee. Events followed events and Shabble found that his quiet life was over and he had a fight on his hands. Shabble in his various moments had to imitate many things - demons and the like. Later on the two aliens would meet and do their worst.

Hugh Cooks writes some humorous fantasy - this is Volume 6 of the *Chronicles of an Age of Darkness*.

CIRCLE OF LIGHT by Martin Middleton. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1990. 376pp.

A\$10.99. On sale now.

A new Australian fantasy writer. A native of Queensland, Middleton shows he can keep up with the overseas market with this book. It is a quest novel - four Vahian soldiers set out to look for the heir to the kingdom. The king was dead - assassinated by his brother. A youth, Teal, joins them. He shows he can quickly acquire skills and is lucky too; he finds a talisman ring which can be a link in finding others of its kind. Through it he finds two others and the seven attempt to stay together to stop the evil which is corrupting the kingdom.

Middleton seems to have a good grasp of the basics of fantasy writing, though writing in the first person is very hard to get across, especially with this reader. Still, not bad for a first attempt.

THE STEERSWOMAN by Rosemary Kirstein. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1989. 299pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

Rowan was a steerswoman - a person who was a scholar of sorts - who sought after knowledge. She was born into a world where magic ruled. A rough world where violence was a part of life. A farmer was cutting down some age old trees when he found a strange jewel in one of them. He called the steerswoman and she determined to find out the reason for the creation of the unnatural stone.

The plot is straight-forward and the writing clear and unambiguous. The society depicted is that of many fantasy stories - medieval, with swords the prime weapons. The opponents in this case are wizards, a youth and his sister, who though young have the age-old evil in them. Rowan is not above doing evil herself to gain her own ends - torture for one, and this sets the pace for the book.

Well written fantasy. Pan isn't exactly a prolific publisher like some, but what they do publish it worth reading.

STAR SCROLL by Melanie Rawn. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1989. 582pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

STAR SCROLL is the second book in the Dragon Prince series (the first was **DRAGON PRINCE**, reviewed in TM 66).

Rawn weaves a strong story with this novel, a fantasy that combines the power shown in the first novel that deals with sunlight and starlight with the stranger power of the small dragons. The Star Scroll had been lost for countless years, but Sioned knew that it had and did exist, and she was determined to find it.

Fantasy novels are nearly always set in a simpler past, with either peasants (who are peasants, or kings who are hidden as peasants) or the nobility as main characters. In this novel the nobility are the main characters, specifically princes and princesses. It is a long novel which enables Rawn to give depth to her characters.

MOONHEART by Charles de Lint. Pan trade pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1984. 477pp. A\$19.99. On sale now.

Quite a well-thought out novel. A fantasy, set in the present day. When Sara Kendell found the small leather bag she did not know what she had in her hands and when she opened it and found the tooth, the picture, the ring and the bone disc and bunch of feathers.

Needless to say they all had a story to tell and they revealed a world other than the one she knew in her everyday life in Toronto. There were others that found out the ancient druid mysteries and some of these weren't human.

I found de Lint's writing style very easy to read and the novel engrossing. He writes in the style of the best of the fantasy writers - a style that doesn't need the utmost concentration, but which slides easily into the mind.

THE RETURN OF THE SHADOW - The History Of The Lord Of The Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C)1988. 497pp incl. Index. On sale now.

This book is part One of Volume 6 of The History Of Middle Earth, and it (and the companion Part Two) gives background and the different versions of the three novels.

THE RETURN OF THE SHADOW is the abandoned title of the first volume of **THE LORD OF THE RINGS**, and in this book Christopher Tolkien shows how Bilbo's "magic ring" changed into the Ruling Ring of the Dark Lord, and the first moment when the first Black Rider rode into the Shire. The development of the Hobbit Trotter (later called Strider or Aragorn) is described, though his "true" identity is still hidden to the reader. The changes of name and personality of Frodo's companions are shown, and other disguised figures: an ominous Treebeard and a evil-minded Farmer Maggot.

The volume has reproductions of the first maps and facsimile pages from the early manuscripts. These books are obviously created for those serious studying of fantasy and they are a good buy for the serious reader of LOTR and those other fictions and near fictions of Tolkien and other masters of the art.

THE 1991 TOLKIEN CALENDAR illustrated by John Howe. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 14pp. 35x38 cm. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Next year's Tolkien Calendar is illustrated in full colour by John Howe. As before, the illustrations are of scenes or characters from his various works.

In this case they are: January is of Old Man Willow from **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING**, February is a scene of orcs in Mordor from **THE RETURN OF THE KING**, March is a study of Galadriel from **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING**, April is the fight between Sam and Shelob from **THE TWO TOWERS**, May is The Company Of The Ring Approaching Caradhras from **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING**, June is the fight between Turambar and Glorund from **THE BOOK OF LOST TALES 2**, July is the scene At The Ford from **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING**, August is a view of Minas Tirith from **THE RETURN OF THE KING**, September is the fight between Glorfindel and the Balrog from **THE BOOK OF LOST TALES 2**, October is an illustration of The Dark Tower from **THE TWO TOWERS**, November is the fight between Eowyn and the Nazgul from **THE RETURN OF THE KING** and December is a scene of Gandalf striding along a dirt track.

The last leaf gives the page numbers of each book that the scenes are from. A collectors item.

THE KINDLY ONES by Melissa Scott. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C)1990. 371pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This is a completely different style of novel to her 5/12ths of Heaven series. **THE KINDLY ONES** is a well constructed sf novel set on a system whose two worlds are each much colder than the usual terrestrial planet, and the society so evolved had to have some strange twists to enable it to survive. That the conditions that pertained then had changed over the centuries was brought to the fore when two of the clan-like Families came into conflict. Because of outworlders there, one of the Families sought, and got, outworld weapons and totally destroyed the majority of the other Family.

The setup of the society, with its "social death" and "real death" is fascinating - the same thing has been tried with other sf novels, but Melissa Scott makes it work particularly well. Another thing noticeable in the novel is the predominance of female characters, which makes it a refreshing, if slightly harder to read, change.

Recommended.

THE RUBY KNIGHT by David Eddings. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1990. 347pp. A\$29.99. On sale now.

Another novel of The Ellanium from David Eddings. Eddings seems to have two series - The Ellanium and The Malloreon - going at the same time. Good if you can do it.

In **THE RUBY NIGHT** the small band of Church Knights are pursuing their quest in an attempt to retrieve the Bhellion. The blue sapphire had been lost for five hundred years when King Sarak and his small band had been killed in a fight. Many others had been killed since then looking for it but hadn't found it, although the many digs around the country-side attested to the attempts.

Eddings style is again seen in this novel. Some readers call it slow and ponderous, but it gives effective background detail to the characters and landscape. Some of the characters seem to be a little like others, but the long-lived wizards and other people have different drives, it is obvious. The secret behind the girl-child Flute is revealed. Excellent fantasy.

THE TIME-LAPSED MAN by Eric Brown. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1990. 216pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

The stories by the author appeared in **INTERZONE** and **OPUS** between 1987 and 1989. They are: **THE TIME-LAPSED MAN**; **THE KARMA-KID TRANSENDS**; **BIG TROUBLE UPSTAIRS**; **STAR-CRYSTALS AND KARMEL**; **KRASH-BANGG JOE AND THE PENEAL-ZEN EQUATION**; **PITHECANTHROPUS BLUES**; **THE GIRL WHO DIED FOR ART AND LIVED** and **THE INHERITORS OF EARTH**.

Throughout most of the above stories there runs a common thread that binds them together - a kind of common future with several things in common. One is the nada-dimension: a space-time continuum that enables man to go FTL. Another is the use of drugs - which is what, I suppose, acid shorts are and the extension of our society that Brown extrapolated will grow into his future. He has a strange writing style - it is almost naive and just manages to rub me the wrong way when I'm reading it. The plots of the stories aren't bad - just something needs polish. Still, a good first time collection.

TALES FROM PLANET EARTH by Arthur C. Clarke. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1950-1990. 313p. A\$9.95. On sale now.

A commendable collection of some of Clarke's short fiction. Some has been anthologised in other collections, but this is the time to get those that haven't.

The stories are: **THE ROAD TO THE SEA**; **HATE**; **PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN**; **THE OTHER TIGER**; **THE DEEP RANGE**; **"IF I FORGET THEE, OH EARTH..."**; **THE CRUEL SKY**; **THE PARASITE**; **THE NEXT TENANTS**; **SATURN RISING**; **THE MAN WHO PLOUGHED THE SEA**; **WALL OF DARKNESS**; **DEATH AND THE SENATOR**; **MAELSTROM II**; **SECOND DAWN** and **ON GOLDEN SEAS**. As can be seen, the above includes some stories that were the basis for future novels; others have been around for ages but have not been seen for some time.

All in all, a collection of the "hard" aspect of the author worth acquiring. If you don't have the majority of the above, then get this volume. At \$9.95 it is good value for money.

WARLOCK TO THE MAGIC BORN by Christopher Stasheff. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1969-1984. 696pp. A\$14.99. On sale now.

WARLOCK TO THE MAGIC BORN is a collection of three novels: **ESCAPE VELOCITY**; **THE WARLOCK IN SPITE OF HIMSELF** and **KING KOBOLD REVIVED**. **THE WARLOCK IN SPITE OF HIMSELF** was reviewed in **THE MENTOR** 39.

The first novel is purely space opera - with quite of bit of Stasheff's humour. Yes, these are the first three Warlock books, which were very trendy back in the sixties and continued along the trail of humorous science fantasy. **THE WARLOCK IN SPITE OF HIMSELF** introduces Rod and Fess, his computerised horse (which is actually a computer in a mechanical horse) and his adventures on a planet that has warlocks and where apparently magic works. **KING KOBOLD REVIVED** continues the story later with Rod fighting against a monster that had strong psi powers - King Kobold.

The writing is clear and the nearly 700 pages makes an excellent light read for fantasy fans and those who like humorous writing.

WINTER IN APHELION - The Adventures Of Skarry The Dreamer by Chris Dixon. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1989. 220pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Skarry was a simple sheep/goat herder. He was often tormented by the other children, being a loner. He goes along with the Dreamer, a man of intelligence, to see the Lord of the area his village was in, to warn him of recent events. With him is Ress, a girl he is attached to. The men they encounter are warriors and are rough and ready. Even the Lord is such, and it took the Dreamer to keep him from taking rash decisions against the barbarians.

Dixon has written a fantasy, set apparently on a new world, a world where the humans have a feudal type culture, but there are others who see clearer what is going on. There is more depth in this novel than if it was just a blood and guts type adventure story. The author has put feeling into his work.

WINTER IN APHELION is a solid read and the reader becomes interested in the characters. The background is well extrapolated and the society is what would have evolved in the climate postulated.

THE ARROW OF TIME by Peter Coveney & Roger Highfield. W.H. Allen h/c, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1990. 378pp incl Index. A\$.32.95. On sale now.

This book took me some time to read though, but it was well worth the effort. Dr Peter Coveney is a lecturer in Physical Chemistry at the University of Wales at Bangor and Dr Roger Highfield is the Science Editor of the DAILY TELEGRAPH. The book gives a history of the concept of time, from the ancients to the present day. A listing of chapter headings give some idea of the contents: Images of time; the rise of Newtonian physics: time loses its direction; Relativity: how time defeated Einstein; a quantum leap for time; The arrow of thermodynamics; Creative evolution; Arrow of time, arrow of life; A unified theory of time and The unending quest.

Briefly, the authors say that modern Relativity and Quantum theory both say that time is unidirectional - that time could run backward as well as forwards. However with thermodynamics, it must run one way. Life runs one way. With the step by step approach made, the reader can follow comparatively easy the arguments, ranging from the details of entropy to current Chaos theory (the book was written in the latter part of 1989). There is much information of genetic theory and biological (and chemical) clocks. All good stuff and fascinating.

I know that there are several reviewers of sf that also like hard sf and I also know that many writers (and readers) of sf are always looking for source works - this is one such.

TAKE BACK PLENTY by Colin Greenland. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 359pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

A "Space Extravaganza" with a woman as the lead. Tabitha Jute was the captain of an interplanetary cargo ship. It was an old ship but still went ok. It had an AI as pilot (built into the ship) and she was always short on cash. She was also down and out on a planet where the alien police had taken her in and booked her and the only way of paying the fine was to get some cargo somewhere. That was when Marco Metz turned up. He was good, both in bed and looks, but was shifty. He hired Tabitha and her ship and then brought his troupe on board (he had a club act). Two of the group were clones - male and female, and the other was a bird (the flying type). In no time at all the cops were after her again, and then after them all.

Greenland has set up an easy to follow plot line and the adventure is engrossing - most of the time the reader is guessing what is going on. Tabitha does not, like most female leads, fall for the male lead - in fact he gives her a pain. When they arrive on the asteroid Plenty Tabitha thought she would get her cash and be gone - but the alien that had sealed in humanity in the solar system had other ideas. Different space opera.

ROYAL CHAOS by Dan McGirt. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan books. (C) 1990 (I presume - there is no copyright acknowledgement). 246pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

This is the sequel to **JASON COSMO**. It is a humorous fantasy set in a world where gods, wizards and demons and orcs exist. Luckily the gods don't mix too much in human affairs - the humans have enough troubles of their own.

The book opens with the wedding of Mercury (a buddy of Cosmo) and Queen Raella. Unfortunately there is a terrorist attack and the Queen is blown away. Mercury is, needless to say, upset, especially when Thule Nethershawn takes over the reigns of government and attempts to destroy the royal armies. Jason escapes with Mercury and they both attempt to find out who was behind the killing of the Queen. They both think it had something to do with the Dark Magic Society, whose members were vying for the title of Overmaster. Some of the members, Necrophiliacs the Grave for one, were intent on doing the goodies instead of fighting between themselves, but if one of the other council members got in the way...

Pan has used the same cover artist as Corgi uses for Terry Pratchett's paperbacks - and the humour is much the same. Though if you do get both of Dixon's books, I wouldn't recommend reading them one after the other.

THE COLLOGHI CONSPIRACY by Douglas Hill. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 238pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

At last Aussie book prices are reflecting their true value. The UK cover price is £4.99 and the Aussie price is A\$9.95 - closer to the real thing.

THE COLLOGHI CONSPIRACY is a sequel to **THE FRAXILLY FRACAS** (mentioned below) and continues in the same humorous vein. Del Curb is still the same well (ahem!) dressed courier and has taken on the task of delivering the pod and (frozen) body of an ancient astronaut to the planet of Haitus. On the way, he awakens the long dormant slumberer and has to persuade the man to get back into the pod so he can deliver the cargo intact. Curb hopes that when the astronaut is "officially" revived he, Curb, will take over the appearances of the young man and make, as manager, oodles of money.

Events take over, however, especially when a mafia representative finds Curb and swears to kill him. Curb finds the secret behind the cryogenic facilities on the ice-world and is on the side of the natives who have been declared as 'semi' sapient. They have thick fur coats and a higher temperature than humans, but Curb finds out that their females are hotter in more ways than temperature.

Hill is a humorous writer and even though written in the first person, I found this novel easy reading.

PRINCE IVAN by Peter Morwood. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1990. A\$ On sale now.

Peter Morwood has written other fantasy than this - the series of books about the Horse Lords is one. In **PRINCE IVAN** he has joined an older tradition of fantasy - set in a present day country - in this case Russia - but postulating a past that did not exist. There are links with the past of the present Russia - the hero is Prince Ivan Aleksandrovich, the son of the local Tsar and the heroine is Mar'ya Morevna, a princess and a sorceress. It is not a historical romance - there are talking horses in the tale, and burning rivers and Tartars and wizards, etc.

The story is one of love and death and life everlasting. The villain is Koschchey the Undying. Neither swords nor poison can kill him, though such can kill the young Prince - as when Koschchey does when he cuts the Prince's head from his body with a single stroke of his heavy sword.

This is an action fantasy - and fans of this literature will find it exhilarating.

THE BICENTENNIAL MAN by Isaac Asimov. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C)

1976. 211pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This is a collection of twelve short stories by Asimov, that were originally published between 1966 and 1976. They are: THE PRIME OF LIFE; FEMININE INTUITION; WATERCLAP; THAT THOU ART MINDFUL OF HIM; STRANGER IN PARADISE; THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MULTIVAC; THE WINNOWING; THE BICENTENNIAL MAN; MARCHING IN; OLD-FASHIONED; THE TRICENTENARY INCIDENT and BIRTH OF A NOTION.

Each story has a short introduction. The reader is getting quite a bit for her/his money because not only is there 211 pages - it is in small typeface; in fact it looks almost as if the hardcover pages were photoreduced to produce the paperback. As is the case with most of Asimov's work, the stories are polished and well worth the purchase and reading. They have a range of subject matter, and there is a representation of many of his subjects, including this time a female robot.

If you don't want to miss any of his stories, get this book. It also makes a worthwhile addition to the home library of most readers. It is always good for a gift to someone just venturing into the deep waters of sf.

ORBITSVILLE JUDGMENT by Bob Shaw. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 281pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

This is the concluding novel of a trilogy. The other volumes were ORBITSVILLE and ORBITSVILLE DEPARTURE. Orbitville is a Dyson sphere built around a sun and has the interior surface area of billions of earths. To get into it one goes through a Portal, a circular hole that has a forcefield across it to stop the air escaping. Billions left earth for the virgin surface of the new world and the first two novels shown the discovering and setting up of the settlements. ORBITSVILLE DEPARTURE ended with Orbitville losing all contact with the outside and apparently departing for elsewhere.

ORBITSVILLE JUDGMENT opens with an Evangelicist arriving in a small village. There one of his flock seduces the local handyman and entices him to withdrawing all his cash and liquidate his assets to join her (figuratively speaking) in passing on God's message that Orbitville is a Trap. Shaw creates, as is his style, a natural sf premise and background, and adds the human equation. His characters are "ordinary" men and women - the ones you work with and meet in day to day life. They have their emotional problems and, as should be in good literature, they solve them and learn from them. Well constructed literature and sf. Worth reading - but get the other two (or at least read) before you start reading this one.

BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO ON... THE PLANET OF BOTTLED BRAINS by Harry Harrison & Robert Sheckley. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 236pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

The background of the cover illustration is bright purple, as is the actual hardcover. This is a good illustration of the type of prose inside.

If you have read the other two Bill novels (BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO and BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO ON THE PLANET OF ROBOT SLAVES - or is that Bill...etc retitled??) you will have some idea of this one. The story line seems to be made up as the author/s go along and goes from one cliff hanger to another. "It was at this precise moment that the new thing happened." ends Chapter six. I could really pick where Harrison or Sheckley was writing, except for the American slang terms and concepts. "Bronx" etc, that are sprinkled throughout.

About the story... Bill is sent on a mission to a planet which is perpetually surrounded in clouds, with the odd rift. When any spy ship gets near the rift it suddenly finds itself miles away. The Military think that they need the device responsible and send Bill in to get it. He comes across caricatures from Star Wars and Star Trek (Splock and Dirk, Ham Duo and Chewgumma the Kookie). There also appears Hannibal and mad computers and pneumatic well-built females. It makes, ah, "interesting" reading if you can take it light and frothy - very "frothy".

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM BOMBADIL by J.R.R. Tolkien. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 75pp. A\$10.95 (h/c \$19.95) On sale now.

This volume is classified on the back cover as "Children/Fantasy." Of course it can be read by children, but adults of all ages can read it too. The poems, songs and rhymes are taken from THE RED BOOK, and the verses are drawn from many sources - some were written by Bilbo and Sam Gamgee, some come from Gondor and some are elvish. There is a commonality in many of them that it is obvious that the authors are Hobbits.

Apart from the titled verse, THE ADVENTURES OF TOM BOMBADIL, the others are: BOMBADIL GOES BOATING; ERRANTRY; PRINCESS MEE; THE MAN IN THE MOON STAYED UP TOO LATE; THE MAN IN THE MOON CAME DOWN TOO SOON; THE STONE TROLL; PERRY-THE-WINKLE; THE MEWLIPS; OLIPHAUNT; FASTITOCALON; CAT; SHADOW-BRIDE; THE HOARD; THE SEA BELL and THE LAST SHIP, the latter being the last ship of elves sailing for Elvenhome and the crew trying to persuade Fíriel to join them. If you like the lay of Tolkien's poetry from LOTR you'll want this volume.

QUEEN OF ANGELS by Greg Bear. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 384pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Greg Bear is getting better and better as a writer and his growth is shown in this novel. I had trouble settling into it - it is set in the 21st Century and Greg uses 21st Century slang which takes getting used to - when the reader adapts to this the novel takes off.

There are four plots in the novel - one is the story of the first intelligent interstellar probe and what it finds in the Alpha Centauri star system. The second is the search by a Public Defender (a policewoman) for a multiple murderer. The third is the tale of a writer friend of the murderer as he tries to come to grips with the news, and the last is the story of the man and woman who attempt to penetrate the murderer's "Country of the Mind" to try to find out why the man murdered eight people.

The plots are interwoven and events in all of them bring to bear on the others one way or another. The background of the 21st Century is well extrapolated and I found the novel engrossing once I had established myself in it. This is another book that is going to make a big impression. *Recommended*.

ERIC by Terry Pratchett, illustrated by Josh Kirby. Gollancz pb, dis in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 126pp. 19.5 x 28 cm. A\$16.95. On sale now.

ERIC is another story about Discworld. The two main characters are again Rincewind and the Baggage. Another main character is Eric, a fourteen year old demonologist. In order to escape from Eric, Rincewind is forced to grant his three wishes. Which is kind of hard as Rincewind shouldn't be able to grant the wishes. *Someone* does, though, and the two find themselves in various adventures, with the baggage bowling in and saving the two when they (often) find themselves in tight spots.

The book is profusely illustrated in full colour by Josh Kirby, who usually does the covers for the novels, and who has his own distinctive style. Some of the illustrations cover two facing pages and are integrated with the text. There is even a full two-page illustration of the Discworld and the giant turtle and four elephants that support it. This makes a very good looking (and readable) volume. I am a fan of Pratchett's discworld books and found this book to be as humorous as the others.

If you wondered if there is a Hell in the Discworld pantheon then this will answer that question for you.

THE GHOST FROM THE GRAND BANKS by Arthur C. Clarke. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 253pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

This novel shows that Clarke hasn't lost his touch. It combines high-tech extrapolation with a

convincing background for 21st Century life.

THE GHOST FROM THE GRAND BANKS is the *Titanic* which sank there in 1912. The new millennium has created some new wealthy - and some of them are getting bored. When two groups thought to raise the *Titanic* for the centenary of the event - 2012 - they both had firm business reasons for doing so. One was a British group, and the other was Japanese based. They both knew that they couldn't display the wreck in the open air (it would decompose rapidly on exposure to air), so they both planned underwater viewing.

How the two groups meant to raise the wreck, which was in two parts, is an interesting technical problem for the author. I don't know much about mechanics, but it sounds feasible given the technology used. The social background of the future civilization is also extrapolated well - some of the moral attitudes were the results of two great 20th Century plagues and would likely turn out as Clarke says. A very readable "hard" sf adventure novel by one of the masters of the craft and set in a medium that he takes great interest in.

BREAKING STRAIN by Paul Preuss. Pan sf, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C)1987. 265pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

An adventure story set on various ships and stations around Venus. The main character is Sparta, an enhanced human female who has been given additions to her body that were thought would be of use to her in dangerous situations. She found herself as a Special Investigator for the Space Board, and also found that various people were after her - with the view of killing her, among other things.

One of the unfortunate occurrences about being an enhanced person - with powers beyond that of mortal men/women, is that some of the powers are unknown until an event comes up when they are needed. This is pretty hard on the reader when the heroine gets out of situations by seemingly the author's pulling something out of a hat.

Still, a well constructed adventure novel - especially the diagrams in the centre of the volume. Paul Preuss also wrote **BROKEN SYMMETRIES** (reviewed in TM 54) - which also showed he does his homework in creating believable cultures and backgrounds to his novels. It exhibits an obvious workmanship and no doubt is the first of several in this setting.

SOMA by Charles Platt. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988. 238pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

On the top of the cover of this novel is "Piers Anthony's Worlds of Chthon". The main character is a half human half Minionette, Aton-Five. He is a fairly brutal type, who is captured on Chthon and entered into a training program to hone his fighting prowess for the kidnappers own ends.

Aton spends most the novel in an orgy of destruction - killing and raping his way through many blood soaked scenes. The novel **SOMA** most reminds me of are those of John Norman. Not that there is the S&M type of sex - though it is mostly dominance that is shown, in that Aton invariable kills the women. **SOMA** is really a good example of the type of fantasy of the Sword and Violence genre, of which there aren't all that many around. John Norman is one such, but from what I can remember of reading in the original **CHTHON**, it didn't strike me as really having all that much blood and guts adventure.

SPOCK'S WORLD by Diane Duane. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1988. 310pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

This novel takes place back in the Old Star Trek universe, with Kirk and Spock and McCoy. Indeed, the illustration of Spock on the cover is that of the older Spock - from the times of the five movies.

Diane Duane has the background of the Federation and of the relationship between the three main characters seemingly down pat - there is the usual bantering between the three and of course the

(now) obligatory problem that puts strain on the relationship between Spock and Captain Kirk. In this case the planet Vulcan had come up with something that could shake the Federation - they plan to secede from it. The two other Vulcans that most readers/viewers know - Sarek and T'Pol are also involved. Soon the Three are in the thick of it when the *Enterprise* is sent to Vulcan.

The story is quite natural for Star Trek, and the action adventure is quite well plotted. This joins a long series of novels set in the Star Trek universe and the readers following them won't be disappointed with this one.

THE LOST YEARS by J.M. Dillard. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1989. 307pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

This is another novel set in the time of the old Star Trek. The time period is a little different this time in that it is set between the time of the TV series and the first motion picture (STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE) when Kirk is an Admiral. The five year mission is over and the various characters are furthering their own careers. One thing is interesting - on page 120 the author reveals that Star Fleet occupies *one wing* of one building.

The plot follows the three (and others of the crew) in their adventures and of course Dr McCoy gets into trouble - as do the others in the crew whose adventures are not usually followed in novels, though some of them have emotional tangles with yet others of the crew. There are a couple of things that will have to be thought over more in more depth in all future novels - smoking is one of them (one of the characters smokes a cigarette later in the novel). I notice that in THE GHOST FROM THE GRAND BANKS reviewed above, one of the jobs the main characters do is to go through all the old movies and edit out the scenes of people smoking as no-one wants to watch such disgusting habits on TV. In fact I've noticed this in myself watching the old Bogart and 1940's and '50's movies. A novel for the trekkers.

THE BUREAU OF LOST SOULS by Christopher Fowler. Arrow pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1989. 244pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

With the success of Christopher Fowler's ROOFWORLD (reviewed in TM 65) his publishers have looked around and found that he also wrote short stories. This is a collection of twelve of them, written in 1988 and 1989. They are not the traditional horror stories of vampyres, mummies, sex slashers and zombies, but all have that atmosphere that is of the true horror tale.

The stories are titled: THE ART NOUVEAU FIREPLACE; BOX; THE LADIES' MAN; THE SUN IN THE SANDS; HOT AIR; SHADOW PLAY; DECEIVING THE LIZARDS; JUMBO PORTIONS; SAFE AS HOUSES; THE MASTER BUILDER and THE BUREAU OF LOST SOULS. Each story is well written and set in the present day, with the people who live in cities and flats and who are like most other city dwellers. In THE MASTER BUILDER, for instance, the main character in the story hires a master builder to re-model her apartment. He does an excellent job, but before he is finished he rapes her, but in the act, before he has finished, because she has fantasized about him, she lets him go and when he does it again does nothing, though she does tell her girl friend. It is this friend who works out the puzzle of the flat and warns her just in time to save her life. Interesting reading.

GOOD OMENS by Terry Pratchett & Neil Gaiman. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 268pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

For once, GOOD OMENS isn't about the Discworld. It is about Agnus Nutter, witch, who has prophesised that the world will end on a Saturday, the next Saturday, in fact, just after tea. There are various characters involved in the plot: Crowley, who was once a serpent named Crawley who didn't like his name much and changed it...Aziraphale, an angel with a book shop in Soho, and the Antichrist, an eleven year old boy who is quite nice.

There were others around of course - the Four Motorcyclists of the Apocalypse for starters, who

all had their own jobs to do and wound up doing things to both help and hinder. Some of the plot sounds familiar... back eleven year before, three babies were born, two were in a hospice, the other... elsewhere. The babies were switched around... a certain baby who was actually the Antichrist ended up in place of Deidre Young's baby, who was carted off elsewhere.

As in all of Terry Pratchett's books they are a good light read and the humour is not too blatant. This one is a fantasy and is worth getting if you like British humour.

HEATHERN by Jack Womack. Unwyn Hyman h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 255pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Though this volume has 255 pages, the typeface is larger than usual. This isn't all to the bad, since Womack packs a lot into those pages and by the time the reader finishes the book he or she is sated.

As with his other novels, the world is later this century and is set in an America well on the way to economic ruin. Well, it *has* hit the bottom and is slowly wending its way back, though if Dryco has anything to do with it, it will take some time to get there. Dryco is The power in the USA. It holds political power, though the puppet Presidents and rigged elections, economic power through its deals with other governments and its takeovers of other businesses. It holds real power in that it tells the Army, which is intent on keeping the peace through the barrel of a gun, what to do. One thing that is different to such novels such as **AMBIENT** and **TERRAPLANE** is that **HEATHERN** deals with religion in a particularly American (read US) way.

These novels aren't true Cyberpunk, but the social atmosphere is the same. They *are* much easier to understand, though. I like them.

SALVAGE RITES by Ian Watson. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1989. 252pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

I haven't read many of Ian Watson's short stories (not reading the prozines...) so this volume was a pleasant surprise. This collection would be broadly classified as "speculative fiction". There is some sf, some fantasy and some horror.

The stories included are: **SALVAGE RITES**; **THE MOON AND MICHELANGELO**; **JEWELS IN AN ANGELS WING**; **THE LEGENT OF THE SEVEN WHO FOUND THE TRUE EGG OF LIGHTNING**; **HYPERZOO**; **LETTERS FROM THE MONKEY ALPHABET**; **DAY OF THE WOLF**; **THE MOLE FIELD**; **THE EMIR'S CLOCK**; **LOST BODIES**; **SAMATHIEL'S SUMMONS**; **AID FROM A VAMPIRE**; **WHEN JESUS COMES DOWN THE CHIMNEY**; **THE RESURRECTION MAN** and **JOAN'S WORLD**. The title story, **SALVAGE RITES**, is a little horrific tale of a couple who take some time to clean up their house and get all their rubbish together and take it to the local dump. When they arrive there they find bins to help pre-sort the rubbish out - paper, glass etc. They throw various things in and drive off down the seemingly endless alleys, lined with the giant bins. The story is much like that endless elevator story of, I think it was Ellison. There is, however, another nasty surprise at the end which the discerning reader will guess at.

I liked the whimsical story **WHEN JESUS COMES DOWN THE CHIMNEY**, too. Of course it *is* nearly Christmas.

DICTIONARY OF SCIENCE FOR EVERYONE, ed. by Herman & Leo Schneider. Bloomsbury pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1988. 324pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

This is a very good reference book for those, writers, students and everyday readers, who want a basic explanation of scientific terms. It has been written "for scientists and non scientists" and is a cross between a dictionary and a small encyclopaedia. The authors selected more than 1000 common words of science using statistical importance (frequency of terms used in the media), portmanteau value, whim and door opening value (for entrance for further sophistication).

The words range from "absolute zero", through to "coroilis effect" to "greenhouse effect" to

"water cycle". Throughout there are clear illustrations showing how each term and effect happens or is used. The section on the "greenhouse effect" for instance explains that the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere, currently 0.035% will double in less than a century, causing an increase of between 3 and 4 degrees C in less than a century. The melting of the icecaps this will cause will raise sea levels by 70 cms.

The **DICTIONARY OF SCIENCE FOR EVERYONE** is an excellent addendum to the home library and would be useful for school students.

THE STONE GIANT by James P. Blaylock. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1989. 331pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

There is a quote from Philip K. Dick on the front cover which I had to think about how it came about: "A magical world. Magically presented... having journeyed there, you will not wish to leave, nor ever to forget." Since the novel was not copyrighted till '89, he must have been writing about previous novels set in the same "world". And he was: the previous novels were **THE ELFIN SHIP** and **THE DISAPPEARING DWARF**.

Theophile Escargot was thrown out of his home town for stealing his own pie and he decides rather than to settle down in a nearby town, to explore his world, specifically Balumnia. He has adventures along the way and meets up with Professor Wurzle and is kidnapped onto an elfin ship and taken aloft by Captain Appleby. There is also Leta, a lovely girl who he is determined to rescue and he has hopes of discovering if he himself is an ordinary native of the land or has wizardly powers himself.

Blaylock has built on his earlier novels and is creating a reputation for himself with these novels of the elfin ships and goblins and the strange people of Twombly Town.

SUGAR RAIN by Paul Park. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1989. 384pp. A\$14.99. On sale now.

SUGAR RAIN is the sequel to **SOLDIERS OF PARADISE** (which I haven't read). It is an sf novel, set on Paradise and in the city state of Charn. The natives are downtrodden and are subject to the Starbridge - the ruling classes - Judges, princes, and financiers. The next down are those of the guilds - artisans and craftsmen. Tradesmen and merchants are lower, as then are soldiers and slaves. Beyond these are the outcasts - antinomians, adventists, cannibals, carnivores and others.

The novel is about the search for enlightenment and for each other when two lovers are separated. They spend most of the novel searching. The complicated machinations of the politics and the thrusting and retreating is shown with acumen by Park.

Though 384pp the print is larger than usual, which makes it easier to read. The language Park employs is clear and easy to engross yourself in. He writes good action adventure sf and has created a stimulating world.

STONE OF FAREWELL by Tad Williams. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1990. 589pp incl indices. A\$17.95. On sale now.

STONE OF FAREWELL is the sequel to **THE DRAGONBONE CHAIR** (reviewed in TM 66), which was also a large novel. They are both fantasies, set in the same country - that of Osten Ard, where the Kingdom of Prester John exists in sorrowful times. King Elias is now king and growing madder by the day. His brother, Josua, escapes the castle with his life and is in the process of gathering followers to destroy the mad king and take over the rapidly devolving kingdom.

Simon, the young man who had been schooled by the scholar Doctor Morganes, also escapes and in his journeys he meets up with Princess Mariamele - disguised as a servant girl - and they eventually find the castle fortified by Josua. In **STONE OF FAREWELL** the adventure continues and the reader will find her/himself engrossed in the tale. Tad Williams is one of the still elite band of fantasy writers who are at the apex of the genre. When the "Memory, Sorrow and Thorn" series is completed it will be a volume that will have made his name.

THE GAP INTO CONFLICT : THE REAL STORY by Stephen Donaldson. Collins h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1990. 173pp incl Afterword. A\$24.95. On sale now.

This looks like a slim volume, but the contents are meaty. It is, except for a short story, the first science fiction written by Donaldson that I've read. When I started reading it I wasn't sure that I would like it - his fantasy I found very heavy going.

THE REAL STORY is a space opera set in the ore mining belts of interstellar space. There is a giant mining company running the place, since Earth is too far away for it to have any force. There are pirates, who steal and murder much as they will. There is a police force, but it is spread thin among the Company's stations. The central piece of the plot is a triangle - one woman and two men. The story focuses on one of the men - Angus Thermopyle - when he helps destroy the family ship Morn, the woman, was crew. He kidnaps her and uses her, physically and mentally, trying to break her. She does break, Angus's disgusting personal habits and violent fits over time destroying her. The other man, Nick Succorso, is also a pirate, but a more swashbuckling one. In the end he takes Morn off Angus's hands and makes off with her.

I think the novel could do without the Afterword - it is almost as if Donaldson is trying to make excuses for himself with it. It demeans the book, which is really an engrossing adventure, with deeper overtones.

THE GREAT SF STORIES 21 (1959) ed. by Isaac Asimov & Martin Greenberg. DAW pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 347pp. A\$8.99. On sale now.

There is an Introduction to the year 1959, followed by fourteen stories in the volume, with introductions by the editors. The stories are: MAKE A PERSON by Lawrence Block; THE WIND PEOPLE by Marion Zimmer Bradley; NO, NO, NOT ROGOV! by Cordwainer Smith; WHAT ROUGH BEAST by Damon Knight; THE ALLEY MAN by Philip Jose Farmer; DAY AT THE BEACH by Carol Emshwiller; THE MALTED MILK MONSTER by William Tenn; THE WORLD OF HEART'S DESIRE by Robert Sheckley; THE MAN WHO LOST THE SEA by Theodore Sturgeon; A DEATH IN THE HOUSE by Clifford Simak; THE PI MAN by Alfred Bester; MULTUM IN PARVO by Jack Sharkey; WHAT NOW LITTLE MAN? by Mark Clifton and ADRIFT ON THE POLICY LEVEL by Chandler David.

Many of these stories are well known, and some haven't seen the light of day for many years. Several of the authors - Karen Emshwiller and Chandler David are not seen often in the collections of short stories published in paperback collections these days, others, like Zimmer Bradley, Farmer and Simak are still in print, with short stories and novels. If you haven't read the majority of these stories then by all means get this book. It is well worth it.

STARSWARM by Brian Aldiss. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1964. 190pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Collections of short stories seem to be making headway again at last, or at least they are being reprinted. This still shows that sf is a market for the short story.

STARSWARM is set out with introductions written as if the stories included were examples of what humans turned into when they left Earth and went to the stars. The stories range in years of publication from 1958 to 1963. They are a good example of the author's output of his space opera short stories, ending with the classic OLD HUNDREDTH.

The stories are: A KIND OF ARTISTRY; HEARTS AND ENGINES; THE UNDERPRIVILEGED; THE GAME OF GOD; SHARDS; LEGEND OF SMITH'S BURST; O MOON OF MY DELIGHT and OLD HUNDREDTH. They show in themselves how Aldiss created a niche for himself in the English sf world and, together with his novels and the volumes he has edited, has quite a large section of library shelves to himself. This is another book to get if the reader does not have it already.

THE WIND FROM THE SUN by Arthur C. Clarke. VGSF pb, dist. in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1962-1972. 193pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

I originally reviewed this book back in TM 47, but, since most of TMs current crop of readers wouldn't have seen that issue from back in December 1983, I'll mention it again. The stories included range from space opera, through to vignettes. They are all readable, even twenty or more years on. Some fiction does not age.

In TM 47 I said it was the first time I had read many of the stories in the volume and that it was a book worth getting. The stories are: THE FOOD OF THE GODS; MAELSTROM II; THE SHINING ONES; THE WIND FROM THE SUN; THE SECRET; THE LAST COMMAND; DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN; RENUNION; PLAYBACK; THE LIGHT OF DARKNESS; THE LONGEST SCIENCE FICTION STORY EVER TOLD; HERBERT GEORGE MORLEY ROBERTS WELLS, ESQ.; LOVE THAT UNIVERSE; CRUSADE; THE CRUEL SKY; NEUTRON TIDE; TRANSIT OF EARTH and A MEETING WITH MEDUSA. The last story is now well known, as is the title story, about the sunjammers. The others are well worth reading and are good examples of Clarke's abilities. They are the type of collection that make the backbone of a good library for the sf reader.

THE BUREAU OF LOST SOULS by Christopher Fowler. Arrow pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1989. 244pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

With the success of Christopher Fowler's ROOFWORLD (reviewed in TM 65) his publishers have looked around and found that he also wrote short stories. This is a collection of twelve of them, written in 1988 and 1989. They are not the traditional horror stories of vampyres, mummies, slashers and zombies, but all have that atmosphere that is of the true horror tale.

The stories are titled: THE ART NOUVEAU FIREPLACE; BOX; THE LADIES' MAN; THE SUN IN THE SANDS; HOT AIR; SHADOW PLAY; DECEIVING THE LIZARDS; JUMBO PORTIONS; SAFE AS HOUSES; THE MASTER BUILDER and THE BUREAU OF LOST SOULS. Each story is well written and set in the present day, with the people who live in cities and flats and who are like most other city dwellers. In THE MASTER BUILDER, for instance, the main character in the story hires a master builder to re-model her apartment. He does a good job, but before he is finished he rapes her, but in the act, before he has finished, because she has fantasized about him, she lets him go and when he does it again does nothing, though she does tell her girl friend. It is this friend who works out the puzzle of the flat and warns her just in time to save her life. Good reading.

MIDNIGHT'S SUN by Garry Kilworth. Unwin Hyman h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 316pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

MIDNIGHT'S SUN joins those fantasy novels that have animals as the central characters, though animals that talk as humans.

In this case the animals are wolves - wild wolves. There are two packs involved, and much of the action is between the leaders of the two packs. Athaba is one of a litter of five cubs born to the she-wolf Meshiska. The climate was cold and bleak and the wolves found themselves forced to look for food around the human settlements. It was while there that Athada was taken captive and locked into a cage for display. He had to adapt to the human food and water and became quite attached to the southern hunter who had captured him.

The novel is of a par with those which have been published recently - rabbits, bears, foxes and owls. It is competently written, but such a market surely does not have an enormous audience - it will only be a matter of time before the readership grows weary of such. Still, it is easy reading for several hours.

HEATSEEKER by John Shirley. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988. 364pp.

A\$10.99. On sale now.

This is a collection of short stories by one of the writers who is linked with the "cyberpunk" stylists. To reinforce that, there is a Foreword by Stephen P. Brown and an Introduction by William Gibson.

The stories themselves stand on their own and show an intensity that is an eye-opener to the casual reader. After reading about two-thirds of the book I found that I needed to give my brain a rest for a day or two and then continued reading. The stories are: WHAT CINDY SAW; UNDER THE GENERATOR; SLEEPWAKERS; TAHITI IN TERMS OF SQUARES; SILENT CRICKETS; I LIVE IN ELIZABETH; THE ALMOST EMPTY ROOMS; THE GUNSHOT; EQUILIBRIUM; UNEASY CRHYSALIDS, OUR MEMORIES; QUILL TRIPSTICKLER ELUDES A BRIDE; RECURRENT DREAMS OF NUCLEAR WAR LEAD B.T. QUIZENBAUM INTO MORAL DISSOLUTION; WHAT'S IT LIKE TO KILL A MAN; TRIGGERING; SIX KINDS OF DARKNESS; THE UNFOLDING (with Bruce Sterling); THE PECULIAR HAPPINESS OF PROFESSOR CORT; TICKET TO HEAVEN and WOLVES OF THE PLATEAU. Nearly every one is sf or science fantasy, including TICKET TO HEAVEN, about a advertising man's dilemma as to whether to use his ticket to go to Heaven or not. Some are Cold War stories, and thus will now age, others, such as THE UNFOLDING, will probably never age. Good, gutsy sf.

THE MACE OF SOULS by Bruce Fergusson. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1989. 321pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

As with **THE SHADOW OF HIS WINGS**, **THE MACE OF SOULS** is set in the Six Kingdoms, a brutal land that Falca Breks had lived in for all his life as a thief and an inhabitant of which had captured Amala's essence and placed in in a jewel studded mace. Falca determines to steal the mace from the sect that had created it and somehow get her soul back into her mindless body.

He is accompanied on the quest by two companions - Ballast, a stoneskin warrior and Frikko, a small woman, who as the three batter their way through their adventures become slightly the worse for wear. By the end of the novel many people have died in blood and the quest is nearly finished.

SHADOW OF HIS WINGS was published in hardcover in 1987; I haven't seen the paperback yet, though I presume it was released later. Both that novel and **THE MACE OF SOULS** are good fantasy adventure novels that ensure a pleasant read for several hours. They are well written and have easy to follow plots - standard Quest, though better written than many.

THE DARK DESCENT 2: THE MEDUSA IN THE SHIELD ed by David G. Hartwell. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1930-1980. 368pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

THE DARK DESCENT is volume 2 of a three volume series presenting a wide spectrum of horror fiction, from Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner, Thomas M. Disch, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harlan Ellison, Oliver Onions, Edith Wharton and Gene Wolfe.

The present volume has another eclectic selection with the following stories comprising this part of the set: **THE SWORDS** by Robert Aickman; **THE ROACHES** by Thomas M. Disch; **BRIGHT SEGMENT** by Theodore Sturgeon; **DREAD** by Clive Barker; **THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER** by Edgar Allan Poe; **THE MONKEY** by Stephen King; **WITHIN THE WALLS OF TYPE** by Michael Bishop; **THE RATS IN THE WALLS** by H.P. Lovecraft; **SCHALKEN THE PAINTER** by J. Sheridan Le Fanu; **THE YELLOW WALLPAPER** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman; **A ROSE FOR EMILY** by William Faulkner; **HOW LOVE CAME TO PROFESSOR GUILDEA** by Robert Hichens; **BORN OF MAN AND WOMAN** by Richard Matheson; **MY DEAR EMILY** by Joanna Russ; **YOU CAN GO NOW** by Dennis Etchison; **THE ROCKING-HORSE WINNER** by D.H. Lawrence; **THREE DAYS** by Tannith Lee; **GOOD COUNTRY PEOPLE** by Flannery O'Connor; **MACKINTOSH WILLY** by Ramsey Campbell and **THE JOLLY CORNER** by Henry James.

As you can see, there is something old, something new, something borrowed (from the mainstream) and something blew. This is set is a must for the serious reader.

THE EMBEDDING by Ian Watson. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1973. 254pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

Though **THE EMBEDDING** was written nearly twenty years ago, it has hardly aged. The politics are still the same as now - South America does not appear to have changed from Watson's image of it back in the early 1970s.

The Embedding referred to is that of language. The novel commences at a Hospital somewhere in England, where Indian refugee children are experimented on by being given a new drug which enables the brain to process information, or ideas, in a way not tried before. There are several plots, though they are not sub - more like a branching of the main plotline. Aliens arrive on earth in passing their way from 'trading post' to 'trading post'. They are looking for a way to another reality at right angles to our. They offer to swap information on a stardrive for six live human brains fluent in six languages. Another piece of the plot is set in the Amazon jungle where a primitive tribe is fighting in its own way to keep their land from being turned into a lake by dams spanning the Amazon.

I found the novel engrossing and an excellent study in the role of language in the structure of reality.

SHOWBOAT WORLD by Jack Vance. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1975. 171pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This is a novel set on Big Planet, the 15,000 in diameter planet that was settled by all the people escaping Earth and wanting to do their own thing. That novel, **BIG PLANET**, was reviewed in TM 65. **SHOWBOAT WORLD** is not linked to the previous novel - it is about two rivals who are running Showboats up and down the rivers in a part of that world. Apollon Zamp was a flamboyant captain, and his rival was Garth Ashgale, the captain of *Fironzelle's Golden Conceit*. All was going their normal way until Zamp won a contest to display his boat's talents before a far-away king. He took up the acting services of a young blonde woman, who also wanted to go there.

Vance's backgrounds are always striking and **SHOWBOAT WORLD** is not the exception. The description of the society and the clothes and foods etc are still Vance at his best. He writes good sf adventure with that exotic feel.

FARMER IN THE SKY by Robert A. Heinlein. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1950. 224pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

I'm reading all these re-issued Heinleins for the first time. I don't know why I didn't read all these novels back in the 1960's and '70's, but I didn't. However, now is a good time to get stuck into these oldies. They are solid and convincing sf and still read well now, forty years on.

FARMER IN THE SKY is about the colonisation of Ganymede. And it is a story of a real colonisation - the story is about colonists. They arrive on the *Mayflower*, a converted starship and they land on a small shuttle. This should have given them some idea of what to expect. The Colonisation Board had sent the original Ganymedians 3,000 people instead of the machinery that they had asked for. Things were rough and ready because of this and many of the "colonists" soon found they had to help out the settlements instead of starting their farms straight away. A bit of settling did take place, until an astronomical event really disrupted events and took of a heavy toll of human life and machinery.

These novels which have adolescents as the central characters were where many of the new younger sf readers came in and then stayed on. Heinlein was one of the main stays of sf writing for many years after that.

POLYPHEMUS by Michael Shea. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1979/87. 288pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

POLYPHEMUS is both a representative collection of Michael Shea's best stories and the name of the lead novelette. The other stories are : THE ANGEL OF DEATH; UNCLE TUGGS; THE PEARLS OF THE VAMPIRE QUEEN; THE HORROR ON THE #33; THE EXTRA; THE AUTOPSY.

There is an introduction by Algis Budrys to the collection. Just what kind of story is included can be worked out from the original publication: all but one were published in the MAGAZINE OF F&SF. They all have a touch of horror in their makeup. POLYPHEMUS is probably the most "sf" of the lot, with THE EXTRA a close second. THE PEARLS OF THE VAMPIRE QUEEN is good science fantasy, set in one of Jack Vance's worlds, with the main character Niff the Lean. THE ANGEL OF DEATH is about an encounter between an insane human and an alien (not two interstellar ambassadors, as the blurb on the back cover states). UNCLE TUGGS is straight horror, with maligning machinery; THE HORROR ON THE #33 is why you don't want to become too friendly with bag-women (or men), and THE AUTOPSY is a combination of sf and horror and is very outstanding. A collection well worth the \$10.

HALL OF WHISPERS by Mike Jefferies. Fontana pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1990. 414pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

HALL OF WHISPERS is Book Two of the duology The Heirs to Gnarlsmyre, the first book being GLITTERSPIKE HALL, reviewed in TM 68.

The land of Gnarlsmyre is still struggling with all that trouble that came with all the trouble that came with the death of the hated Lord of the realm, that left the land under the rule of one of his many daughters, Marrimian, the eldest. Unfortunately, as in many cases, the inhabitants did not like the idea of a woman ruling and making all the decisions and although Marrimian had the intelligence and most of the background to make a good ruler, they still didn't like the notion. Food was in short supply and Ere and her cronies were plotting her dethronement and the destruction of all that she and her family represented. They planned to use Marrimian's sister to do the dirty work and thought they would have a good chance at doing it.

As with the first volume, the writing is clear and Jefferies gives good depth to the characters and to the background. It makes a short, and good fantasy series.

DARK FANTASIES ed. by Chris Morgan. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1989. 319pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

In the Introduction by the editor, Chris Morgan gives a short resume as to the type of story in this collection. He says that much of modern horror fiction is "graphic" horror (the Intro is titled "No slime, no chain saws"; the fiction in this volume is "dark fantasy", as he puts it - it is subtle horror.

The stories included are: THE WILL by Brian Stableford; URSURPER by Garry Kilworth; LIFE LINE by Stephen Gallagher; CHARLEY by A.L. Barker; CANDLE LIES by R.M. Lamming; TALES FROM WESTON WILLOW by Ian Watson; THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MICKY VALDON by David Langford; SHINE FOR ME by Freda Warrington; LIFELINES by Christopher Evans; DROPPING GHYLL by John Brunner; DON'T GET LOST by Tannith Lee; ARCHWAY by Nicholas Royle; BEING AN ANGEL by Ramsey Campbell; INTERESTING TIMES by Chris Morgan; SKIN DEEP by Lisa Tuttle and THREE DEGREES OVER by Brian Aldiss.

I don't know if the stories have been published elsewhere; somehow I think not. The cover shows an old house in the middle of a lightning storm, with ivy growing up to the first floor windows. For fans of speculative fiction of the old sort.

PACIFIC EDGE by Kim Stanley Robinson. Unwin Hyman h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1990. 280pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

First off, PACIFIC EDGE is a well-extrapolated novel of the 21st Century - 2065, to be exact. It gives a good feel for the society and the characters inhabiting it; however it is set in California and most of the problems faced by said characters are concerning the council of the small town it is set on

- the problem of water distribution and whether the town should build on the last "wilderness" hills in the area. All to the good for the Green vote...

This isn't all that the novel is about, of course - one of the personalities is that of an old war-horse who in the good old days when business was being cut down from multi-nationals to small businesses was in the thick of it. His grandson now found *himself* in the thick of it and called on his grandpa for help. Said grandson also had personal problems when he went to bed with his old childhood sweetheart after she broke up with her old boyfriend, and then later went back to him. They did say that sf needs character filling in, but did they really mean this type of filling in and problem solving?

THE COMING OF WISDOM by Dave Duncan. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1988. 337pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The first book in the Seventh Sword series was **THE RELUCTANT SWORDSMAN**; **THE COMING OF WISDOM** is book three. I haven't read book one.

Fantasies range over quite some spans of time and places - this one is a quest novel, of a sort. There is a Hero, with six companions and a riddle to answer. The world has swordsmen, priestesses and sorcerers, as well as many battles and adventures for the seven. The Hero is Wallie - a man who had wakened to find himself on another world in another body. Duncan's writing is free-flowing and the novel soon is deep into the action. It's 337 pages make rattling good adventure as more and more is revealed as the group battle on.

An adventure story that makes reading a pleasure and time enough for an enjoyable hour or so.

LEGEND, THE KING BEYOND THE GATE and **QUEST FOR LOST HEROES** by David Gemmell. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1985, 1986 & 1990. 431, 414 & 316pp. A\$10.95x2 & \$9.95. On sale now.

LEGEND was first reviewed in TM 50. It concerned the exploits of a living legend - Druss the Axe, who had made his mark years before and now found himself again called upon to defend the kingdom he had helped save. However now he is an old man, but still with many of his old strengths. The fortress he is to help defend is Dros Delnoch, with its six walls built by a military genius of ancient times. The hordes they had to turn back, or at least hold, were the terror of the world. They numbered some 500,000 strong. There were other characters, but Druss is the most outstanding. The former Earl's daughter was a hellion, and the man she married was notable for his disappearing when the going got rough. Well written and thought out.

Back then I *Recommended* **LEGEND**, and now Random Century seem to be re-releasing the entire Drenai series. The only book I haven't received is **WAYLANDER**, which may or may not be being re-released. I'll let you know.

The other two novels are part of the legend but are complete, separate identities and can be read separately. David Gemmell is an English fantasy writer and is very good at his craft. Get these if you like good fantasy adventure.

IVORY by Mike Resnick. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1988. 372pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

IVORY is about the search for the tusks of the Kilimanjaro elephant across thousands of years. The search itself takes place in the year 6304 G.E. The person doing the actual computer search is Duncan Rojas, a research consultant for a publishing house specialising in sports trophies. He is approached by Bukoba Mandaka, the last living Maasai, to find the tusks and is promised a large monetary award.

Rojas searches through the records and finds traces of the tusks throughout Earth and other planets of the explored galaxy. At last he narrows the search down to one planet and they both go there to verify the find. That the elephant actually existed is demonstrated by the photograph on the

interior title page from an auction in 1898. The Kilimanjaro elephant was possibly the largest land animal to exist (it's trunk could reach higher than a giraffe and a man's head came halfway up its leg). The novel is an interesting extrapolation of the way in which this giant elephant lived and died.

REPLAY by Ken Grimwood. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1986. 366pp. A\$9.99. On sale now.

This is one of those novels that once you start reading, you can't put down until you finish. It isn't really "hard" sf - I don't know if you could call it sf at all - probably speculative fiction is the closest to a genre label.

Jeff Winston had a heart attack while talking to his wife on the phone. He came to consciousness back in 1963 in his own body as a boy of eighteen. It took some getting used to, but he settled down and lived that life again, but with the information he had gathered as a radio newsman he had at his fingertips knowledge of how political events went, which horses won which races, and the like. Thus he was able to amass quite a considerable fortune, until he reached that day when, in his other life, he had the heart attack. It happened again... and he awoke again, back in 1963... That time around he was more depressed and when he again reached that certain date he had a medical team waiting - but it did him no good.

The next time around he met another who had died and had been resurrected - and the two of them pooled their knowledge - and went to the press. Good fantasy. *Recommended*

PIONEERS by Phillip Mann. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988. 352pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

PIONEERS is by the author of another sf series I took a fondness for: that of Paxwax.

The narrator of the novel is a genetically altered individual who, together with his female human partner, are sent to trace the earlier individuals who left earth for alien worlds to colonise. They are, naturally, called Pioneers. It is their job to rescue said Pioneers and bring them back to earth. This they do to the best of their abilities. However even with the use of suspended animation tanks, their bodies don't change, but with speeds close to light, time on earth does, and when they return from one of their trips they find that civilisation there has fallen and the once great people that sent them forth are gone.

The two were specially bred for their work and the residue of the society that is left is no real place for two such as they. They find it almost impossible to adapt and must make up their minds what to do. Mann is a good writer and this is entertaining reading.

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED IN THE MENTOR:

THE LAST COIN by James P. Blaylock. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. A\$9.95. On sale now. A fantasy concerning thirty silver coins that have been around at least 2,000 years... A young couple living in the USA, Andrew and Rose, soon found that those coins held the secrets of life and death - possibly their own.

ETERNITY by Greg Bear. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. A\$10.95. On sale now. Reviewed in TM 66. The sequel to EON. A time spanning novel with more on Thistledown, the asteroid starship that was more; Gaia, the world found through the use of the Way, a gigantic "tube" that stretched across space and into the far future that held secrets and puzzles that would bring more than one race to its downfall.

THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW by Clive Barker. Fontana pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. A\$11.99. On sale now. An enormous book of fantasy, set in Palomo Grove in the US, the novel follows the fight between two men - one dark and corrupt, the other representing virtue. They had fought to a standstill, and then both had children and planned to use these to end the way. They did, in a strange, distorted house....

WOLF'S BROTHER by Megan Lindholm. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. A\$9.95. On sale now. Reviewed in THE MENTOR 66. Set in the far past, the plot follows Kerlew and his mother as she fends off the attentions of an ancient shaman and the other men of the tribe. She was an outcast several times, but has managed to survive even this. Till it all came to a head....

THE CHILD GARDEN by Geoff Ryman. Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. A\$9.95. On sale now. Reviewed in TM 66. Winner of the Arthur C. Clarke Award. Set in a Britain that is sweltering in a changed climate, with the population eating from rice paddies home grown. A future history of tailored viruses and changing flesh.

THE FRAXILLY FRACAS by Douglas Hill. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. A\$9.95. On sale now. Reviewed in TM 65. There are not that many *good* humorous sf novels - this is one of them. When a man and a woman team up to make money one presumes that their relationship will be smooth - not the team of Curb and Sergia, though. Get it for a lot of long laughs.

NECROSCOPE III - THE SOURCE by Brian Lumley. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. 528pp. A\$10.95. On sale 11/90. I don't usually review vampire books, unless they contain a certain amount of sf. This volume doesn't. Still, if you like horror novels, in this case a vampire talent in the present day, this one may be for you.

THE MASK by Stuart Gordon. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. A\$10.95. On sale now. A fantasy set in the present time. The last novel in The Watchers trilogy. (The others are ARCHON and THE HIDDEN WORLD). In this volume, the Millennium is coming to fruition and Azazel is preparing to take over the earth and destroy mankind.

THE DRAWING OF THE THREE by Stephen King. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. 399pp. A\$9.99. On sale now. A mention of the latest series by Stephen King - a horror/fantasy series. This could be a link between the two genres - it hasn't taken off as well as his other horror stories; maybe it is too subtle?

WYVERN by A. A. Attanasio. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. A\$10.95. On sale now. Reviewed in TM 64. I suppose you could call this novel a "historical fantasy" - it is set in the 1600s, and tells of Jaki Gefjon and his strange adventures in the Pacific and the Americas. Well written drama.

2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY by Arthur C. Clarke. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. A\$8.95. On sale now. The classic first contact story by Arthur C. Clarke. Made into a series of movies. If you had trouble following the first movie, then you'll need to read the book to have it explained to you.

FORTUNE OF FEAR by L Ron Hubbard. New Era pb, dist in Aust by N. E. Publications. A\$9.95. On sale now. One of the Mission Earth decology. First reviewed in TM 62c. Heller is gambling on the Futures market, rumbling with the Mafia and running away from the Countess Krak in addition to fumbling with the girls of the Gracious Palms bordello.

UNICORN MOUNTAIN by Michael Bishop. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. A\$10.9. On sale now. Reviewed in TM 66. The story about the mountain and its unicorns, and the four people who work together to try to save them from a disease that is killing them. Set in present day USA. A strange tale and if unicorns are your thing...

THE DRAGONBONE CHAIR by Tad Williams. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. A\$12.95. On sale now. Reviewed in TM 66. A giant of a book at 912 pages, this book would usually have been made into a trilogy. A tale of wizardry, and a friendship that endured. Good fantasy and reading for those long winter nights...

NEMESIS by Isaac Asimov. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 447pp. A\$9.95. On sale now. Asimov's latest. The h/c was reviewed in TM 66. A red dwarf is moving speedily towards the sun, and earth will be destroyed. A new space drive has enabled an earth colony to escape earth and it is now circling the red star. Can humanity escape the disaster?

KEEPER OF THE KEYS by Janny Wurts. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1988. 350pp. A\$9.99. On sale now. This book has a January release date, but the hardcover was also reviewed in TM 66. The second volume of The Cycle of Fire series. **STORMWARDEN** (reviewed TM 64) is volume one. Engrossing fantasy.

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

HOUGHTON MIFFIN **TENANU** by Ursula Le Guin
 ROBOT VISIONS by Isaac Asimov
 THE DIFFERENCE ENGINE by Bruce Sterling
 THE DOSADI EXPERIMENT by Frank Herbert
 THE WORLD INSIDE by Robert Silverberg
 THE DAYS OF PERKY PAT by Philip K. Dick
 SUMMERTIDE by Charles Sheffield
 BERSERKER BLUE DEATH by Fred Saberhagen
 THE TWILIGHT OF BRIAREUS by R. Cowper
 WILD SEED by O. Butler
 FATHER TO THE MAN by J. Gribbin.
 LITTLE BLACK BOX by Philip K. Dick

PENGUIN **THE WYVERN'S SPUR** by Grubb
 THE KILLING BLOW by Richard La Plante
 WARLORD OF ZENDOW by Richard La Plante
 POOL OF RADIANCE by Hong & Ward
 BUCK ROGERS: HAMMER OF MARS by M.S. Murdock

HAFLING'S GEM by R.A. Salvadore
ARMAGEDDON CRAZY by Mick Farren
THE PLAINS by Gerlad Murmane
CONAN CHRONICLES V.1 & 2 by Robert E. Howard
DRAGONREALM by Richard Knaak
STARFIRE by Paul Preuss
WHERE DRAGONS LIE by R.A.V. Salsitz

ALLEN & UNWIN FORESTS OF THE NIGHT by Tanith Lee
MIDNIGHT'S SUN by Gary Kilworth

TRANSWORLD JOHN GLEN: SPACE PILOT
JITTERBUG PERFUME by Tom Robbins
THE ROWAN by Anne McCaffrey (h/c)

PENGUIN KAZ THE MINOTAUR by Richard Knaak

COLLINS/A&R COUNTER CLOCK WORLD by Philip K. Dick
THE STONE GIANT by James P. Blaylock
SUGAR RAIN by Paul Park

RANDOM CENTURY KALIMANTAN by Lucius Shepard (h/c)



DITMAR NOMINATIONS (and VOTING)

Enclosed in this issue of THE MENTOR are some Ditmar nomination forms. You should get them in time to nominate what/who you like by the 14 Jan. All being well I will include the Voting forms in the next issue of TM.

About the only thing I can recommend is for the Best Professional magazine section. (If there isn't one, there should be). I've just received in the mail a copy of SYZYG. Not only is it the best new professional (paying) sf magazine from Queensland in 1990; it's FREE! This sure beats any of those other newsagents distributed magazines that charge you to get them.

It's available from: SYZYG Magazine, c/- 6 Burke St, Woodridge, Qld. 4114.