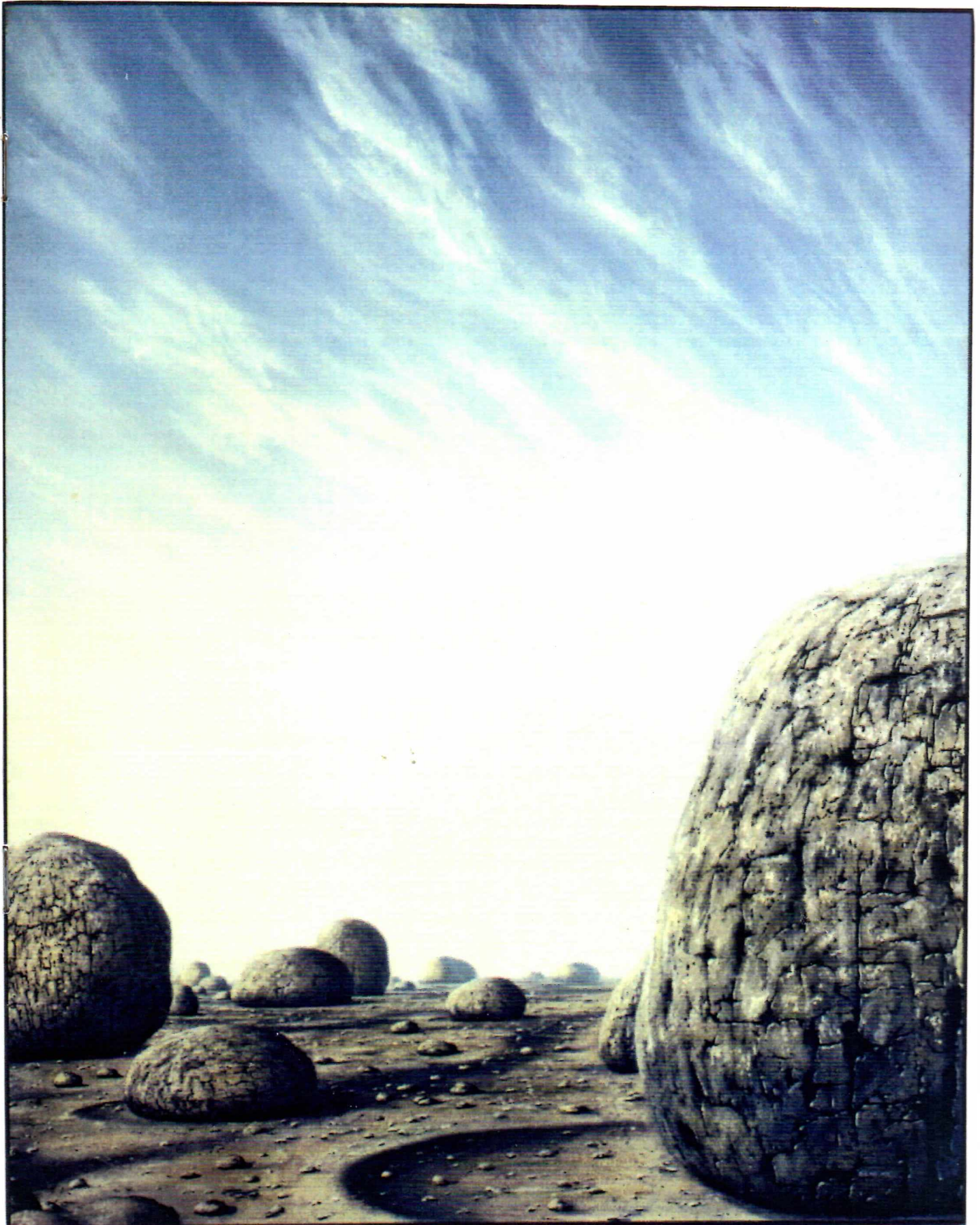


THE MENTOR 70

Australian Science Fiction



THE MENTOR

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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CONTRIBUTIONS MUST BE ON AN APPLE II OR IBM ASCII FILE (NOT H/D) OR TYPED, SINGLE OR DOUBLE SPACED, PREFERABLY A GOOD PHOTOCOPY (AND IF YOU WANT IT RETURNED, PLEASE ENCLOSE A STAMPED, SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE). AND TYPE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS! CONTRIBUTORS ARE NOT PAID, HOWEVER THEY RECEIVE A FREE COPY OF THE ISSUE THEIR CONTRIBUTION IS IN, AND ANY FUTURE ISSUE CONTAINING COMMENTS ON THEIR CONTRIBUTION.

EDITORIAL SLANT

by Ron Clarke

There has been a bit of an upsurge in Australian professional publishing of science fiction in the last six months. I'll take as an example of this the new magazine AUREALIS, the volume SINGULARITIES II and the anthology FROM SEA TO SHINING STAR by A. Bertram Chandler.

Issue One of AUREALIS came out in September, 1989. It was edited by Stephen Higgins and Dirk Strasser and published by Chimaera Publications, PO Box 538, Mt. Waverley, Vic 3149. It was folded A4, had a four colour cover and was 80 pages without the ads and was priced at \$6.95, being distributed by Gordon & Gotch. Overseas subs are A\$31 sea mail and A\$39 air mail for four issues. I found my copy - one of the last - in Galaxy Bookshop in Sydney in December. I had gone around the main newsagents in Sydney and they hadn't heard of it. "Uh huh," I thought, "bad distributing". The second issue came out in early January and appeared in all those newsagents that hadn't gotten the first issue. At least five copies went to the newsagent in Clarence Street near my work office - and are still there.

The stories in that first issue were TALENT by Michael Pryor; "...AND THEY SHALL WANDER ALL THEIR DAYS" by David Tansey; NIGHTWINGS by Sue Isle; IN THE DARK RUSH by Terry Dowling; 5 CIGARETTES AND 2 SNAKES by Geoffrey Maloney; AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE TURNER; DO WE LOVE? by Dianne Speter; MATTER OF MIND by Jai Russell; I STILL CALL AUSTRALIA HOME by George Turner; THE SF HALL OF FAME and a paragraph on each author. All were *short* stories: TALENT is about a Absolver who delivers people of their wrongdoing one way or another; "AND THEY SHALL WANDER..." is good space opera; NIGHTWINGS is a disjointed horror story; IN THE DARK RUSH is a short hard to follow piece set in a mad spaceshiptime; 5 CIGARETTES.. is about the Revolution and is one of the best stories in the zine. DO WE LOVE? is a throwaway piece that could have been published in NEW IDEA; MATTER OF MIND is another item of horror fiction; I STILL CALL AUSTRALIA HOME is a short, sharp bite of satire, though hardly filling.

In the first issue the editors were obviously still finding their feet. Issue two also had a four colour cover (with an scene linked to Australia - in Issue One an aborigine type with the cover colours the black, red and yellow of the aboriginal "flag" and a kangaroo on Issue Two) with 75 pages of fiction. Said fiction was BUT SMILE NO MORE by Stephen Dedman; THE TREE by Jodie Kewley; THE SEA'S NEAREST SHORE by Damien Broderick; ONE DAY SOON by Paul Collins; INFERNAL HALLUCINATIONS by Pauline Ranscombe; VIGNETTE by Stephen Higgins; RAIN FROM THE NEW GOD by Simon Brown; THE HUNT by Peter Trueman; HOVERING ROCK by Rosaleen Love and THE SF HALL OF FAME.

BUT SMILE NO MORE is a bartender-told story about a conspiracy; THE SEA'S NEAREST SHORE is an (obvious) extract from a novel about psi powers; ONE DAY SOON is a well-executed time travel story; INFERNAL HALLUCINATIONS is nearly a feminist fantasy, but is slight; VIGNETTE is a three page well told satire; RAIN FROM THE NEW GOD is an anti-religious tract that bites; THE HUNT is a fantasy that could well have appeared in F&SF, but for the fact the end could be seen coming a long way off and HOVERING ROCK is an attempt at Literature that doesn't quite come off. I enjoyed THE SF HALL OF FAME from both issues and congratulate the editors on a readable magazine. But for the fact that several of the stories were set in the USA the others had an Australian flavour. Back issues are available.

SINGULARITIES II contains stories from the Canberra S.F. Society 1989/90 Short Story Competition, and is edited by Garry Wyatt. It is professionally typeset and printed with a polished grey cover - which unfortunately marks when handled. The typeface is *very* large (about 15 point) which make the book easy to read. It is 197 pages and is \$7, from PO Box 47, Civic Square, ACT 2608. The stories included are THE STRANDED BIPED by Shane Dix; A DAY AT THE BEACH by James Mcnicol; REFLECTIONS ON THE SEA OF ARRIOCH by Penelope Hughes Gilles; THE ANOMALOUS ANALOGY by Steve Woodman; TIME THE HEALER by Frankie Seymour; COLONY WORLD by David Tansey; HAVE I GOT A PLANET FOR YOU! by Barry Rosenberg; FORTUNE SEEKERS by Jane Meredith; FOREVER by Vern Wietzel; STORY TELLER By S. Sherman; RACE AROUND SATURN by Graeme Eadie and VIRAL INFECTION by David Walker.

STRANDED BIPED is a well constructed sf piece; A DAY AT THE BEACH has a strange quantity that left me up in the air; REFLECTIONS... is a so-so bit of morality; THE ANOMALOUS ANALOGY is a nice work of irony; TIME THE HEALER is, like most of Frankie's older work, emotionally satisfying; COLONY WORLD is a well thought out piece of hard sf; HAVE I GOT A PLANET... is nicely written, but US aimed? FORTUNE SEEKERS is Literate Sf - the reader needs to work to understand it; FOREVER is good, hard sf - one of the better stories in the collection; STORY TELLER is fantasy but the ending is unclear; RACE AROUND SATURN is adventure space opera - I found myself skipping paragraphs near the end; VIRAL INFECTION is a lightweight end piece. Overall, a collection of Australian sf that is at least as good as the "professional" anthologies emanating from the publishing houses in Victoria.

The third publishing venture is the volume FROM SEA TO SHINING STAR by A. Bertram Chandler, edited by Keith Curtis and Susan Chandler, illustrated by Nick Stathopoulos. The first edition is limited to 500 copies printed on acid free paper - copies 1-100 are the Collector's Edition and are bound and boxed in ensign red cloth with gold impressed lettering and signed by the editors and the artist. Copies 101-500 are the Numbered Edition and are bound in navy blue cloth with silver impressed lettering. It is published by Peregrine Imports of PO Box 312, Fyshwick, ACT 2609. Barbara de la Hunty is the proprietor.

I ordered one of the Collector's Editions at Syncon 90 when I heard of it and received it in January this year. The publishing of it has been through many trials, but that is another story. The book itself is 338 pages and looks to be 8 pitch. So there is a lot of material there. I haven't read that many of Bert's short stories, at least at one go, and was pleasantly surprised. The stories in this volume are, in the section subtitled *From Sea...* SEACHANGE; SHADOW BEFORE; PRECESSION; CASTAWAY; CHANGE OF HEART; NOT QUITE THE NOBLEST; AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING; WHAT'S IN A NAME?; THE WORD; ALL LACED UP; THE PIED POTTER; WHAT WOULD YOU DO? THE HAIRY PARENTS and SENSE OF WONDER. Those in the section subtitled *...To Shining Star* are THE LONG WAY; CRITICAL ANGLE; ARTIFACT; JETSAM; MOONFALL; THE IDOL; HINDSIGHT; THE LAST HUNT; SEEING EYE; THE SOUL MACHINE; JOURNEY'S END; FINISHING TOUCH; MAN ALONE; THE CAGE; THE KINSOLVING'S PLANET IRREGULARS and GIANT KILLER. There is a Foreword, Afterword and Bibliography. There are, and these really put the icing on the book, some nineteen pieces of art by Nick Stathopoulos scattered throughout, plus the full colour cover. There are a couple of typos near the end, but overall a very neat edition. The copyright dates of the stories run from 1945 to 1970, so a good range is covered. The oldest story is Chandler's probably most famous - GIANT KILLER, but the other stories don't include any duds. There range from fantasies to hard sf, but even the fantasies have internal logic. There are Grimes stories scattered throughout. The stories are split up into those set on Earth (up to the present) in the first section, and those set in the future are in the second section.

I think the book is worth the money I paid for it (for price and availability contact the publisher). For readers who haven't read much of Chandler's fiction, you will find this volume worth reading. If nothing else, contact your local library to get a copy in. It is one of the *best* collections of Australian SF published in years, possibly ever. There *is* sf being published in Australia and is a growing phenomenon. Hopefully the present recession won't bite *too* deep and kill the market.

HUMAN ERROR

by David Tanseg

"Who ever wrote a story from the point of view that man is a blemish on the cosmos, who ought to be eradicated?"

H.P. Lovecraft, 1923.

First manuscript:

This man I am going to tell you about was an ordinary man. He lived in the year 2040, which is fifty years from the time of writing; that is, two years after the aliens invaded Earth. His name was Geoffrey.

The invaders were called the Rull. That term was only the poor human vocalisation of the name they called themselves, a word which sings through your mind something like RLLLLLLLLL... To the humans who lived under their domination, Rull was easier to say; a simple monosyllable like shit or fuck.

The Rull dropped their atomic bombs along the eastern seaboard of Australia; the cities of Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong and Canberra were obliterated.

'We are here to help you,' said the Rull, in the dreams of survivors who huddled on the outskirts of these cities.

'How did *that* help us?' replied the hapless survivors.

'We saw the evil in your cities and destroyed it. We realise in hindsight that we also destroyed a little good, so we will no longer use atomics. In any event, the good who died should be able to reform their selves on the <level of souls>. We have done them a favour. If they can reach that level they will become <higher beings>.'

'Do they often reach that level?' asked Geoffrey.

'Amongst humans, sadly, almost never.'

Geoffrey saw his first Rull when he was fifteen years old. He and a miscellaneous group of others were picking their way along a ridge top in what were known as the Blue Mountains, just west of the Sydney blast zone.

They halted as one. A man - Arnie, Geoffrey thought his name was - pointed ahead to the next ridge. Geoffrey squinted through the haze of blue-tinted sunshine to the heavily-forested ridge.

A pod of Rull had been lowered there. They stood about gazing stupidly at the landscape. Their metalform shells were short, wide, stiff, jet-black. The limbs moved mechanically, the heads pivoted, but an inner essence looked out from the eye-slits. One reached down to pluck a flower, then acted as though it didn't know what to do with it.

They were only robotic shells. The Rull would not dare send their actual bodies to the surface. The shells were clumsy work-suits controlled by the individual *thought-flight* of the creatures reposing comfortably in tanks within the starships orbiting above.

They looked at Geoffrey and his comrades. The humans looked back. The faces of the shells had horizontal slits where human eyes would have been. Something indefinable to the humans looked back through those slits.

'Let's kill 'em,' said one of the humans.

'You can't kill 'em, stupid, they're only row-botts.'

'I don't care. Let's kill 'em anyway.'

One of the shells seemed to be looking directly at Geoffrey.

'We are here to help you,' a voiceless communication came to his mind.

'I know,' Geoffrey replied, wondering whether -

The telephone rang.

Barnett looked up from his desk in annoyance. He dropped the manuscript, reaching for the phone. In the three seconds he took to pick it up, he had made a mental note of two criticisms: the opening line reads too much like the opening of Pohl's DAY MILLION, and the profanity would have to go.

'797,8825,' he said, 'Rob Barnett speaking.'

'Rob, Cathie.'

'Oh, hi. How are you?'

'Fine, listen. How about lunch tomorrow?'

'Sure. You sound flustered, Cathie. Anything wrong?'

'Wrong? No. Things couldn't be better. As a matter of fact I'm just putting the finishing touches to a new story. It's a ripper. I'll bring the manuscript to the brasserie - the usual place. How are things with you? Working late?'

'New batch of stories to read, so I brought them home. Most are junk, some good ones. The one I'm reading now, it's called COVERT ACTION AGAINST THE RULL. A pun on that old van Vogt story. By a bloke called - hang on, I've got to find the cover page - here it is, Zoltan Smith. That's gotta be a pen name.'

'How's the story? Better than my stuff? I'll get jealous, you know, if you like someone else's work better than mine.'

'It's passable,' replied Barnett. 'I'll suggest some changes, though. But you know, Cathie, no one else's work would come close to yours'. You're my bread and butter.'

That was true. Cathie was undoubtedly the best SF writer in the country. It was her stories that had blasted the sales of the magazine Barnett edited, INDEPENDANT SF, to previously unthinkable heights. Sales now reached into the tens of thousands, even attracting a faithful readership in Britain and the States. The publisher, Pancreas Press, had been transformed from a cottage industry to one that could afford to employ Barnett full-time and provide him an office.

'Flattery will get you everywhere,' Cathie laughed, but the tone of her voice held a strain of tension.

The pressure of being a brilliant writer, Barnett supposed. He said, 'Look forward to tomorrow,' and put the phone down.

Barnett rose from his desk. The CD he had been listening to had finished while he was absorbed in the Rull story. He put on another from his extensive collection of SF movie themes, and settled back to finish the manuscript.

From outside his study window the carpet of lights that was suburban Canberra spread. It was after nine p.m., and Barnett was still working through the pile of manuscripts he had brought from the office. Normally at this time of night - an oppressively hot summer night - he would sit out on the terrace with a glass of Chivas or Black Label, with Brin or Benford to read, or perhaps Barker or Ligotti if in the mood, and the only sound the distant buzz of traffic.

Tonight, however, there was work to do, so no grog. Barnett needed his desk with its lamp, to illuminate the manuscripts as he pored over them and made comments in the margin and corrected typos. Lately the need to take work home had been made necessary by the sudden flood of stories sent by hopeful writers, many of whom he had never heard of. Like Zoltan Smith.

Barnett completed the story. The main character, the boy Geoffrey, was adopted by the Rull, and eventually taken to their flagship in orbit. He was scanned minutely first, to ensure nothing had been implanted in his body. Later, when face to face with the head Rull, which dripped as it rose from its tank, Geoffrey suddenly ran up to it, embraced it, and burst into flame, killing himself and the alien.

The punch line was that Geoffrey had been selected to confront the Rull, as the rebels had tested his genetic structure and found he possessed the chromosome that had also been found in corpses which had suffered spontaneous combustion. They had excited that chromosome just prior to Geoffrey going aboard the flagship. That was the only way the rebels could take covert action to attack the Rull.

Barnett put down the manuscript with a satisfied feeling. Smith's theme was that an alien invader might destroy humans out of misunderstanding, a parallel that could be found in many actual situations on Earth where one country invaded another. He decided he would accept the story for INDEPENDANT SF, subject to the author making a dozen or so changes. There were some parts of the story he didn't like. Barnett, like all editors, only accepted stories he personally liked,

notwithstanding the praise given the author by reviewers or readers.

The editor yawned. It was getting late. He rubbed the eye sockets under his spectacles. The other manuscripts could wait for another day. He switched off the lamp.

As Barnett sat looking out over the endless rows of orderly streetlights a thought persisted in his mind.

The story he had just read seemed to hold something familiar. Perhaps it was the style which was familiar. He searched his memory of all the stories he had read over the past years for the connection. There it was - faint, but it wouldn't come to the surface.

Ah well, thought Barnett. Can't be important.

He went to bed, and dreamed of Rull invaders.

Second manuscript:

Beresford worked the control panel as the module neared the planet's surface.

The unnamed planet had only a single landscape type. That was unusual; other planets usually varied to the same degree as Earth did, that is, possessing as varied a terrain as desert, ice mass, ocean, plains, rainforest, grasslands and all the others. But this planet was *all* sandy desert.

Bringing the ship in close to the south polar regions, he instructed it to prepare for landing.

At least the pole would be the most tolerable landing area. The majority of the planet was a vast sea of sand dunes burned by extreme temperatures. At the pole he would at least be able to explore outside the ship without burning to a crisp.

As Beresford overflew a possible landing zone he was alerted to unusual activity on the monitor. Something was moving across the surface under him.

When he saw it Beresford could hardly believe his eyes.

A worm, a giant worm, was carving a path across the dunes.

'By all the saints?' cried Beresford, 'By the beard of the prophet Herbert - '

In the blistering heat, Barnett had stopped at the post office on the way to meet Cathie. He cleared his box, finding the usual dozen or so A4 envelopes which obviously held manuscripts. He glanced through the senders' addresses.

One of the envelopes was from Zoltan Smith. Barnett turned it over, saw it was postmarked: GUNDALEE.

He had ten minutes until he was due to meet Cathie, so on impulse decided to have a look at the new Zoltan Smith story. He had started reading it under the shade of the post office wall.

BLAST FROM THE PAST, the story was called. He scanned the rest of the story following the character Beresford's discovery of the giant worms, ascertaining it involved a future world where early science fiction writers were regarded, literally, as prophets. As explorers reached new planets, they found them to actually resemble the planets described by the early writers. The punchline was that the SF writers had been influenced in their writings by alien forces who wanted Man to learn about the rest of the universe.

"Hardly believe his eyes", he thought, making a mental note. 'Writers should avoid cliches like that.'

'Got the time, mate?'

'Yes, said Barnett, 'It's - holy shit, I'm late. Gotta go.'

'Hey, wait, what about telling me the time...!'

Cathie was already at the table when he entered the brasserie.

'Hi,' she said brightly. Cathie was a petite brunette, dressed in a crisp orange uniform-style skirt and blouse.

'God, it's hot out there.'

Barnett flopped all the envelopes down on the table. He ordered a beer from the hovering waiter. As usual, Cathie drank only water.

'Working hard, I see,' she said, indicating the envelopes.

'This country must have gone SF mad,' Barnett observed. 'Writers are coming out of the woodwork. Damned if I can figure it out.'

'You've opened one.'

'From that Zoltan Smith character, or whatever his real name is. An interesting plot. There's something about his style I can't put my finger on.'

'Oh, really? Tell me more.'

'Well, I get this feeling I've read him before. Some stylistic nuances I've only ever seen in one other author.'

'Who?'

'You may be able to help me here, Cathie, you've got a better memory than me. Uh, I'm going to skip the entree. Too hot to eat a full three courses. I need to attend Jenny Craig as it is. What'll you have?'

'Same as I always eat - seafood. The crepes.'

'Right, thanks waiter. As I was saying, you've got a good memory. Remember that con we went to in Melbourne four years ago? CONNECT, I think it was called. I got so drunk one night you had to carry me to my room.'

'Oh yes. Are you sure you want to talk about it?'

'And everyone wanted your autograph, not mine. Bitch. Well, there was one writer there. He had sent me a lot of stories. They were good, but just a bit too much over the top to publish. Contained some controversial elements. His name was Pete Milk or Silk or something wishy-washy. Anyway, those stories I rejected, I'd swear they were written by this same Zoltan Smith who's now sending me stories.'

'You would swear?'

'Well, I try not to swear in public. This writer, he collared me at the con and I can vaguely recall him asking me why I hadn't published any of his stories. I think that was the night I got drunk.'

'And...'

'And, that's all I can remember.'

'Well, forget about it,' Cathie said. 'Here's *my* latest story.' She slipped an envelope across the table. 'It's the best thing I've ever done. They'll love it, Rob.'

'Thanks,' said Barnett. 'But that was rather an abrupt change of subject. Can you try to remember that writer's name?'

At that moment the food arrived and the topics of conversation moved elsewhere. Cathie talked profusely of the con due to be held in Canberra soon.

Later, when he had returned to the office of Pancreas Press, Barnett went to the filing cabinet holding his old con papers. It took about an hour to find the CONNECT program. He held the cover sideways, upside down, at all angles, until he could finally make out a scrawl.

ONE DAY YOU'LL ACCEPT MY STORIES!! BEST WISHES PETER MILKEN

Milken, that was it! Barnett went to another draw, found the program book for the convention for the year following that of CONNECT. Flipping through the preliminary pages, he found:

"During the year the SF fanzine industry lost one of its most promising writers in Peter Milken, who was killed in a car crash in his native Gundalee. The committee offers its sincere condolences to Peter's family, all his friends and the wider SF community."

Barnett finally felt he was getting somewhere.

The Gundalee Valley, where was that? He had a vague idea it was in southern New South Wales, not far from Canberra.

There were other stories to read and the typesetting of the next issue of INDEPENDANT SF to organise. A million things to worry about. Barnett left the envelope Cathie had given him unopened. He tried to ignore it but felt he had to reread the Zoltan Smith story over and over. There was something he couldn't get out of his mind.

The similarity of style with Peter Milken.

And that Gundalee postmark.

After he left the office that day Barnett drove to his friend John De Bautista's flat. Walking into the flat was like walking into a very over-stocked second hand bookshop. The living room (and most of the other rooms) were crammed with books, magazines, comics, bits of junk and collectible items in floor-to-ceiling shelves, while the walls were covered in movie posters, maybe two or three layers thick. Where the shelf space was not enough, books had been piled in cardboard cartons or simply strewn on the floor. Barnett picked his way down the aisles.

Amongst this mess John sat, a small, undernourished (he thought money spent on food rather than SF a waste) twenty-five year old with beer-bottle spectacles hanging off an enormous nose and a

mass of uncombed hair. He was rummaging through one of the boxes, furiously scribbling in a notebook.

'How's it going, Johnnie?' roared Barnett. 'I didn't bother knocking as I knew you be too busy to hear.'

John jumped into the air and resettled. 'Hi, Rob. That's okay. You know, I don't think I'll ever get this catalogue finished.'

John De Bautista knew more about SF than anyone else Barnett knew. He would have been a scholar if he'd had the ability to put his knowledge in written and comprehensible form.

'I liked the last issue of INDEPENDANT," said John, fidgeting and not looking at the editor. 'How's Cathie?'

'Fine. Still writing strong. Listen, Johnnie old mate, I've come to pick your brains. SF, Australian, four or five years ago. An amateur writer called Peter Milken.'

'Milken, Milken,' mumbled John, his mental processes churning as though he were a computer which had just had a request for data punched in. 'The name rings a bell.'

He vanished around the corner of the book stack. Barnett followed him. John was flicking through magazine holders, discarding them, looking at others.

'Small time, amateur,' John said. 'Here's one of his stories. And another. I've actually met this Milken, at a couple of cons. Then he died in a car accident or something. Very sad.'

'Do you think I could borrow those?' Barnett asked, indicating the handful of obscure fanzines John had extracted.

'Okay,' John said grudgingly, as though he was parting with treasures.

'Thanks. See you at the con next weekend.'

Barnett made a hasty departure. When he got home he sat at his study desk and read the Milken stories.

The first was titled GOD'S CONCENTRATION CAMP. It concerned the survivors of a nuclear holocaust, who where being rounded up and transported to camps where they were exterminated. At the story's climax, one of the few final surviving people learns that it was not humans who started the nuclear war, but aliens intent on wiping out humanity.

After he put the story down Barnett recalled he indeed had read it some years before. With surprise he realised he was sweating.

He brought out the manuscripts of all the Zoltan Smith stories. The Smith stories were more polished than the Milken ones (as though the writer had developed over time); but Barnett believed his editorial insight when it told him all the stories came from the one pen - or rather word processor.

Perhaps someone had come across some of Milken's unpublished drafts and was rewriting them and submitting them under a pen name. If both Milken and Smith came from the Gundalee Valley maybe it was one of Milken's friends or relatives.

Later in the evening, Barnett came across a paragraph that was common to both a Milken and a Smith story:

'The invaders were called the Rull. That term was only the poor human vocalisation of the name they called themselves, a word which sings through your mind something like RLLLLLLLLLL...'

The paragraph occurred in the Smith story COVERT ACTION AGAINST THE RULL, and the Milken story CHILDREN OF ANOTHER GOD, word for word.

Barnett knew he was onto something. He went to bed that night pleased with himself, but slept badly, dreaming of cities consumed by fireballs.

Third Manuscript:

Two days later Barnett could stand the itch in his mind no longer. He found the Gundalee Valley on a map, worked out it would only take him an hour and a half to reach from Canberra.

He left a message on his Ansaphone that he would not be in that day, and drove out of the city. Barnett had no idea what he was trying to accomplish, but felt swept along by an urge he had no control over.

A rational part of his mind said: Milken died in a car accident. He was unimportant. The fact that somebody is writing like him is also unimportant. Another part of his mind said: the manuscripts are so similar they could only have been produced by the same mind.

His car climbed a crest then dropped over the valley rim. The Gundalee Valley was green and held a picturesque lake, but was otherwise unremarkable.

Descending the inner valley wall to the town of Gundalee, Barnett went first to the tiny post office, housed in what must have been a heritage building, and asked who owned the box that Zoltan used. The clerk rightly refused to tell him.

He next went to the police station, and told the desk sergeant - the town's only policeman? - that he was passing through and wanted to look up the family of his old friend Peter Milken who had died in the car accident.

The sergeant looked at Barnett as though he didn't believe a word the editor had said, then proceeded to talk at length about the tragic accident that had claimed young Peter on the cliff road. Peter had been a sensible lad, never drank or sped, so it had been hard to understand why his car had left the road and tumbled down the hill. The policeman raved on as though he had nothing better to do - he probably didn't - then gave directions to the Milken farm, just out of town.

Barnett drove there. He parked in front of the old, rundown homestead and knocked on the door.

After receiving no reply for many minutes, he tried the door handle. It was unlocked. Country people never lock their doors.

'Hello?' he asked, stepping through the doorway. He called out again and again, as he made his way down the hall. The walls were undecorated and raw-looking, as though the house were nothing more than a movie set.

There was a room at the end of the hall that had a lived-in appearance. It held a table and chair, a computer and printer. And - somehow justifying Barnett's illegal entry - several copies of INDEPENDANT SF were scattered about. The lurid cover of the latest issue, with the large lettering "featuring a new story by Cathie Dalgleish" were identifiable from a distance.

On the table was a A4 envelope. It was unsealed, and peeking inside Barnett saw the cover sheet of a story called DIE, TO SLEEP.

Shakespeare, Barnett thought. Hamlet, Act III Scene I. One of the most oft-quoted passages from English literature.

Barnett noted that the envelope was addressed to him. I'll save him some postage, he thought, carrying the manuscript out of the house. He went to his car and drove off.

The editor felt the urge to read the story straight away, but restrained himself until he had reached his home in Canberra. The sun had gone down by then, though the oppressive summer humidity continued well into the evening.

Barnett settled himself at his desk. He poured himself a glass of Chivas. The balcony windows remained open to admit whatever cool breezes might appear.

TO DIE, TO SLEEP concerned a plot by invading aliens who were intent on destroying humanity, not out of any evil design of their own, but rather to rid the evil of mankind from the universe. The aliens were somehow the goodies.

Before the destruction was due, the aliens sent to Earth a vanguard of what were the equivalent of psychiatrists in their culture. These disguised themselves as people and proceeded to write great quantities of what the humans thought were science fiction stories.

As the reader was led through a tangle of clues and red herrings, the mystery of the aliens' purpose was unravelled. It seemed that they were going to give humanity one final chance to prove itself worthy of not being destroyed. They were testing the reactions of people by presenting them with the outrageous idea that the human values, beliefs and actions they cherished were not up to scratch. The medium of these ideas was the SF story, the most suitable form of expanding mental consciousness. But in truth, the stories, when stripped of their SF gimmickry, boiled down to the treatment of human social issues.

The hero of the narrative, an SF magazine editor, eventually uncovered the plot. The aliens told him that mankind had been observed and had been seen as a threat to other civilisations, as human spaceships were about to venture into deep space where the good, peaceful races lived. That could not be allowed to happen, so humanity was to be destroyed.

The editor character argued that humanity was worth saving, but the tests showed the aliens Man was unsalvageable. In the end, one alien told the hero they had to conduct the tests in that manner. Although they knew it would be a lost cause, the fact they had conducted the tests would show future generations (of aliens) that at least they had tried.

Barnett put the story down. He shivered, and reached for his drink. A sudden chill breeze -

The editor looked up from his desk, saw with a start the dark figure enclosed by the terrace doorway.

Not a burglar, but someone he knew. The shapely curves of a female form.

A friend. The best science fiction writer in the country, in fact.

'Oh, shit, you've seen the 'script,' she said. 'You can kill a renegade, but they always manage to come back. Well, we'll have to try something different this time.'

She stepped into the room and in the reflected light of the desk lamp he saw her face.

'We'll have to become editors as well as writers,' the woman continued. 'We won't have so many problems if we put out our magazine. I'm afraid that means we won't need *you* any longer.'

The man started to say something, but the woman had opened her mouth. No sound issued, but his neurons were torn in two by a high-pitched resonance that sang through his mind something like RLLLLLLLLLLLLL....

The man pitched forward and collapsed. He -

Barnett slopped some of his drink on the manuscript as he read that last.

There it was again, he thought, the Milken/Smith connection. The use of that same term, "Ruff", for the aliens.

He heard a noise from outside on the terrace. The scrape of a shoe, perhaps.

'Hello,' called a familiar voice.

'In here,' he replied, 'Come on through.'

Cathie stepped through the balcony door, smiling.

'Hi, Rob,' she said. 'Sorry to bother you at this time of night. I did knock on the front door but there was no answer.'

She crossed the room and stood by the desk. 'What have you got there?'

'Oh, just the latest story from that Zoltan Smith person.'

'Shit,' said Cathie, frowning, 'You've seen the manuscript!'

'What?'

He got no answer, for Barnett suddenly felt faint. The world had darkened and shrunk to a pinpoint. Chivas spilt in a flood across the desktop.

Fourth manuscript:

A dalek spun past him, barely missing Barnett's toes as he entered the hotel lobby. 'Exxx-termmminate,' a voice from inside bleated shakily. He registered at the con desk, had a name tag pinned to his shirt pocket, and made his way through the crowds to the function room hosting the cocktail party.

Half a dozen people greeted Barnett as he squeezed through to the bar. He ordered a B-52 and downed it in one swallow. He then ordered a Harvey Wallbanger, taking it away as he scanned the crowds. More people greeted him, smiling. Others slapped him on the back, congratulating him on the magazine's success.

POLLIECON was an annual event in Canberra, drawing fans from all over Australia. It had grown over the years to be the largest science fiction convention in the country.

Barnett spotted the shape of Cathie's back and made for it. He tapped her on the shoulder.

'Oh, hi Rob,' she said brightly, raising the glass of water she was holding. 'Another successful year, and I owe it all to you.'

'Did you come around to my place two nights ago?'

'Why ever do you say that?'

'Well,' said Barnett, 'I woke up the next morning sitting at my desk. Drink was everywhere. I thought I had been reading a manuscript, but I couldn't find it anywhere.'

'Maybe you should cut down on the drink.'

'How many others here are Rull?'

Cathie shrugged. 'Plenty. I can't remember who all of us are. I'd hoped you wouldn't remember.'

'How long have you been on Earth?'

'Tsk. Tsk. So many questions.'

'Will it hurt you to tell me?'

'I suppose not.' Cathie drank her water and sidled over near the wall. Barnett followed.

'We've been here eighty years now. Another five years or so to go... before we have to make our final decision.'

'I don't know, sometimes it sounds like...'

'Like science fiction?' Cathie's eyebrows rose in amusement. 'What is science fiction, after all? It's fiction based on scientific principles. The ultimate reality. A method of evaluating the capacity for mental expansion, to see if you are capable of worthier thinking. The exploration of all possibilities. The opposite of narrowness, like religion.'

'Ah, but there was one SF writer who invented his own religion.'

Cathie laughed aloud. She quoted:

'L. Ron Hubbard went to the cupboard
To get his poor followers a tome
When he got there
The cupboard was bare
And so he wrote one all on his own.'

'You don't mean...?'

'Yes, *he* was one of us, but he went too far in the end.'

'And what about Milken?'

'He began to get carried away. Milken forgot what we were here for. He began to write more and more outrageous plots. He began to include elements concerning us, the Rull, and our mission, in his stories. So I killed him.'

'You didn't,' Barnett's voice, 'You did. You began to... compete against each other. To see who could sell the most stories.'

'Yes, I suppose we did.'

'If you're capable of killing you're no better than us.'

'Silly, you can't kill a Rull. These organic shells we wear can be destroyed, but we work our way back a few years later in a different form.'

'You won't get away with this,' Barnett said with sudden anger. 'I'll tell everyone about you.'

'Silly, who'll believe you? They'll lock you up in a loonie bin. We are technically human. Besides, I won't be sending you any more manuscripts. I'm starting up my own magazine, to publish only certain authors -'

The woman froze, looked at something past his shoulder.

The editor turned, saw a tall figure pushing through the crowd toward them. In the shifting light he couldn't make out the other's features too well, but received an impression of youth, wide forehead and sunken eye sockets.

The approaching figure had a third arm; rather, he held something long beside him which he raised as he neared. It was black, gun-like, with a thick magazine coiled around it.

Where's the people enforcing the weapons policy when you need them? he thought as the other raised the thing horizontally.

He caught a glimpse of a piece of white cardboard pinned to the other's chest. It said:

ZOLTAN SMITH

The air was slashed by a spray of red/white laser light; the editor was numbed as the woman beside him fell backward, her chest opened like bloody petals, sizzling.

People screamed. The assailant whipped backward and used the confusion to mask his escape.

The woman lay on the ground, her body shattered. He knelt down next to her, to listen to her last words.

'I'll be back... -'

Final Manuscript:

Barnett sat in the darkened room bathed in the glow of the monitor screen.

Cathie had been right. No one would ever believe his story about the Rull infiltration of Earth society. But there was a way he could present the idea to people, and hopefully those with sufficient insight would recognise the "tale" for what it was.

In his early days in the field Barnett had tried to write SF, achieving a moderate success, although he had not had the time to write a proper story for years.

He took a sip from his drink, sighed, and keyed the title into his word processor:

HUMAN ERROR

The End



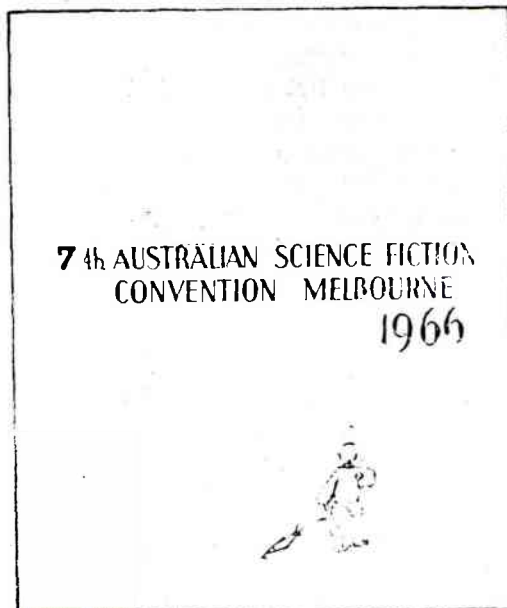
RUMINATIONS I

1966 - 1971

by Ron Clarke

The 7th AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION MELBOURNE 1966 was the title of the booklet given out at the first convention I attended. I had been a active fan for a year before I joined the con on 15th May, 1965. It cost 15/- to join. I had heard of the con through one of John Foyster's fanzines, and had written to John, who was the Organiser/Secretary/Treasurer, to join. I decided to fly down to Melbourne from Sydney and bugged John as to how to get from the TAA terminal to the Con. He posted me a pencilled map. I flew down for the Easter Con on the 8th of April on TAA (a return flight in those days cost \$43.20).

The Central Committee was John Foyster, Mervyn Binns, Lee Harding and Dick Jenssen. Other committee members were John Bangsund, Bob Smith, John Straede, Mervyn Barrett, Roslyn Hardy, Ced. Rowley, Paul Stevens and John Straede.



When I got to Melbourne I booked into the old Victorian Hotel (which had *very* small rooms), unpacked and at around 2 pm I walked down to the Melbourne SF club address, where the con was being held. A flapping banner above the door announced the venue, and after struggling with the controls of the water lift, I managed to cross the threshold of the Club. There were groups of people all around the room, and on registering and getting my badge (I was member #17) I strolled around. There was a Welcome and Introductions by the Committee in the front of the room at 2.30 pm and the Auction, conducted by Dick Jenssen, started pretty close to time at 3 pm. There were light refreshments put on by the Con as there were not many shops open. At 7.30 pm the films METROPOLIS and THE HAUNTING were shown. From what I can remember there was trouble with the showing of METROPOLIS; I think the projector was playing up.

I got up about 10 am on the Saturday and was at the Con shortly after 11, when the hucksters opened. There was a Business Session at 1.30 and at 2 pm there was an author panel, with Brian Aldiss and Ted Carnell speaking on tape. The panelists were listed as John Baxter, Damien Broderick, Stephen Cook, Lee Harding and Nigel Jackson.

At 7 pm THE SEVEN FACES OF DOCTOR LAO was shown (which began my admiration of that film). I got back to the hotel late that night and slept well into Sunday, since the events didn't commence till 2 that afternoon, when there was the second part of the auction and general sales. At 3 pm there was scheduled a talk by Kevin Bartlett on SCIENCE FICTION ON TELEVISION, but I think the auction kept on. At 4 pm a further tape from the UK, featuring Michael Moorcock and other writers was played, and after a break for dinner an illustrated lecture titled THE HORROR FILM by John Baxter was given, after which FORBIDDEN PLANET was shown.

I thoroughly enjoyed myself at the con and caught many of the events on Super 8 with my camera, the only complaints being the bright lights I used - at one stage someone pulled the power cord out of the wall socket and saved the audience's dazzled eyes. Playing the film at Syncon 90 there were many comments on the appearance of the young, short haired, clean-shaven fans of twenty-five odd years ago. Who are now middle-aged, bearded, greying and balding.



PAT(RICK) M. TERRY

In the October 1987 issue of John Bangsund's AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW appeared the following notice: "SYDNEY SF GROUP. Sydney fans interested in forming "a kind of unofficial and friendly sf group" are invited to contact Miss Betsy Holt at the Department of English, University of Sydney. (Phone: MW 0522)." At around the same time, John Bangsund was told that Edmond Hamilton and wife Leigh Brackett would be in Sydney on the 26th November. Pat Terry wrote to Betsy Holt and to about 21 other people mentioning this and suggesting a meeting. John Danza, a middle-aged sf reader living at Potts Point in Sydney (near Kings Cross) offered his flat as a central point for the meeting. Pat went to the hotel and met the Hamiltons and later that night I picked Pat up and drove to John Danza's flat where we met him and his wife, Marlen, for the first time. Bert Chandler arrived shortly after and various people trickled in, including friends of John Danza. All in all some thirty three people turned up to see the Hamiltons. After speaking to them, there was a discussion about forming the new group and a meeting time was set for the 6th of December under the chairmanship of Warren Glass. With this over the meeting with the Hamiltons continued, and when they left all the people who had attending the meeting were delighted to have met such easy going people as the Hamiltons.

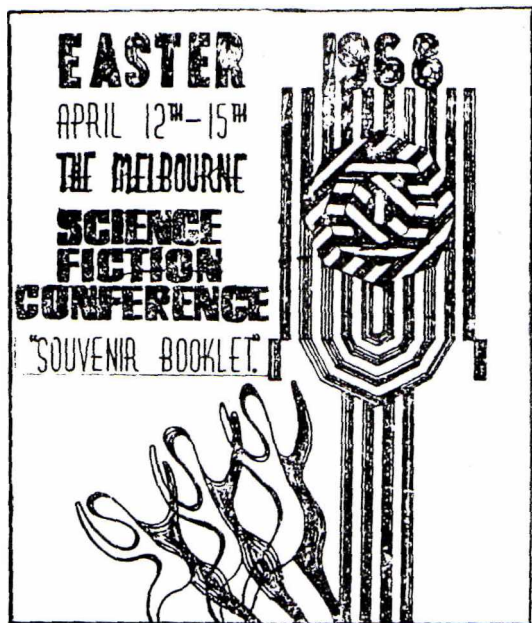
At the meeting of



FANS AT JOHN DANZA'S FLAT (HIS DAUGHTER AT RIGHT)

the 6th December about 16 people attended. In the discussion two names for the group were tendered: I suggested Sydney Science Fiction Foundation (a la Harry Seldon's Foundation) and a Mr Burnett suggested Sydney Science Fiction Forum. The Foundation won out on a vote. Betsy Holt didn't attend - she wanted an sf group formed, but didn't intend being on the Committee herself. From that meeting, which set up the SSFF, the club was created in much the same image of the Futurian Society of Sydney, with constitution, formal meetings, committee meetings, etc.

Two sf readers who attended the early meeting were Zian Wilkinson (the sister of Gary Mason's future wife) and Eric Lindsay. (For a more in-depth description of the creation of the SSFF see Pat Terry's report in ASFR #14).



The next event I attended was the Melbourne Science Fiction Conference held over Easter 1968 (April 12 to 15). I joined and was given membership number 30. I again flew down and when I registered I was given a round cardboard badge some 8.5 cm wide with my name in calligraphy in purple and red letters. That event was also held in the MSFC clubrooms. Mervyn Binns was the Chairman/Organiser, Tony Thomas was the Secretary/Treasurer and others were John Bangsund, Paul Stevens, Dick Jenssen (who was also spelled Jensson later in the booklet), Leigh Edmonds and Bill Wright. Assistants were Lee Harding, John Foyster, Diane Bangsund and John Straede. Paul Stevens edited the Convention Programme Book, which was 32 mineod pages done folded foolscap.

I had arrived at shortly after 10 am on Friday the 12th when registrations commenced and obtained my badge. At 10.30 am there was a tape played on the first floor with a dramatised version of Samuel R. Delany's THE STAR PIT, and Harlan Ellison read his SHATTERED LIKE A GLASS GOBLIN.

After a lunch of sandwiches, the Auction started, the auctioneer again being Dick Jenssen. After a cheap dinner of sandwiches, sausage rolls and a soft drink, a Welcome was given Jack Wodhams, the Guest of Honour, and to the other Con members by Mervyn Binns. The film ALPAHVILE was shown, after which coffee was served and there was general discussion.

Saturday dawned, and other tapes from James Blish, Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison and Buck Coulson were played at 11 am. After lunch Merv Binns addressed the gathering of fans and after than the Business Session commenced. There was an auction at 3 pm and later that night the films LA JETTEE and FAHRENHEIT 451 (the first time I had seen either) were shown to an appreciative audience - at least for FAHRENHEIT 451. I found LA JETTEE hard to follow, not the least being projector problems. I loved FAHRENHEIT 451 and thought it an all-time favourite.

Sunday the 14th had programmes starting at Boronia at 2.15 with Jack Wodhams' address. As usual for Jack it was filled with humorous anecdotes. A panel discussion, chaired by K.U.F. Widdershins (the local fandango) was followed by the Business Session Part 2. Dinner at Boronia Progress Hall was followed by the screening of THE DAMNED and THE WAR OF THE WORLDS. Another Australian author I first met at this conference was Wynne Whiteford, whose signature graces the back-cover of my programme book along with John Foyster, Leigh Edmonds, Tony Thomas and Jack Wodhams.

Monday was a general discussion time between fans then various film serials were shown. At 3.30 pm there was a general cleanup and a party that night. All through the Conference there was generally good feelings and I don't remember any major upsets. I purchased a NEW WORLDS cover painting by Gerard Quinn and several books. I flew back to Sydney on Tuesday the 16th at 4.45 pm and all too soon was back to work at the daily grind.

The next major event was the release of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY.



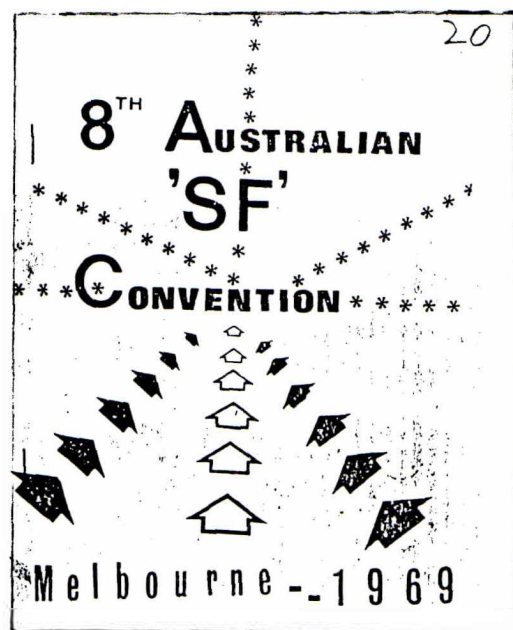
SSFF GATHERING: (1) Ron Clarke (2) Debbie Dowden (3) Zian Wilkinson

The Sydney Science Fiction Foundation had just been formed and the group booked into an evening session. I had seat C23 in the De Luxe Lounge upstairs at the Plaza cinema. The night of Thursday, May 23, 1968 was fine and clear. The sf attendees, done up in their finest attire, trooped up the stairs and down the aisle of the lounge. My seat was somewhere near the middle and after the

short film the main feature started. It was slow starting and after two hours or so just seemed to be getting into its stride when the "Gate" sequence came on. Seemingly shortly after the closing credits started rolling up the screen.

'Is that it?' and 'I didn't understand the ending' were the general comments made by the audience, including most of the sf fans attending. I had gotten some idea of the meaning of the film and could understand the feeling behind the images, but nearly 99% of the audience seemingly didn't have a clue. Standing outside and signing each other's programmes we looked at each other and grinned. At least we were all there together! An organised first for Sydney fans that hadn't happened for years.

I was back in Melbourne in 1969 for the 8th Australian SF Convention. I was a pre-supporting member, and joined for \$3.50 on 3rd March, with membership #20. I flew down by TAA again on flight 411 at 9 am on the 4th April (the round trip was \$47). The co-ordinator for that Con was Diane Bangsund. One of the highlights was the art display, with artwork by Stanley Pitt from his comic artwork SILVER STARR and THE STARS MY DESTINATION. This con was also held over Easter and had Australian author and fan Lee Harding as Guest of Honour. Registration opened on the Friday at 10 am, followed by the Official opening and Introduction. There was a business session at 1.45 after lunch and then Lee Harding gave his "speech". It was short and humorous. At 3 pm there was an author panel discussion with Harding, Turner, Boutland, Ron Smith, Phil Collas and Wynne Whiteford, chaired by John Bangsund. The awards - the first Ditmars - were presented after dinner, and were followed by the movie SECONDS, which made a lasting impression on me.



Saturday was a sleep-in day - the first event was the auction at 2 pm, which was followed by the Fan Guest of Honour speech by John Foyster. There was a fan panel discussion chaired by Leigh Edmonds with John Bangsund, Paul Stevens, John Foyster, Bernie Bernhouse, Gary Mason and myself at which I distinguished myself by being struck dumb when asked a question. This effectively jolted the panel; I didn't get asked another question. After dinner there was a "Wild party... grog, sex & massed orgies", which I don't remember anything of.

The Capri theatre at Murrumbidgee hosted the films on the Sunday, commencing at 12.30 with FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON and the Russian PLANET OF STORMS, which except for the strange colours, impressed me. At 3.50 there was a panel discussion chaired by Paul Stevens, with G.P. Lynch of Universal Pictures, John Allan of Columbia Pictures, Bruce Gillespie, Gary Mason, Geoff Gardener and several others. This was followed by WILD, WILD PLANET and then shortly after 6 pm dinner was served.

After dinner 2001 was screened and a lively discussion followed. These early conventions were good in that I was meeting Interstate fans on their own ground, and it was here that were forged those bonds that would hold Australian SF fandom together for the next twenty-five years. I flew back to Sydney on the 2 pm flight on the 7th of April.

The next convention I attended was the first in Sydney since 1955. It was the first convention that I had helped organise. The idea for a SYNCON was first mooted by Peter Darling, Gary Mason and myself after a fruitful discussion with well-known comics fan John Ryan. The Committee for the first SYNCON was John Brosnan, Ron Clarke, Peter Darling, Robin Johnson, Gary Mason and John Ryan. We decided that we would put on as polished a con as we could: the programme booklet was

offset and throughout the meetings we held we created continuity by using committee bulletins. The con programme itself went through about five changes.

The convention was held at the Bert Parker Memorial Hall in Epping, north west of Sydney, a few hundred metres from Peter Darling's parent's house, where he lived. The hall was the usual church-type hall, with a kitchen and male and female toilets (the male had a poster of David above it, the female a poster of Raquel Welsh (from ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.). The most striking feature of the hall was the colour and black-and-white comic artwork around the walls - most of Australia's best professional comics artists had contributed artwork and actually turned up at the con. I lived at Normanhurst at the time, which was only about twenty minutes drive from the con, which suited me.

Thursday, the 1st of January 1970 was a hot, sunny day. At 2 pm the programme opened with registration and huckstering. At 2.30 there was a brief introduction of notables, such as Gerald Carr, Peter Chapman, Keith Chatto, John Dixon, Les Dixon, Ken Emerson, Brian Foley, Reg Pitt, Stanley Pitt, Wal Simpson, Monty Webb and Paul Wheelahan. The Guest of Honour was Ronald E. Graham, the Sydney fan who had an enormous collection of both professional sf and fantasy. He also published the sf magazine VISION OF TOMORROW in the UK and Australia. Other notable fans and authors in attendance were Alex Robb, Wynne Whiteford, John Bangsund, Lee Harding, Ron Smith, Bert Chandler, Jack Wodhams, John Foyster, Bruce Gillespie, Noel Kerr, Pat Terry and old time fan Bob Smith. At 4.30 pm there was an Introduction to fandom and fannish ethics, followed by the opening of the Art show. After dinner there was a talk "Astronomy and Life In Outer Space", followed by the film ONE GIANT LEAP FOR MANKIND and a panel "What was STAR TREK All About"? This was followed by more films.



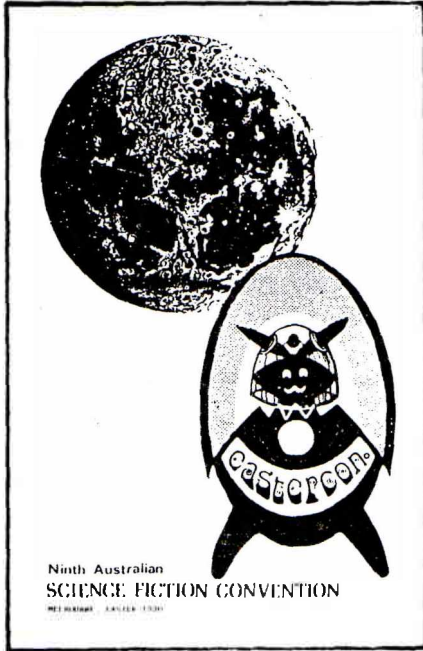
Friday the 2nd had the Official Opening and welcome at 10 am. There was a panel on "SF and fandom in Australia in the '40s and '50s", followed by a panel on "Sf in the '70s". This was followed by a lunch provided by the Con, and at 2pm Ronald Graham gave his Guest of Honour Speech. At 3 pm there was a panel "The Criticism of Science Fiction" and at 4.30 a panel "How Science Fiction is Used in the Schools". The panel after this at 5 pm had the intriguing title "What About the Worldcon" and was possibly the first public suggestion of the 1975 Australian bid, which bid was carried by acclaim. After dinner the films FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH and ONE MILLION YEARS B.C were shown, starting my appreciation of the former.

Saturday dawned bright and cheerful as had the other two days and at 10 am the comic art segment opened with introductions of the chief comic artists, followed by a panel at 10.30 on "The comic book - "Whither Goest Thou"?". At noon another panel, "The comic strips - "Whither Goest Thou"?"" was set up, followed by lunch.

At 2 pm there was a panel "The Golden Age of Science Fiction", with Bob Smith, Bruce Gillespie, John Foyster and several others. This was followed by a panel "Is there a market for Science Fiction in Australia?", which was followed by an auction. Dinner closed that session at 6.30 pm and after that was the Syncon party.

Membership of SYNCON 70 reached 71, with attendance hovering between 35 and 45 most of the time. The auction, because of the donations, made a good profit. The con was a success, and revived the interest in Sydney fans for running conventions.

The 9th Australian Science Fiction Convention was held in Melbourne over the Easter weekend of 27-30th March, 1970. Attendance was \$4 attending, and \$1 supporting. They were getting into the swing of things also - the convention booklet was 40 pages folded 4to and offset. The slant towards films in Melbourne (with its Fantasy Film Group) could be seen in the many film photos scattered throughout. Mervyn Binns was the Organizer, John Foyster doing publicity, Paul Stevens assistant organizer, Dimitrii Razuvaev artwork, John Bredan displays, John Bangsund handbook design and editing. Other committee members were Leigh Edmonds, Peter House, Tony Thomas, Noel Kerr, and Peter Innocent.



The Programme followed what was becoming the Usual for Australian SF cons - Registration at 10 am, lunch, then Welcome, Introductions and Announcements, with the usual programme changes on a blackboard. At 2.15 pm there was a business session with John Bangsund presiding over reports from clubs and groups. After this there was discussion re "Australia in '75". At 4 pm there was a film show with a STAR TREK episode being shown, followed by dinner. At 7.30 pm Mr N.K. Kroschel was programmed to speak on the Space Programme, illustrated by short films. The last event of the evening was the screening of THIS ISLAND EARTH and the trailer for MAROONED.

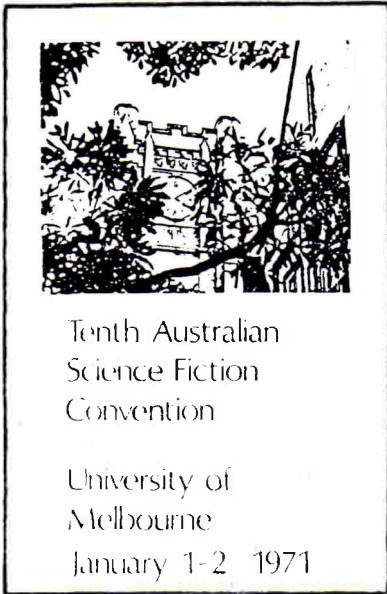
I dragged myself out of bed on the Saturday morning and had a quiet lunch before heading out to the Capri Theatre to hear Lee Harding preside over a discussion on "Science Fiction, Past and Present, with attention to the place of sf in Literature". Needless to say I can't remember anything about it twenty years later. At 2 pm there was a general discussion session followed by an Auction at 3 pm with *Dick Jenssen* presiding. The film BARBARELLA followed dinner, and left most of the fans (being mostly male) had their attention riveted onto the screen.

Sunday the 29th found me having to get up by 9 am to get to the theatre to hear Noel Kerr talking in the comics programme (back in those days all the con members went to the panels). The cons were all one strand and one could be sure of getting an audience. After lunch John Foyster presided over short talks and discussion on the different aspects of fandom: sf, comics, Tolkien, ERB, Star Trek, fanzines, US fandom, TAFF, etc. Twenty years ago the talking points were the differences between sf fans and comics fans - some, such as Gary Mason, had a foot in both camps. This was followed by the screening of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. At 7 pm was dinner and the awarding of the DITMARs, this being the first time they were awarded at the "banquet". There were guest speakers, and at 9.30 pm there was the Paul Stevens Show, which would prove to be an enduring event as long as Paul was in SF fandom.

Monday was Paul Stevens day, with two films: PROJECT X and DANGER DIABOLIK. Sandwiched between them was discussion on Film Censorship, which was big in those days before the Labour Government of 1975 and the lifting of all restrictions except for child pornography, bestiality and sexual violence. There was a quiet evening at the Melbourne SF club for those still around - I was on my way back to Sydney by then.

The 10th Australian SF Convention took a leaf out of SYNCON's book and held their con over New Year's weekend - the 1-2 January 1971. It was held in the hallowed precincts of the University of Melbourne. The Fan Guest of Honour was Robin Johnson and it was probably the first time that the Fan GoH was proffered in the Con booklet before the "pro" GoH. The Con Committee were John Foyster, Lee Harding and Leigh Edmonds. The Programme Book was folded 4to offset and edited by

John Bandsund. I joined the Con and managed to again penetrate down to the Southern City.



Again the programme followed similar lines to those previously, though a bit more frivolity can be seen by glancing through it. Registration opened at 1 pm on the Friday and at 2 pm was the official Opening. At 2.15 (after an obviously short ceremony...) there was a round table discussion of "Reviewing Science Fiction", "Fanzine Publishing", "The Worldcon Bid" and "Comics fandom". The leaders of the panels for these round table discussions were Bruce Gillespie on "Reviewing SF", John Bandsund on "Fanzine Publishing", Gary Mason on "The Worldcon Bid" and Noel Kerr on "Comics Fandom". At 3.25pm there were two short interviews and at 4.30 pm there was an address by Dr. D. Jenssen when he was quoted as saying, after admitting that he no longer read science fiction: "Science is so bizarre nowadays that it provides its own escapism. Who wants to read a dull book of fiction when they can get hold of an exciting technical report?" There followed the auction with Dick Jenssen upholding his end. After dinner Carla Harding and Elizabeth Foyster provided light entertainment. I can still remember that the audience loved the quips between the two - too bad they didn't continue into other conventions.

At 8.20 pm there was an address by Robin Johnson in his attire as Fan GoH and at 8.45 there was a panel on Amateur Press Associations (APAs), chaired by Gary Mason. The Nova Mob had a masquerade party after Gary had finished and the fans attending lasted well into the night.

Saturday the 2nd had informal meetings of special interest groups (including ANZAPA) and at 1 pm there were more round table discussions on "The Preparation of Manuscripts" (leader Lee Harding), "SF and Horror Films (Paul Stevens), "Edgar Rice Burroughs" (Allan Tompkins) and "The Psychology of the SF Fan" (Tom Newlyn). These were all well attended and the Business Session at 2 pm was subsequently put back when several of these panels ran over time. The AUSTRALIA IN '75 report was scheduled at 2.15 pm and at 2.30 there were interviews and discussions with con guests. There was a panel on SF Films at 4.30, with Paul Stevens chairing. Paul also gave another airing of The Paul Stevens Show at 8 pm after dinner. This was followed at 8.30 pm by the Ditmar Awards presentation. Following that was a panel chaired by Leigh Edmonds which had a good attendance. This was followed by fan movies and a slide show. One of the fan movies was the super 8 I took at the 1966 Con and Syncon 70. The slides were presented by Robin Johnson and Merv Binns. These also went over well.

The attendance of the con was good - more than 100 fans attended the first day of the con and overall it was looking good for the proposed Worldcon.

The next convention was a surprise for everybody. It was Qcon '71 - the first SF convention to be held in Queensland. Held over the Easter weekend of the 9 -12th of April, it was the first of the "Relaxacons". The Committee was Michael Cameron, Noel Gribble, Dennis Stocks, Neil Rahman, John Ryan and Peter Wright-Smith. I would say that Dennis Stocks had a lot to do with the con - at the time he was publishing OSIRIS, one of the best straight SF fanzines ever to be published in Australia.

Author and old time fan Brank Bryning was was Guest of Honour. Attending membership was \$1.50. The programme booklet was mimeod and 18 pages 4to. In the programme booklet was a short history of Queensland sf fandom from 1952 onward. There was a stated aim to have any profit given to the Australia in '75 bid.



The events opened on Friday the 9th of April with Registration opening at 2.30 pm and, after socialising, there was a discussion on the "Time Travel Paradox". This was followed by a talk by Robin Johnson on AUSTRALIA IN '75. There was a general exodus at 4.30 pm for a barbeque tea at John and Jan Ryans - cost, 50c. At 8 pm the films THE MAGUS and FAHRENHEIT 451 were shown at the Salisbury Theatre.

Saturday events started with Registration re-opening at 10 am, with the usual socialising. At 10.30 am (they wake early, these Country Folk) there was a panel on "Science Fiction: a TV Failure?", followed by a talk at 11.30 on "UFOs In Our Time", which was an illustrated/illuminated talk by Roy Russell, President of the Queensland Flying Saucer Research Bureau.

After lunch Frank Bryning gave a talk on "The Gernsbackian Era", which was well attended, and at 3.30 pm there was a panel on "SF Illustration: The Dying Art". After dinner the films APOLLO XII and THINGS TO COME were shown, followed by discussion. After a supper break SECONDS was shown to an appreciative audience.

Sunday the 11th was a trek to Charles Mustchin's house for a look at his large sf collection. Before reaching that, however, a tour of the Gold Coast was conducted. After the tour lunch was to be ordered by the now hungry fans at Greenmount Point - mostly fish and chips. After lunch the horde descended on Charles and spent the afternoon there, whereupon individuals drifted off as they wanted.

The five years after the 1966 convention was an explosive growth period for Australian SF fandom. Fans in all states were writing, meeting each other, organising conventions and publishing fanzines. About the only "feuds" going were those between sf and comics fandom and even then they were friendly spats, done mostly tongue-in-cheek. Fandom was still mostly a male area - most of the women who turned up at cons were the wives of male fans. Star Trek fandom, in the guise of DUSK, organized by Shayne McCormack, would, in the next five years, turn this upside down. There were a few unattached femmefans, such as Zian Wilkinson, but overall, it was still an area that the young male reader could meet his cohorts equally.

Up to this time I was able to attend nearly all the conventions that took place. From 1970 on, however, more than one convention took place each year, and some of these were more than a thousand miles apart. The hold Melbourne had on the National Australian Convention was about to be broken and it would travel to other States. In 1972 there were three fairly large (for Australia) SF conventions in different States. This wouldn't happen again till the late 1980s.

New fans still entered onto the scene and, after staying their time, left for greener pastures. About the only thing they left behind them that was lasting were any fanzines they published (for articles on the fanzines of 1966 - 1979 see my articles THE AUSTRALIAN FANZINE EXPLOSION Part 1 in THE PENULTIMATE BLIMP #1 [Feb. 1972] and Part 2 in THE MENTOR #26 [Aug. 1980]). Some fans, such as Bernie Bernhouse, Gary Woodman and Alan France, stand out for their contributions to fanzine fandom, even though they are now long gone. Your deeds *do* live on after you.

- Ron Clarke

BOIL THE WATER...

by Margaret Pearce.

Agent 202, alias George Smith, lounging by the window in carefully tattered denims, gave a small unnoticed sniff.

Grubby dog-eared files in the in-basket; three dismantled guns half buried under a cascade of broken transistorised parts and crystals in the out-basket. A clumsy bouquet of wilting fleshy leaves drooped in a squat chipped vase. Three phones huddled together in a higgledy piggledy tangle of cords - not even modern phones, but battered old manual phones.

Behind the desk sat a balding man with stooped shoulders, wearing a crumpled floral shirt and stained jeans. His face was middle-aged and anonymous, set in defeatist lines, and his eyes vague. He was the Head of the most efficient security service in the galaxy. The man with the reputation for razor sharp reflexes.

George caught himself yawning. There had been weeks of intensive briefing with the backroom boys; hours and hours of practice, the secrecy and precautions, and for what? To culminate in an interview with a seedy little man in a shabby office on the edge of a remote spaceport.

He was examined by the shifting grey eyes, which suddenly focussed. George snapped to attention. The hard intelligence in the eyes didn't belong with the contrived seediness of their background.

This last interview with the Head of the security service was a formality, really. He was ready and prepared as much as the backroom boys could make him for this assignment. The other two agents who would be monitoring his movements were already on board.

He looked again out the window to where the battered interstellar freighter was waiting; waiting the pleasure of the stooped little man with the vague grey eyes. He had been briefed, and briefed again. He had memorised faces, names, harvesting procedures and the geography of the planet, and its potential dangers. He could identify the snakes, reptiles, the fatal stinging grass, and the insect eating plants, which perhaps grew larger. The swamps that covered most of the planet and the heavy steamy atmosphere were inconveniences, not dangers.

The man behind the desk went over the points again, ticking them off on his stubby fingers.

'We have to keep harvesting. That plant with its cycle of crystallisation is absolutely unique and invaluable.'

George tried to look intelligent. Chemistry wasn't his field. He hadn't grasped exactly why the properties of the grey flop-leaved plant were so important. Something to do with the process of

reducing the process of synthesizing molecules to one abstract formula. The industrial monopolies were paying a fortune for each load harvested.

'We have lost to date, two hundred settlers, in a rigid order of male, female, male, female.'

George just waited. He had been through all that, too. The next anticipated disappearance would be male. This was why it was his assignment. If he failed, Agent 203, a hard faced brunette, was already in training to replace him.

'So far, we have lost three agents sent to investigate.'

George kept his face impassive. Two females and one male, intelligent, quick witted and highly trained. Still, he had survived a thousand dangerous situations. He would be a little harder to dispose of.

'Always alone when they disappear.'

George was getting bored. He had been over the circumstances of the disappearances so many times he could repeat each detail word for word.

'None of their weapons were in their harnesses, but no attempt had been made to fire them.'

The grey eyes went vague again. He paused and lit a cigar. George noticed with disgust it wasn't even a good one. Just a cheap acrid smelling thing you could buy at any store.

The settlers and agents who had vanished had all left behind their personal belongings as well; rings, watches, buckles and other bric-a-brac. They were all in neat piles along the benches in the laboratory, and every so often one of the backroom boys would mull through them looking for some sort of clue. It was understandable that the settlers could be disarmed before being marched off to some sinister destination, but not trained alert agents, aware and waiting for trouble.

'And just why didn't the communication devices work?'

George stiffened a bit at that, and caressed his throat. His stitches had been out a week and the scar was still a bit itchy, but no one could pick it. His three predecessors had been fitted with the very same type of communication devices. His eyes went again to the cascade of crystals and transistorised pieces that once were instant communication to the constantly monitored receiving stations.

The Head pushed his chair back, and prowled around the small office. A dribble of cigar ash clung to the floral shirt. The agent noticed it was not even a good cotton shirt, just cheap nylon. Minute holes showed through where the ash had clung.

'We've been over that planet with a fine tooth comb - no sentient life. The stinging grass occurs in patches, but it can't walk - the snakes are only aggressive in their mating cycle, and the reptiles stick to the swamp.'

'Lot of swamp, Sir.' George thought he had better let his briefing show.

George sneaked another look out the window at the battered freighter. The stooped little man pacing up and down ignored the hint.

'Of course, we haven't caught up with the life cycle and ecology. There must be something we've missed. The swamp frogs are the only form of life always near a settlement, but they're harmless. Wonder if they're being used somehow to watch...' He didn't finish his sentence, and kept pacing.

George looked out the window again. He had spent a lot of time studying the films of the swamp frogs, and the specimens dissected in the laboratories. They were fairly large, ranging in size from a dinner plate to a table. They were very flat and scaly, spread out like a pancake with four webbed feet. Their only resemblance to a frog was in the bulging wide apart eyes and the large mouth.

They were herbivorous solitary creatures, a zoological oddity, hermaphrodite, with a completely inexplicable life cycle. They had been dissected, analysed and dismissed as casting no light on the mystery of the missing settlers. They were accepted as just part of the alien landscape, basking on the mud flats, and blinking at the bustle of the settlement with sad mud coloured eyes.

'The hut has been fitted with electronic guard devices, and closed circuit cameras. When outside you don't go out of range of the truck.'

George relaxed. At long last he was going to get into that freighter, and take off. He straightened up to salute, but the Head took his hand and shook it.

'And Agent 202. Remember to boil the drinking water. Lot of nasty stomach wogs around that planet.'

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George Smith slouched into the quonset hut that had been his predecessors. He spared an indifferent glance at the tumble-down rusting loader he had driven from the freighter. Inside, it had been fitted up as a monitoring station, and the two agents cramped inside were in for an uncomfortable stay.

The hut was a few kilometres from the main settlement, temptingly isolated. After the morose old hermit who had assembled it had vanished, it had remained empty.

As each of the agents who occupied it also vanished, the uneasy settlement moved further and further back from the area. There were no prying eyes to see the installment of the machinery that controlled the sonar beams, or the reinforcement of heavy steel behind the rusty iron of the walls.

It all looked very primitive and ordinary. There were cooking facilities, a desk littered with loading manifests, a lopsided filing cabinet and unmade bunk, and the rest was just storage area. Over all hung the deadening smell of the harvested grey plant.

'Testing,' said the voice in his ear.

'Comfortable,' he assured silently. 'All nice and tight.'

Steel floors, roof, walls, and windows and door were guarded by the sonic beams. Anything breaking the beams triggered off a racket loud enough to wake the dead, and also triggered off a charge strong enough to stun an elephant.

'Vision obscured on the left side,' complained the voice.

George Smith shifted the battered calendar to a lower level, and the innocuous stud it covered winked dully.

'Better,' said the voice. 'That's complete coverage of the whole hut. An ant couldn't walk by without us spotting it.'

George Smith, harvester and colonist, settled into a routine, so did the two agents monitoring

him. Every morning he drove the rusty loader through the heavy steamy mist, following the swamp around to a different location, swung the punt down and launched it. He then poled it around looking for the grey large-leaved plant, never at any stage moving more than a certain distance from the loader.

Every afternoon he stored the harvested plant in large plastic bins, and placed them aside for the pick-ups. The pile of grubby receipts grew larger.

'Your realise, we'll have made a year's pay in three weeks,' he told his invisible watchers.

The mechanism crackled, as he was answered. The transistorised equipment seemed to be deteriorating, although the experts swore the new receivers were foolproof.

'Earning money the hard way, Georgie boy,' Agent 702 had snapped.

It was nerve wracking monitoring for a continuous period. There was tension building up between the three of them as they kept waiting for that inexplicable something to happen.

One morning, George Smith slouched out and drove the rusty loader quite a bit further down the winding track that edged the swamp, looking for a fresh patch of leaves to harvest. He scowled as he manhandled the punt into the water. There were isolated patches of the poisonous stinging grass fringing the swamp edge.

'The visual scan shows it gets heavier further along,' warned the voice.

'I'm harvesting to the south,' George Smith explained wearily.

He poled across to where a promising patch of the grey plant showed though the green of the oversized fungi surrounding it. Some of the plants were in flower, large crimson and pink bell shaped flowers that swayed and quivered in the still air.

George backed the punt away, and sat looking. On all the briefing and discussion of the important grey plant, there was never any mention that it flowered.

'This might be it, Georgie boy,' said the excited voice in his ear.

The flowers rested against the mud of the swamp, dwarfing the squat plant from which they were growing. Could they ingest a passing colonist and disgorge his gun and transmitters?

'Throw something into one,' ordered the disembodies voice.

There were no rocks or pebbles in the soft mush that passed for shoreline. George Smith unhooked his water canteen, canvas covered of good quality metal, and threw it down the pink and crimson throat. The petals quivered and started to close, but the canteen came sliding out and fell with a soft plop on the mud.

'Hum,' said the disembodied voice thoughtfully. 'We need to find if it is carnivorous. We'll put in a report when we get back.'

George picked up his canteen with the edge of his sickle, and dropped it into the punt, and backed the punt away from the vivid splashed of colour. On an alien planet you could never be sure. The only thing wrong with the theory was that everything from the missing colonists and agents had been left in their huts.

A muted splash made him look up suddenly, but it was only a swamp frog floundering across the water. George watched with interest. This was the first he had seen, apart from the briefing

films. He backed the punt against the security of the rusty loader, and waited for it to pass.

It was larger than he realised, spreading two metres from one webbed flipper to the other. The eyes blinked in his direction, but it surged towards the patch of poison grass.

'We've got weapons on it.'

'Harmless,' George replied.

The swamp frog vanished underwater and then surfaced, with an angry wriggling snake in its mouth.

'They're not harmless,' one of the agents voices grunted.

Obviously the poison didn't affect swamp frogs. The loose skin around its mouth was being lacerated by the darting head of the snake, but there was no change in the steady speed of the frog.

It reached the patch of flowers, and hunched itself. The blossoms swung pink and crimson throats towards it. The frog spat with a curious whooshing noise, and the snake vanished into one of the blossoms, which snapped shut into a long silvery grey bud. The frog floundered off back to the poison grass.

'What do you know,' marvelled a voice.

For a fleeting moment George felt sorry for the agents in their cramped quarters, trying to film the scene, and surrounded by their network of screens and console buttons.

'Maybe the frogs feed colonists to the flowers.'

'Maybe not,' argued George. 'How would they get close enough to make everybody disarm first?'

It was the end of the discussion. After all, it wasn't their job to theorise about what went on, just send back reports.

The bale wasn't quite full, and George eased the punt around the next cluster of fungi, looking for more of the grey plants. He was too wary to approach the oversized flowers that sprang from the fleshy grey leaves.

'Don't get too far out.'

George shrugged. The monitoring agents were getting more like old women every day. He found another huddle of leaves and swung the sickle. It clanged against something hard. A large marrow shape, gleaming a vivid red and purple. It came away easily from the main stem. He put it in the punt, struggling with its unexpected weight.

'The backroom boys might be interested,' he explained to his unseen watchers. 'I didn't know they fruited.'

'All plants have seeds,' was the irritable reply. 'Drive this heap a bit more carefully, will you.'

He transferred his crop to the big plastic bins, and left the large marrow on the floor of his store room. After tea, before the light failed, he went through his usual security check; beams functioned on doors and windows, the television scanners were clear, and his forearm gun sensitive to the pressure of his arm muscle.

'All clear,' he mouthed.

'Sleep tight, Georgie boy,' came back under his ear.

George grinned and stretched out more comfortably. The two agents monitoring him would be curled up on their bunks watching the closed circuit screens around the walls of their little cell. His large barnlike hut had the tattered pin ups of the glamour girls of the galaxy. His eyes roved around the walls. One thing you had to admit, one of his predecessors had taste.

He was just dozing, when a soft plop woke him to a sweating alertness.

'What is it, Georgie boy?'

He flipped the switch of the powerful solar generator. In the harsh light the storage hut was unchanged, except the seed or melon had split, and oozed out a mixture like white dough. The livid colour of the seed case had faded to a dead white. He prodded it. It was soft and warm to touch.

'Might be poisonous,' came the warning. 'Want us to come in?'

'You can see it through your screens,' he grunted. If they came in, he was going to have to go through the complicated sequence of disarming his tight security.

He checked it with his scope. It had stopped oozing, and spread across most of the bench. 'Not poisonous,' he reported. 'Molecular construction a bit odd, yeasty almost, but nothing is registering as poisonous.'

'Okay,' sighed one of the agents. 'Try and get some sleep. One of us will watch it.'

George went back to his bunk, and shut his eyes determinedly against the bright glare of his solar powered generator light. He was woken some time later by the urgent voice in his ear.

'George, you all right? Why is the light off?'

'It's on,' he grumbled. As he blinked his eyes open he stared straight at the naked figure of a girl, stumbling towards him. He recognised her face from his briefing. It was one of the settler's daughters who had disappeared. 'One of the missing girls has turned up in here,' he reported.

'Well, what's wrong with the cameras?' asked the urgent voice. 'Almost as if they've been knocked out by heat or radiation.'

'It's not hot in here,' George said.

He inspected the girl. Her face was quite blank, her eyes slow moving and expressionless, following his movements as he reached for the rug to cover her.

There was a faint prickle of unease in the back of his mind at the colour of her eyes. They were the turgid brownish green of the swamp. The official report and description had stated baldly - eyes blue. He wondered if she was drugged.

'Nothing to worry about,' he soothed as he wrapped the rug around her.

She fell against him, and he wrapped her more firmly in the rug, and waited for her shuddering to ease off. Her skin was cold and clammy.

'It's Sandra Jackson,' he said, and her eyes followed the movement of her lips without comprehension.

'One of the earlier colonists reported missing,' came the voice in his ear. 'Interesting to know how she got in, and where she's been for the past twelve months?'

'Might need medical treatment,' the other voice ordered. 'Put her down, and start your disarming sequence.'

George hefted the girl over to his bunk. Her body was warming, and he became uncomfortably aware he was dressed only in his forearm gun, and his cotton shorts. He felt the heat of her through the rug and against his body.

'She's got a temperature,' he reported.

'Might be contagious. Get away from her and get the place unlocked so we can check her out.'

George sighed. There were no known illnesses on the planet, except for the beastly stomach wog. The agents were getting more and more like a pack of old women with each week they monitored.

He tried to put her on the bunk, but her arms suddenly wound around his neck and pulled him closer.

Her clinging arms were impossibly strong, and the overheated body strained against him. Her eyes were still without comprehension, staring blankly at him.

'She's delirious,' he explained, trying to disentangle her arms. She seemed abnormally strong.

'Like to know why the cameras' aren't working,' grumbled one of the monitors. 'For goodness sake put her down and disarm the place so we can get in.'

George sighed. He braced himself with one knee on the bunk and moved back, the girl coming up with him. He was arrested for a few seconds by the crimson of her lips and the pinkness of the half open mouth. An enticing combination, but it reminded him of something; something important!

His knees wobbled with the strain of trying to push that abnormally strong body away from him. His whole body felt numb. Some sort of perfume or gas rising from that heated body seemed to be anaesthetizing his senses. The burning mouth clamped itself on his, and exhaled. He groaned and crumpled.

'What's happening - answer, George,' came the frantic voice in his ear.

George couldn't reply. The body pressed so tightly against him was burning hot and somehow fluid. It was melting into him. He could feel it burning as it penetrated. Flowing into him, dissolving and changing him. The last thing he heard, faintly and from a far distance, was the tinkle of the undigested transistor parts, and his gun as they fell to the metal floor.

His whole body was a burning rawness, altering molecule by molecule with the catalyst flowing through it, melting and flattening out, pink and crimson underneath, and dulling to the grey brown scales on top.

It poured off the bed, and streamed under the door, barely scraping by under the lowest sonar beam.

By the time the agents had radioed through for the security code to disarm the hut, and pounded into the hut, staring with disbelief at the unholstered gun and collection of transistor parts, the swamp frog had reached water, to swim smoothly through the turgid swamp to a definite

destination.

It somehow knew that deep in the swamp there was a promising patch of poison grass by which to plant its eggs. A patch with a plentiful supply of snakes, which some instinct assured the swamp frog would be needed later; at least a planetary rotation later, when the eggs had grown into healthy broad leaved grey plants with the vivid crimson and pink flowers, which had such an insatiable appetite until they fruited.

The swamp frog, as far as it could feel, was contented. The new life form that had arrived on the planet had an easier ingestion rate than the aeons of reptile and snake life it had evolved with. There would be more seeds with the synthesized molecular structure required, to entice more of the bisexual life patterns needed for a respectable hermaphrodite to reproduce its kind.

Whatever that might be.

THE END



THE LIONESS

by Anne Stewart

My room was slowly closing in
The Lioness scared me.
Shadows fell like leaves
On freshly laid snow.

Hope was gone for me
From my life.
I had nothing or anyone to turn to
I had no-one to talk to.

I turned to the only thing
That could help me.
For once in the last few days
I was carefree.
I didn't want to face facts

I was high and I had no troubles.
My memory recalled the happy times
A field of yellow daisies
Running, running with a friend
I used to know.

But reality was staring me in the face
Concrete buildings, grey and dirty
Ever reaching upward.
People rushing about me, not caring.

I felt anger for them, corrupting me
With their words and faces.
I was free of them
For the moment, at least

LOST YOUTH

by Anne Stewart

Youth knocked at my door,
Once at birth and again before death.

Twice it knocked and twice I didn't answer.
I didn't go to the door.
What a fool I was!

I didn't want youth to enter.
What reason did I have?
What was I afraid of?

It's too late now; I'm old
Too old to go to the door,
Too weak to open it.

I'm afraid it's closed.
I can't open it now,
When I want to be young.

It's closed shut.

FORBIDDEN PLANET- INNOVATIONS

by Peter Brodie

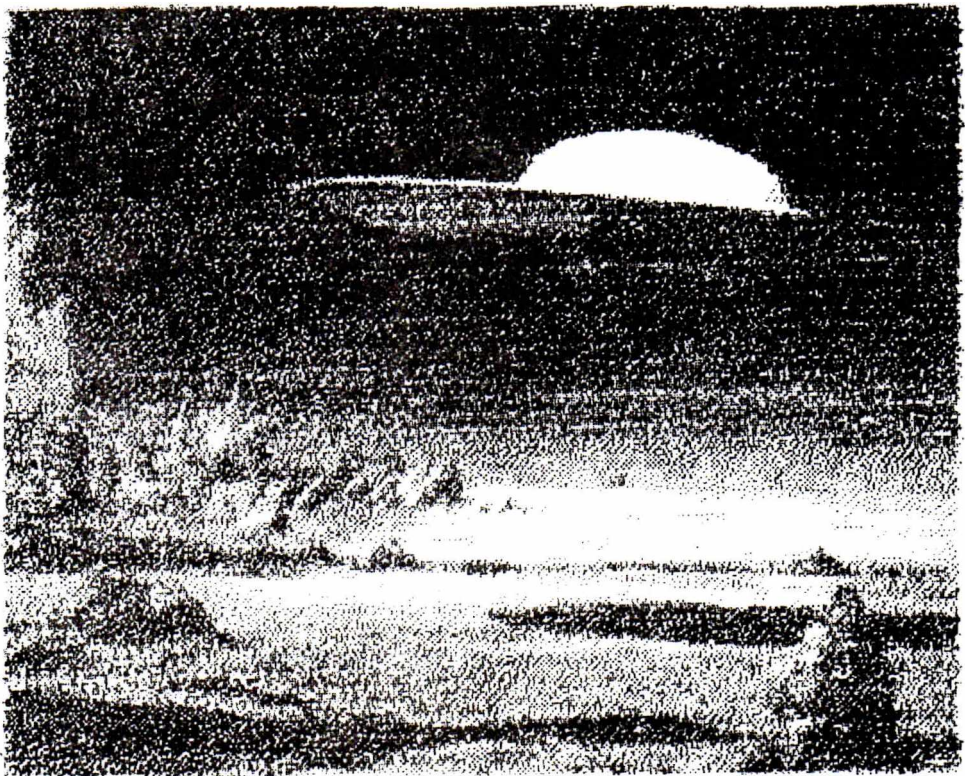
The list below was forwarded by Peter Brodie as an example that one early SF movie at least, *did* have something that set it off from those following. - Editor.

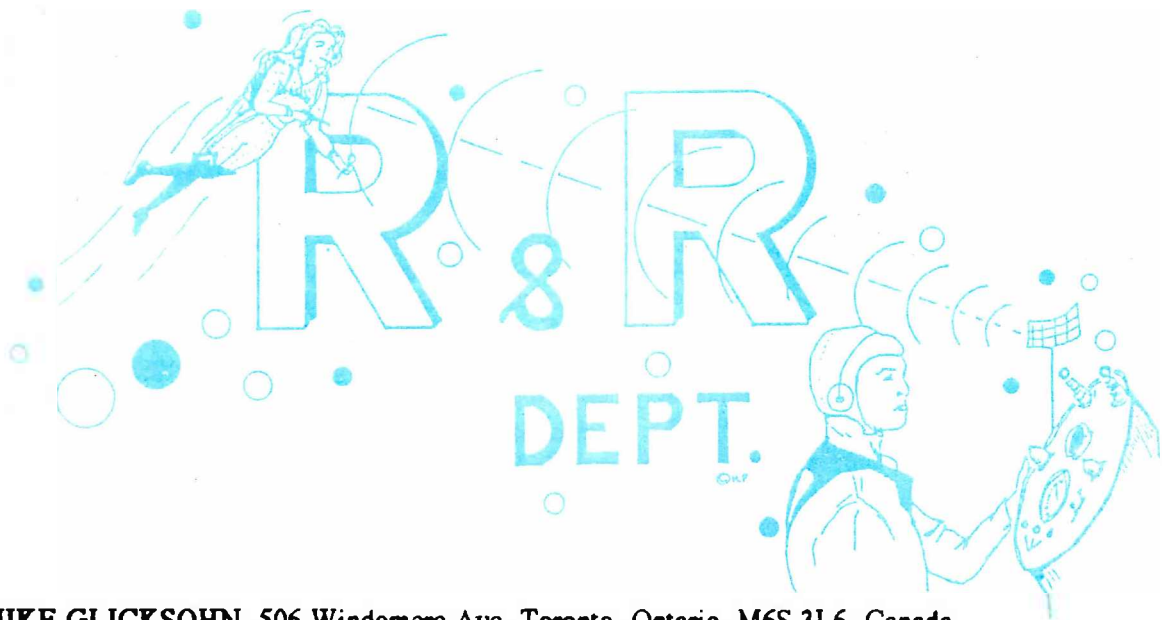
1. Hyperdrive starship crewed by humans.
2. Saucer shaped starship from Earth.
3. General crew address in ship via any microphone.
4. Deceleration stations for the drop below hyperdrive.
5. Indications of problems and dangers of hyperdrive navigation.
6. Ship computer makes automatic safety maneuvers for ship.
7. Navigation console and dome in the round: viewable and accessible from all quarters.
8. Upper level crew lifts activated by body weight.
9. Earth ship surveying of planetary surface from orbit.
10. Indication of delicacy of magnetic forces and the balancing thereof during landing cycle.
11. Landing beam to stabilise craft.
12. Small hand-held electronic data base.
13. Neutron energy sidearms.
14. Compact commbelt with tracking, situation indicator, interpersonnel comm and built-in TV transmitter mike/camera, attached via retractable wire.
15. Robot provides both power source and directional guidance for travel car.
16. Robot can synthesise any matter in any quantity.
17. Robot can activate household appliances.
18. Identifiably extra-solar planetary landscape.
19. Entire story set in another solar system.
20. Earth based intersolar federation.
21. Ensignia for above federation.
22. Exterior and interior of futuristic house.
23. Earthmen using energy weapons of earth manufacture.
24. Superfast travel car with anti-inertia facility.
25. Household disintegrator garbage disposal.
26. Palmpass activated houseshields.
27. Houseshields made of memory metal.
28. Palmpass beamer for robot summon.
29. Small cylindrical roster file.
30. Indication of difficulties of creating true robot servant; 23rd century techno incapable.

31. Extrasolar earth colony.
32. Robot possesses various beams for unwanted pests, weapon deactivation, etc.
33. First in-depth depiction of totally alien race.
34. Engineering on an unhuman scale.
35. Solid state music player and playback capsules.
36. Metal that soaks up energy.
37. Alien cyclic lock mechanism with four point light indication of sequence.
38. 3D mental image producer.
39. IQ tester and indicator.
40. Machinery with no direct wiring.
41. Creation by thought.
42. Enclosed travel pod and tubeway.
43. Thermo-nuclear reactors en masse, harnessed in tandem.
44. Vast machine that makes minor improvements to its structure as required.
45. Viewing mirror to obviate danger from viewing thermo nuclear energies direct.
46. Depiction of alien written language.
47. Depiction of alien music.
48. Truly alien architecture: doors, stairs, etc.
49. Self-maintaining alien machinery.
50. Earthmen being attacked by alien force on extra-solar planet.
51. Projection screen capable of displaying entire body of racial knowledge.
52. Earth ship force field posts.
53. Earth ship heavy duty neutron cannon with auto-track and swivelling four point energy projectors.
54. Earth ship tractor with magnetic grapple.
55. Indications of difficulty of communicating over interstellar distances.
56. Different crew uniforms for various duties.
57. Invisible, indestructible monster created by machine/mind interface.
58. Hull of ship contains flush speakers to allow important commands to be relayed to immediate but ex-ship crew via commbelt.
59. Energy creature that can manipulate matter.
60. Above creature can renew its atomic structure nanosecond by nanosecond.
61. Earth ship contains internal energy weapons.
62. Earth ship neutron cannon and force field powered by wave link to ship.
63. Indication of psychic link between child and parent.
64. Device that starts irreversible reactor chain explosion.
65. Compact power source for Earth ship.
66. Aliens taking specimens of Earth fauna back to their planet.
67. Strict starship crew specifications.
68. Totally electronic music soundtrack.
69. Standard shipboard crew uniform.
70. Failsafe override for robot ("Emergency cancellation Archimedes.")
71. Highly detailed technical background with no exceptions.
72. Video tape as popular entertainment ("Mad scientist of the taped thrillers.")
73. Journey to legitimate extrasolar destination (Altair).
74. Depiction of legitimate extrasolar destination (main sequence star Altair, hot G-5 type).
75. Astronomically correct definition of star (main sequence).
76. Exact planetary landing co-ordinates.
77. Establishing orbital approach for particular planet.
78. Set standard of security system on ship.
79. Optical fibre camera (commbelt).
80. Military starship crewed by military personnel.
81. Sentry duty, armed watches, etc to guard above ship while landed.
82. Robot helmsman and navigator for starship.
83. Central viewing screen with various uses: ex-ship view, mike/camera aspect from any crewman, etc.
84. Binocular viewing scope at navigation console to allow 3D appraisal of navigational problems

without peripheral movement distracting.

85. Environment suits (unused).
86. Extra-solar graveyard.
87. Ship crewmen buried on alien planet.
88. Shipboard marriage enroute to destination (Morbis and his wife).
89. Human born and raised on another planet.
90. Named starship (Belerephon).
91. Type and designation of starship (Cruiser, C-57D).
92. Human named after star (Altair).
93. Artificially enhanced IQ's.
94. Standard procedure for planetary landings.
95. Indication of pre-colonisation survey of planet ("You have the standard charts?")
96. Robot can analyse atomic structure of any substance.
97. Robot that speaks a multitude of languages and sub-tongues.
98. Correct definition of isotopic material (same properties: different atomic mass).
99. Robot can manipulate its specific gravity and centre of mass.
100. Suspended gravity storage containers.
101. Clear writing stylus with no indication of ink supply.
102. Specialist ship personnel.
103. Scavenging ship's parts to create another device.
104. Earthmen killed by alien force on extrasolar planet.
105. Robot houseguard.
106. Total atomic disruption of targets.
107. Power packs for energy weapons.
108. Starship with recreation facilities.
109. Depiction of ultimate goal of all technology (machine for creation by mere thought).
110. Human drama set some centuries ahead of now.





MIKE GLICKSOHN, 506 Windemere Ave, Toronto, Ontario M6S 3L6, Canada.

Your description of SYNCON '90 in TM #68 left me thinking that at least *some* aspects of Aussie cons are different from the way cons run over here. I don't know of any North American GoHs who have skipped the Friday of the con because of a conflicting sf meeting. Nor do I think many concons over here would let that happen: once a concom hands out the bucks to get a guest to the con they like to make maximum use of said guest to "get their money's worth". Hell, at one con I was Fan Guest at I was involved in no less than 15 official duties between Friday night and Sunday afternoon! (The organisers were good friends of mine, though, and I didn't complain. Too much.)

SYNCON '90 was a relaxacon and didn't really get going till the Saturday. Also the Con Chairman is a personal friend and knew how much I wanted to be at the sf meeting (also it was at our house and we didn't know who was actually coming...) - Ron.

Di mars? You guys have a new set of fan awards down there? Or is it time to fire the proofreader? You are also correct in pointing out that overseas fans (well, this one at least) think that the Ditmars are an Australia-wide award.

The report on Danse Macabre shows just how different one person's convention can be from that of another attendee at the same gathering. I can't remember the last time I watched a movie or a video at a convention, for example. While Alan was watching Star Trek reruns, for example, due to the absence of parties I would have inveigled George Martin into a poker game and stripped him of some of his vast Hollywood wealth. Different strokes for different folks, obviously! Other than that, though, Alan does a very thorough job of reporting on the con and makes it seem like a pretty typical and quite successful convention.

Buck's column was enjoyable as always (even though you don't have to live in the country to suffer from inadequate water pressure due to old too-small water pipes which you don't have the money to replace with new three-quarter inch copper pipe no matter how many flyers got shoved through the mail slot) but I don't share his passion for privacy or his mild paranoia about fannish boors. Over the last twenty years I've entertained quite a few travelling fans (including a couple from Australia) some of whom were only names in fanzines when they called to see if there was crash space available and I've never had a bad experience yet. One of these days I'll try and make the trip down to Indiana and drop in unannounced on Buck (who'd *probably* not shoot me since we're friendly acquaintances) just to give him some ammunition for his feelings about being hard to locate.

I enjoyed the pictures and Jozef's artwork was well looking at.

Jim's piece about the WOTF gathering was quite fascinating, mainly for what it revealed about the enormous amounts of money Bridge is spending on running these contests. I find it hard to believe that these anthologies generate enough revenue to allow for these sorts of expenditures which leaves me wondering how much of the capital behind Bridge and the WOTF contests comes from the coffers of the Scientologists. And it's this very concern that keeps a lot *more* of "many of the great names in Science Fiction and Fantasy writing today" away from Bridge than working for them.

Alan Stewart suggests some pretty logical reasons for the differences between US and

Australian approaches to the con suite but I should point out that I attend some very small cons where the funds available from registration are limited also and yet the con suite is still given top priority. (Admittedly those international air fares must be *the* major reason Australian cons don't have money to spend on free food and drink but you guys must surely have a few cons where they don't import someone from outside of the country?) Perhaps it's tied to traditional expectations as well as finances?

BEB's comments on the changing nature of fandom and its interaction with fanzine fandom are largely spot on but I disagree with him on a couple of points. The print run on my last fanzine was 165 and until just recently (almost a year later) I had a couple of copies left over so it is possible to keep one's mailing list trimmed (even if it annoys a few people you don't interact with all that closely.) And if someone responds without giving you the feeling that your time and effort in producing and sending the fanzine was well spent, then don't send them any more fanzines! My own mailing list consists of a central core of close friends who do not have to react in any way to what I send them because they'll keep getting copies as long as I publish plus a changing collection of fans who interest and entertain me who do have to provide some sort of feedback if they want to keep getting issues. As a letterback of some renown I've always felt that the real coin of the fanzine realm was the loc, not the trade, which is why I've never had any tendency to trade my fanzines with other editor's fanzines just because we were both science fiction fanzine editors. I like my feedback to be a lot more personal than that. Which, obviously, is why I can control my mailing list and keep it at a workable number as I do. (21.12.90)

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

If it was Leda who got forced by the swan, wonder if the cover of TM 68 shows her dodgy twin Della swooning over the truly lusty crow? - very powerful bit of artwork, anyhow. Other favourite bit of art (is) the mermaid coming ashore to spawn on p.7 - only odd effect of that one's positioning is I foolishly assumed it had some connection with the preceding story - ended up re-reading SILENT VOICES looking for a reference to mermaids I'd missed (tho as SV is a very evocative and indeed moving meditation on the idea of the dying man reliving his life in flashback, well deserved a re-read).

Of the other fiction, THE HOPES OF AUTUMN was also moving in a ... well, the term *does* fit... an autumnal sort of way: I particularly liked the way random computer-generated events like the wrong groceries, and the prize, combine to form an external protagonist, in effect, or more dynamic third-party to help break up the marriage. The story also made me look up the origin of the word - my dictionary chickens out by saying "from Latin autumnus, possibly originally of Etruscan origin". The mega OED gives "autumnare" (Latin) = "ripen" for "autumn", which sounds plausible as an origin.

THE KING AND SON I found fairly boring as folk-tales go. What language was it translated from? Welsh folk-tales tend to be much livelier, if the Mabinogion is any guide. Certainly their heroes tend to be either less wimpish or have the wit to call on some more dynamic figure to sort the situation out. Ditto Irish. Was it Cornish? Breton?

Of the poems, ISOTOPIA I found the more striking, both in the language and its relentless forward drive. (My dictionary gave me "chook" = chicken, so I assume "blobby" in the context is an image of mutation into something blubbery and lumpy at once - great). The title, ISOTOPIA, has a lovely ambiguity if I interpret it rightly, meaning at once a future where all things are in an equal state (of destruction, in this case), and where radioactive isotopes "Rule OK".

SILENT VOICES is gently pleasant as a re-working of a fairly standard idea, and "sopors", at first surprising, is on re-reading precisely "le mot juste", but overall didn't stir me.

Part of THE TRAIL-BLAZING ARROW were intriguing, parts had the dubious air of pseudo-plausibility of the links in Lovecraftian tales or accounts of The Illuminati, but the enormous study and research involved has got to be respected by an ignoramus like me even if I'm suspicious of the meaningfulness of some of the signs and sound coincidences: when an ostensibly identical element in an English place name (eg ARK) can in fact originate from 5 or 6 different original words, then sound similarities across thousands of miles/years, on an inter-continental basis, didn't necessarily, to me, prove all that much except that similar sounds (perhaps onomatopoeic) are bound to turn up. (SHAG is (semi-obsolete) slang for act of copulation - I find it hard to believe it relates to either Babylonian or Quechuan, somehow, even though BET SHAGGATHU and SHUQLA get into the ball park of letters used. Shag in the coition sense in the big OED sources it to an American dance of the

30s & 40s which involved a lot of hopping about, but this can't be right, as Partridge traces the sexual sense back to the late 18th C and suggests rather evasively it comes from Shag - to shake, toss about, or be exhausted (which could just as likely have come *from* the sexual sense). A dialect dictionary gives Shag as a hobgoblin or foal with its first year's coat as a link. All very vague - maybe a Babylonian source via Mesopotamian Arabic isn't all that wildly impossible after all - words for basic things do live on.

The other articles I enjoyed reading, but only comment that occurs to mind is re Buck Coulson's barn remarks - here, farmers keep barns (the traditional kind) half-intact till they can get planning permission to turn into houses to sell to yuppies, using new concrete and corrugated monstrosities for their own barn-purposes instead - perhaps there isn't the demand yet in America's rural hinterland but a few old barns could be a worthwhile investment just in case?

I've enclosed a copy of a new chapbook in hopes of interest. The content, humorous "pomes" from earlier British fanzines, may not be of much interest to Australians - the specific connection with your continent is that Paul Enever, one of whose pieces is included, is/was a pioneering English fan. He emigrated to Oz in 1961, and was lost track of by British fandom. Now, if he's still alive, not only would his old friend Vinc Clarke love to re-establish contact, but I would obviously like to get contributor's copies to him. So I wondered, if any of your Australian readers know of, or have heard from him? (27.12.90)

WAR OF THE WORDS (the "sampler of sf fanzine pomes") is a 20 page typeset offset booklet, folded A4. There are pomes by John Brunner, Vinc Clarke, Paul Enever, Chuch Harris, Archie Mercer, Eric Needham and Sam Youd. Quite a few have the authors explanations with them, as several are quite old (1938...). It is a volume worth getting for anyone interested in fanzines and fannish history. The cover price is 1.25p or US(I presume)\$3. I suggest you send Steve an A\$5 note while they are still around. - Ron.

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

One of us appears to have a fixation with the Ditmar Awards. I'm not sure whether it's your insistence on publishing misleading information about them in MENTOR editorials or my insistence on correcting you. Be that as it may, in THE MENTOR 69, you imply that only professional fiction is eligible for Ditmar nomination in the Fiction categories. That is simply not the case. In the ASSF insert in the December issue of THYME, Greg Hills makes it clear that the listings of potential Ditmar nominees he published, as a service to Australian fandom and not as a definitive listing, are mainly from the professional magazines because he hasn't the time to chase through all the fanzines and that he's willing to publish names of amateur pieces if provided with them. You don't have to pay MENTOR contributors in order for their short stories to be eligible for Ditmar nomination. The stories are already eligible. True, stories considered "professional" do tend to do better in Ditmar ballots, but I've found three examples of "non-professional" fiction that have made it to the final ballot, the first example winning the 1978 Ditmar:-

1978 - "Albert's Bellyful" - Francis Payne (YGGDRASIL FEB '77)

1988 - "Celestial Intervention Agency" - Karen Herkes (TIME LOOP #70)

1989 - "A Tale of Nine Cats" - Katherine Cummings (Conviction Programme)

It's clear that you're "not serious about the Ditmars", otherwise you'd do a little research before perpetrating such misleading material.

Incidentally, the Constitution of the Australian Science Fiction Convention, the only body that has any say in the awarding of the Australian Science Fiction Awards (Ditmars), is printed in full in the Conviction (Syncon 88) Programme Book on page 16. I vaguely recall some minor change to the wording, but the Ditmar section is substantially unchanged.

Re your reply to my letter. I quoted the 1971 programme book to provide you with a slightly more reliable source for the name "Ditmar" than "A prominent fan at the time told me..." I wasn't casting doubt on your interpretation. The point I was making about the awards was that the only

reason there might be for seeing the award as Melbourne based is that fans in other states are too lazy to nominate - your editorial suggested a Melbourne conspiracy.

The ASSF was created to foster an interest in science fiction in Australia. Since AussieCon II it had administered the surplus from AussieCon II, for the benefit of science fiction in Australia. Your comments about the ASSF trying to become the "controlling force in Australian science fiction fandom" smack of paranoia. How in hell could anything as amorphous as fandom ever be controlled? My feeling is that the ASSF doesn't do much, but it is trying to support Australian fandom - by financing short story competitions, and by providing seed loans for conventions and funding for projects designed to assist fandom in general. It had deliberately shied away from projects that would merely benefit Melbourne fandom. We're not into building clubhouses here.

Sydney fans are more into fanzines than Melbourne fans? That sounds suspiciously like a generalisation you'd have trouble supporting with examples. I suspect that fanzine activity is equally shared between Victoria and N.S.W. I don't get many of the media specific zines, largely because I don't believe in subscribing to fanzines, but the number of zines I get regularly from the two states seems similar.

N.S.W

Victoria

THE MENTOR
WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE
GEGENSCHN

THYME
ETHEL THE AARDVARK
STUNNGUNN
PINK.

(10.1.91 & 13.1.91)

Well, in my reply to your letter I *was* talking about the past (which is why I said "were" and quoted the SSFF). Hmm, of the four Victorian zines you quote above, I've only heard of the first two.

It is interesting that as I write this (January 1991) I have received two fanzines (SF COMMENTARY and your own Q36) originating from the 1960 brigade. Of the zines published lately, I would think that the majority is put out by those 60s and 70s fans - including Eric Lindsay, above with GEGENSCHN.

I am not *against* Ditmars - they can be an incentive for the newer fans after they put out their first zines and send them off into limbo. It is a good recognition of their labour. The more experienced fanzine fans (unless they are ego-maniacs) have other reasons for continuing to publish their zines after ten or so years.

With sf awards, there is usually a split up of fanzine published material, writers and zines. I am sure that TMs readers and contributors will be thinking of nominating items published herein in future Ditmar nominations and votings, unless the new committee (see the letter and nomination form in last issue) totally alters the voting categories. - Ron.

DAVID TANSEY, GPO Box 2061, Canberra ACT 2601.

Oh, I get it! Peter Brodie didn't really mean all those nasty comments - he criticises *everyone*. He only uses his onanistic wit, no doubt sharpened on a diet of Derryn Hinch and John Laws, to start controversies, rather than make sincere comments.

Well, Peter, there's no need for you to read further. This letter is going to contain some serious discussion, so you might as well scuttle back under your rock.

I am enclosing a copy of the Canberra SF Society's (the CSFS) 1990 anthology, SINGULARITIES 2. I'd like to tip my hat to Shane Dix, whose story THE STRANDED BIPED, is a modern classic and no doubt this was why it was chosen as the lead story.

The latest MENTOR's colour cover (is it the first colour cover?) was a beauty, and when I ripped the plastic wrapper off, the cover hit me like a rainbow in the gloom of Canberra. Also, with your article about the world trip, I started to read it, thinking I would be bored, but after a page I was hooked, and eagerly read the thing through to the end. Such a trip could not be made in this day and

age. That New Zealander on the trip was a bit of a dork, the one who gave the local \$800 in travellers' cheques to change and never saw him again!

Regarding SINGULARITIES 2, this is amazing in that it only costs \$7 postpaid (\$5 to Canberra SF Society members). At that price, which still presumably allows the CSFS to make a profit, it shows what a ripoff the average paperback costing \$10 - \$12 is.

In answer to John Tipper's question, yes, I like to try out ideas in short story form first. Obviously, space restrictions in most fanzines limit the stories they can publish to single idea/single event ones. The exception is THE CSFS NEWSLETTER, which is happy to take stories up to 10,000 words. They are lucky to have access to scanners and other hardware which assist editing. My story from SINGULARITIES 2, COLONY WORLD, compresses events to such a degree as to make the story indigestible. I recently expanded it into a 130pp novella, taking into account comments from people who had read the shorter version.

I've noticed in your letters column several comments from people (all seem to be from the USA or UK), saying that they didn't understand the ending to UNDER PRESSURE. It was a surprise ending, a twist, (but not a joke as someone suggested), being that the huge drive the astronauts used (which was "asteroid-size") was what upset the planet's pattern of lunar influences. I had thought of writing earlier to clear this up, but decided to let the story stand on its own, without explanation.

I'd next like to comment on Ron's assertion that the Ditmars are a conspiracy. It is easy to see conspiracies anywhere, eg, one might read too much into the recent winning of the Huttcon short story competition by its secretary. These "conspiracies" can often be explained by the fact that the Australian SF scene is so small there is a lot of overlap.

However, in the case of the Ditmars, a lot of people I talk to believe the awards are not kosher. I am inclined to agree. But this is not a conspiracy by people from any one city, as Ron believes, but instead is the result of a national SF network, "a mafia", of influential people, who might be in Perth, Adelaide or Melbourne. Groups outside the mafia, eg, the CSFS and AUREALIS magazine, are seen as a threat because of their independence.

In any event, the Ditmars are patently discriminatory in which stories they allow for nomination. They say they will only allow serious publications, ie, those that pay authors. But who could doubt that the stories printed in, say, THE MENTOR or THE CSFS NEWSLETTER are not serious? The editors of those two do not publish rubbish. The stories that appear in THYME FICTION are eligible for nomination, despite the fact the authors are not paid (they receive an Aphelion book, the value of which to the supplier might be only \$5). The stories from EIDOLON are eligible, despite the fact that it does not pay authors for their stories (they receive \$10, which the editor says is a nominal charge to cover postage, etc., and not for the story itself).

On the other hand, the CSFS pays yearly prizes totally \$85 for their short story competition, and in 1989 paid ten authors a \$25 royalty from the proceeds of the book's sale. While the 1989 stories were not held to be eligible, the Ditmar committee has now grudgingly allowed the 1990 stories in.

Another fault with the Ditmars is that SF is not segregated from fantasy. Comparing, say, the fantasies of Terry Dowling and the hard SF of Vern Weitzel should not be done as they are unlike quantities. And why is a Ditmar awarded for foreign works? Let them look after themselves, it is the Australian SF industry that needs encouragement.

I believe that the original purpose for the founding of the Ditmar awards was worthy. However, the Australian SF scene is still too small and too easily manipulated for such awards to have any real meaning.

Abolish the Ditmars. Use the funds to make grants to struggling SF clubs around Australia to produce quality publications containing quality literature, and to fund workshops.

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

Peter Brodie accuses me of childish outbursts while coming across like a spoiled ten year old. Not going to read my stories or letters anymore, eh Peter? Dear God. Next you'll be holding your breath until Ron promises not to print my stuff again. The fact is I welcome all comments, which is not to say I have to *accept* them all. I found your comments to be off the mark, so I defended the story and my motives for writing it. But what you're getting all petulant about is the fact that I used

"vulgarity". Yes, it's a bad world, ain't it, Peter? Personally though, I would have thought your "honest" comments to Grai Hughes (ie. "Maybe she should have sent it to NEW IDEA") and David Tansey (ie. "What a load of shit") to have been more offensive than my humble offering to you of "go take a flying fuck at the moon" (which was intended to have been tongue in cheek anyway; thus the brackets). As for showing great restraint: please, Peter, don't be so magnanimous (you'll spoil your image). Give it to me straight. I'm sure my petals won't bruise. As for your plumage getting ruffled, well...

But seriously, TM #69 was a joy to behold. The cover was excellent, as were the contents. Very professional. A good way to start the new year. Margaret Pearce's CREW WAITING was a good idea and well thought out, though I found the mystery too unsolvable, with Margaret holding all her cards until the last couple of pages. SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE was a tidy little story which was told and written well. I'm not usually keen on robot tales, but in this instance it was used to make a point, and made it quite poignantly. I'd be interested in reading some more of Maria-Louise's work.

Mark McLeod's portfolio was superb, with preference to the forest scene with the two figures. (PS, I never did say thanks for the accompanying illustration you did for my WHEELING story; it was kind of eerie actually, with Bunch looking a little like me!)

A lot of that portfolio came out darker than the (screened) originals - some details of the foreground and the figures was lost. - Ron

Ron's report on his odyssey was of particular interest, leaving me somewhat envious, humbling my own efforts of travel. And the closing statement seems certainly relevant in these troubled times. (If the war mongers have it their way at 3.30 this afternoon, it won't even be safe to travel over to bloody Kangaroo Island!) And by the way, Ron, how much do you read? Every issue there is a huge batch of reviews, but surely you couldn't consume *that* many titles every 3 months!

The last half of that "trip report" was written at the time and appeared in ANZAPA. The first half was written twenty years later - which is why one is topical, the other abrupt, with less personal thoughts and conversations.

I read most of the sf I review and much of the fantasy...

The Gulf War is into its third day as I write this. It will be of interest if this interlude strengthens the UN to be a real Peace Keeping force and a prelude to a World Government, or if it degenerates into the ineffectual organisation the League of Nations lapsed into. - Ron.

John Tipper on 2001: conceded. I have seen the film a number of times on the big screen and enjoyed it each time, though my first viewing of it on video left me flat. As for DR. STRANGELOVE, I'd gladly have a yarn with you about it. One very black comedy which continues to stand head and shoulders over more contemporary attempts at dark humour. And does anyone collect fridge magnets? Well, I have a couple of children, so yes, we have managed to acquire a few bears and butterflies over the years. (Anyone out there want to swap a Minnie Mouse for a Thomas Tank Engine? Hmmm?)

It's been some time since I've seen STRANGELOVE, but to my mind 7 DAYS IN MAY is a better picture. Sellers never did seem to me the genius everyone else asserted him to be. - Ron.

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

For those readers not on Australia's East coast, we've been suffering a heat wave over the past few weeks (it's mid-January). The heat is bearable, but the humidity is close to insufferable. Which is just a way of explaining the lack of fire in this loc. Mark McLeod's cover reminded me of my youth, contemplating tomorrow. I'm a sucker for this artist's work. It's not as spectacular as Jozef's, but it has a timeless appeal.

Favourite item in TM 69 has to be BY FOOT & BUS... I used to go out with a lady who

made a similar trip in the reverse direction. Being one who appreciates the comfort of a good bed and civilized bathroom amenities, I considered her off her head for doing it. I'd much rather read about it, so found your tale reinforced my feeling on such trips!

Both CREW WAITING and SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE made, I thought, enjoyable reading. Maybe I'm not discerning, as a couple of readers have informed me, but as neither have had stories published recently, I figure they should put finger to typewriter and come up with something better - if they can.

Nice illo from Peggy Ranson on page 56, in a style reminiscent of Beardsley. BALLOONS OVER MARS seemed to be an extract, rather than being complete in itself.

Moving onto R & R, I didn't find much to argue about: Richard Brandt was right. I'd forgotten about the Indiana Jones movies. Got me there, Richard. Guess I'd always considered these to be Adventure rather than Fantasy movies until you mentioned it.

Peter Brodie was obviously suffering from heat exhaustion when typing his loc. The compliments almost outnumbered the insults. Has the real Peter been laid to rest? Andrew Darlington mentioned DAN DARE in the Eagle Annual, 1953. Being a collector of both Dan Dare and Eagle memorabilia, I should mention for any other fans out there that a DAN DARE club exists in England. Anyone interested should write (enclosing a couple of IRCs) to Adrian Perkins, 19 Wolsey Way, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 ##Q, UK. This chap is slow to answer, though.

No doubt I should have been more specific when I mentioned "early SF". The 20 years following WW2 is my preferred period. Then again, I'm referring to stories published then, although they most probably appeared a lot earlier in the pulps. I read a number of the Lensman books and found them a little difficult to handle, but gave "Doc" Smith the flick after I attempted to complete a Skylark book: DRAGONS AND SPACESHIPS... guess I'll have to put pen to paper to prove my point.

The radio has just announced the first strike on Iraq. That's kind of destroyed my thought processes for the time being... (17.1.91)

PETER BOOTH, 6 Burke St, Woodridge, Qld 4114.

Love the colour-photocopied cover of TM 69... shame technology doesn't do justice to the original illustration.

Now, I refer to p. 120 of your zine. You laud SYZYGY for being "a new professional SF magazine from Qld". Well, thanks for the publicity, but I'm stuffed if SYZYGY's professional! I don't know how you define a prozine but SYZYGY isn't one of them. Prozine definition according to Booth: "Literary magazine produced with mass production and profit in mind... commissioned authors, cover art, lithographic or offset printed, distributed nationally via a distribution company (Gordon & Gotch, namely), not an APA. SYZYGY is none of these things... despite my paying stance. SYZYGY #1 was a loosely put together heap of shit which I'm frankly ashamed of, seeing zines such as yours resplendent with centrefolds and art portfolios... yet, we are of the same class. I doubt if you do it for profit... if you do, I'd like to know how, and if you do you're the professional, not SYZYGY. It cost me about \$50 to make, mainly Letraset and photocopy charges and I did it for fun, not be to authoritative or austere, though in future issues I'm including a part known as BOOTH SPEAK where I'll mouth off.

To take the "professionalism" first - the problem is that in fandom there are certain boundaries (to use a word loosely), and this shows up in the awards given - one of my current "talking points" in TM. You will notice that awards are given for "professionally published" works and fan works. In this case "professionally published" means printed in a zine that pays \$\$ for it. This used to be prozines; however, in the last year in Oz several fanzines - THYME is/was one - started paying \$\$ for work published. These zines were before that, fanzines. And "professionally published" works did not appear in fanzines.

What THYME et al are doing is muddying the water (for the Awards committees). As far as I am concerned, either the zine is a fanzine, and if they pay for material, they are edging "semi-prozine", not matter what their circulation in Oz. If they want to be called a fanzine, they don't pay for material. If they do and they want to be called a fanzine, the works can't be eligible for the usual awards (DITMARS

etc).

That is why I called SYZGY "professional". Of course it IS "a new...sf magazine from Qld" - in fact about the ONLY sf zine coming from that State (at least literary sf...). - Ron

So, another few things. I've noticed with THYME, ETHEL and THE MENTOR a predilection to place foreign LoCs before Oz ones. Why? Are we, the Oz SF folk, trying to exalt ourselves in UK or USA eyes? Or are we pandering to their whims, seeing that most Americans consider themselves the centre of the Universe. No racism intended, just my experience with them in the Oz army. Pah! Support *us*. It's fine getting LoCs from abroad, but what does it mean? Who cares what Abner RosewketzenFlusenberger said about Cadilacon in Weed, California. No, they are in their own world... concentrate on Oz... pen pals are fins, but putting extraneous people before our own ilk in my opinion is sycophantic. (7.1.91).

Why do the foreign locs appear first in TM? Well, I input the locs on the computer as I received them, and the overseas ones tend to arrive much later than the local ones on the various issues, so the catch up on the issue before the previous issue (which is posted surface mail) ends up first in the new issue, before the Oz LoCs on the last issue. - Ron.

Typing letters is artificial and impersonal to me.... that is why I balked at your credits - "Double-spaced typescript" just for a pitiful LoC. I can understand it if you're after a job or submitting TSS (not MSS - I'm a pedant) for publication - novels, shorts, etc - but not for flippant correspondence.

After about ten or so years of correspondence you change your mind. Because it is quicker, you can get more in, and other people can read it better than degenerated (by then) handwriting. LoCs are usually typed single spaced, but stories double, as the writers keep in practice for professional submissions. - Ron.

SYZGY will have two main categories - to present superb fiction, and to incite people with my inflammatory and abusive remarks and opinions - of which I'll love to hear responses. The man who insults me isn't born. SF in Aust. is very much a nerds thing - you know, horn-rimmed four-eyed little virgins who play DLO and work for Social Security. My intent is to fuck that image right off. I'm hardly that category. I'm an ex-skinhead, had numerous women, a welder by trade... and yet I'm a fan of SF, D&D and all that jazz. I'm not so keen on Media... STAR TREK, DR WHO and shit like that... it isn't SF, it is cliched melodrama, and I'm glad to see none of it hits THE MENTOR's pages... sure, I'll review films.. for what they are. Sensationalism. I'm my own harshest critic, Ron, I consider everything to have a litany of faults. One is to be discursive.... ie switch viewpoints and topics every third sentence... that's another tale... yet, don't think I consider myself fiction personified.

If you don't mind I'll mouth off about what I consider wrong with THE MENTOR:

1) Diminished reproduction of Artwork. Artwork done in detail like that Jozef Fellow's is sadly thrown to shit when photocopied. I recommend black and white lithography.

2) Artwork is too good for what is basically a limited circulation fanzine. Having a centrefold is a ludicrous concept for a fanzine. Acceptable if it were printed, not copied by xerography.

3) Too many pages without substance. In #69 your recount of a Eurasian trip was by far and away the most interesting article in the zine. Too many LoCs and book reviews.

4) Gospel-like editorial (I'm the same), though you seem to entertain no criticism, whereas I'd get off on it... also a been-there, done-that attitude which is boring. What happened to doing things for fun?

5) Ridiculous paragraphing of fiction... ie 2 line spaces between each paragraph. That mode of draft stuffs up continuity of story. Recommend column-format.

6) Giving a Yank ("Buck" Coulson) his own column. The Americans do not need our support, nor should we crawl up their rectums either. THE MENTOR 69 was subtitled "Australian Science Fiction"... live up to it. Don't pander the British either.

7) Finally, the title itself. The "Mentor". You probably know what a Mentor is. Do you consider yourself or the zine to be the spiritual master of SF in Oz? Or is it just a silly name like SYZGY? (17.1.91)

JOHN ALDERSON, Havelock, Vic 3465.

I am particularly interested in the article by yourself BY FOOT AND BUS THROUGH THE HINDU KUSH in TM 69, largely because I had intended to go that way myself this coming year, though the Gulf War may now make that very problematic.

Buck Coulson may easily take debating honours about his burning library and clay tablets for the simple reason that (probably like himself) I don't know what the hell he's talking about. Now let's get this straight...

What library burnt down?

Where was it?

When was it?

What were the circumstances?

What are clay tablets doing in an Egyptian library?

What the hell has this got to do with anything I have done, said or written?

I concede that it does rain in Egypt. Fifty nine points of rain fell when my father was there in 1915. The Egyptians went crazy with terror and some died with heart attacks, as in general they thought the world was coming to an end. Only a few of the very eldest had ever seen rain before. I concede it rains, my father observed it.

I dislike snide attacks being made on me, so Buck, put up or apologise, with authorities and references, please. (22.1.91)

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

What a lovely cover THE MENTOR 69 had! A successful experiment and an enjoyable result.

The story CREW WAITING had a Chandlersque feeling about it and a good narrative pacing.

R&R - Buck Coulson's letter: "Black" or "African" North African may be "African" culturally at the present, but don't forget the Sahara wasn't always a desert. Some of the modern Hamitic nomad cultures may have had ancestors living in north Africa back in the neolithic period. Archaeology and oral tradition tends to suggest/imply that the cattle herding/warrior cultures moved southward from somewhere in the north?

Genetically speaking there are African genes in the current Berber and Arab population. Remember the Arabs kept many Negro slaves and according to Freya Stark in the thirties and forties there were villages within Arabia made up of negro descendants of royal slaves. The Tuareg kept slaves - Senegalese were very popular and undoubtedly there are still many people living in north African countries with African ancestry.

Given the slave population it would be odd if there hadn't been at least a little cultural influence???

I would have thought the Ottoman and Seljuk Turks would have had more genetic impact than the Mongols in the Middle East since they stayed longer and in the 30's Stark wrote of meeting people who spoke Turkish dialects or regarded themselves as being some kind of Turk throughout Lebanon, Iraq and Persia.

The idea color equals culture is comparatively new, of course, and it is tempting. I sometimes find myself wondering if many northern Europeans aren't descendants of psychopaths ejected from the old southern matriarchies or matrilineal cultures and forced into the wilderness only to return thousands of years later as that barbaric destructive coalition known to students of Bronze Age archaeology as the Peoples of the Sea.

Fortunately (?), alas, for legend I know enough world history to realise each continent has its Cains and Abels and nomads attacking farmers, etc etc.

But currently deadlier war games are being played out by those who think culture = religion. Let us hope we can restrain barbarians - on both sides?! (28.1.91)

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

Your typography is so good I managed to read this huge issue (#68) in one day. In contrast, I'm currently five days into reading another fanzine with approximately the same number of pages, because its lilliputian typography causes my vision to succumb after three or four pages and it takes about 24 hours to recover for another session with it. The illustrations are superb, particularly the cover and the pull-out extra-sized drawing. Both confirm my belief that most fanzine illustrations gain immensely when they're reproduced in the largest possible dimension.

SILENT VOICES sticks in my memory pretty well even though I didn't feel altogether comfortable while reading it. Maybe it bothered me because of the knowledge that a person of my age might find himself soon in the same predicament as the protagonist, or maybe I had trouble identifying with him because I haven't been married to the same person for a long time, or for that matter to any quantity of women at all for any given length of time. However, the whole story seemed at its finish to have added up to more than the sum of its parts. A more inventive ending might have made it even better.

THE KING AND SON (which I assume is an original story despite the "translated" reference) is a curious combination of disparate sources: Genesis, Excalibur, Celtic mythology, and maybe one or two others. Somehow I feel it would be a better story if it were either much shorter or much longer. But it inspired one of the finest fanzine illustrations I've ever seen and that's enough justification for its publication in this form.

THE HOPES OF AUTUMN is easily the best story in this issue. It contains memorable characters and a different way of using an old idea for a story about the future. It impresses me as quite professional in style and in quality and if Grai Hughes isn't already a selling author, he or she should soon be another graduate from THE MENTOR to the write-for-pay ranks.

I can only marvel at Mae Strelkov's erudition in languages and alphabets and other written characters. But I wish she would hurry up and get those autobiographical manuscripts into shape for publication as soon as possible. My poor brain is too crammed full of useless stuff to permit me to add to it much of the information she gives here for permanent reference. On the other hand I know I would find enormous pleasure if I could read the full accounts of her experiences as a girl which she has let us see in fragmentary form in various fanzine places in the past.

There aren't many specific comments that occur to me on the various accounts of cons and congoing. But I read them all with enjoyment and they left me with a general suspicion that this type of rather small, short and low-key conventions would be more to my likings than the kind I used to attend in the United States years ago.

I don't now if it's a case of great minds behaving in the same manner or just coincidence, but I discovered that I'd read just four of the books you reviewed in this issue, the same number that Mike Glicksohn was familiar with in a previous issue's set of reviews. The prices you list for those books are mute evidence why so many younger fans are watching movies and television instead of reading books to get their quotas of science fiction and fantasy nowadays.

In the excellent letter section, I find myself gratified to discover Terry Jeeves voicing the same objections to most of today's stories that I feel.

However, Brian Earl Brown misremembers what I wrote about why fanzines were given out in the old days. From the very dawn of fandom, I believe, fanzine editors traded their issues with other fanzines and I don't think any fanzine ever had a policy of refusing to send a free copy to each contributor of written material or illustrations until just recently when a few money-mad projects calling themselves fanzines bobbed up. It was the custom of sending fanzines in exchange for locs that I was writing about. I restricted my fanac considerably from the late 1940s until the last half of the 1950s. At some time during that period, someone introduced the free copies for locs idea and I've never been able to determine for sure who the innovator was although I've heard several theories. I remember how surprised I was when I resumed full activity in fandom to be receiving all these fanzines unsolicited just because I might be expected to respond with a loc.

Just the other day, I wrote about the Morlocks and the Eloi in a loc to another fanzine. I expressed the conviction that the subsurface dwellers weren't raising the surface dwellers for food purposes because it would have been too unproductive a method of obtaining meat. A human usually gives birth to only one baby at a time, and it takes nearly twenty years for that baby to reach full size, and even then it will provide only about 100 pounds or a little more of edible food if slaughtered. The Morlocks if they had any sense at all would breed animals that grow fast, reach imposing size, and

preferably are born in litters rather than singularly. That's why farmers raise cattle and hogs rather than cats or monkeys for food purposes. (22.1.91)

About the only food animal that comes close to the human type would be the lamb, which is slaughtered young, the older animals being used for their wool, not meat, at least in Australia. - Ron.

MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sole, Jujuy, Argentina.

THE MENTOR 67 came and it's beautiful. Many thanks. Re Glen Chapman's remark that Sirius B went nova millions of years ago, of course I accepted the statement as Gospel Truth and erased "Dogones" from my list of curious clues.

However, on a Jan. 1991 BBC program I just learned that Ptolemy's chart of the stars mentioned Sirius as red, whereas for us it's a bright white. Astronomers suggest that the companion of Sirius must have lost some of its envelope to Sirius which masked the great star's brilliance, causing the effect of a red fog. It has since blown away so we see Sirius white again.

I cannot believe that a serious institute such as the Smithsonian could have bungled its information so badly. At any rate, the "happening" that caused Sirius to turn red wasn't "millions of years ago", evidently, if it was so red just some two millennium ago in Ptolemy's time, in the 2nd century of our era. This permits me to go on surmising about the Dogones a while longer.

Glen agrees re yet-to-be-found facts re our origins, and wonders "How hard is it going to be finding evidence?" Well, scientists keep trying and even mere laymen try in our own way. In my approach, the findings (to my mind at least) have been most encouraging, and once I complete what's turning out to be seven books on my childhood in China, I'll get back to putting all that language study into shape. (It'll come to a series of books also, hopefully.) If mankind doesn't blow itself up meanwhile! (1/1/91)

R. LAURRAINE TUTIHASI, 5876 Bowcroft St., #4, Los Angeles, CA 90016, USA.

I believe Harry Andruschak's recent con-going experience in this country is even more limited than mine. My con-going has been somewhat curtailed in recent years due to financial constraints, but it seems my attendance has been heavier than Andy's. I find that most cons here no longer permit or at least discourage smoking in the programme and function rooms. Many hotels provide non-smoking rooms or floors. Most parties are smoke-free, and some provide separate rooms for smokers.

Smoking at the LASFS has been cut back enormously since I started attending meetings in 1983. A lot of people who used to smoke have quit. One of the rooms is non-smoking. And there is generally better ventilation. This does not mean it is always pleasant. Sometimes, it does get oppressively smoky.

I am quite sensitive to smoke myself. I usually find I am suffering from the effects of smoke even when the level is too low to be smelled. The symptoms include sinus headache and irritated eyes. My asthma also frequently kicks in.

Fandom and Mensa are two places where I feel a great deal of accommodation has been made for the comfort of those of us badly affected by smoke. I stay away from college's alumni functions, for instance, because nothing is ever said about whether or not the event is non-smoking. Luckily, smoking is no longer allowed in many public places; so I can go to places like museums without fear of being assaulted.

I enjoyed the rest of #68, but I guess the smoking issue is a button pusher for me. I have recently joined a boycott of the food products made by RJR Nabisco and Phillip Morris. Nabisco is easy to spot, but Phillip Morris's foods are marketed under a variety of brand names.

By the way, I really like the cover. (28.1.91)

Several weeks ago, the High Court of Australia ruled that there was sufficient evidence that passive smoking causes cancer. This means that smoking in a public place can be banned if anyone is

willing to go ahead. It will also mean that people can sue restaurants, etc for allowing smoking in their premises. Already smoking is banned in Australian Government buildings, and several States have also banned smoking in their buildings. Of course, it *is* banned in Government buses and suburban trains. - Ron.

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

THE MENTOR #68 arrived recently. Good to see that you're still publishing. Belated congratulations on being fan guests of honor at Syncon. I find it hard to believe that a convention of about 60 people can even hope to break even these days. But like you, I have a liking for the smaller conventions. Ditto 3, for example last October, only had about 60 members, but I knew at least forty of them and had heard of maybe another ten. Whereas at a Confusion with 10 to 15 times as many members there are at most 40 people that I'd know - if I knew they were there at all. It's no wonder I feel so isolated and ignored at those large conventions.

"Current talking points in Aussie Fandom: The Dimars"[sic]. This was a type of editorial intent, wasn't it?

Alan Stewart's DANSE MACABRE con report just sort of prattled on, which show why con reports are hard to do well.

Buck Coulson has a point about home ownership, the tax advantages are nice, but when something goes wrong, it's up to you to fix it. Even if you don't know what the problem is. Like pulling pumps or fixing toilets. Which reminds me that ours seems to have a lot of water on the floor lately. Perhaps sweat off the tank, or could it be a leaking connection? I'll never know?

I am a bit amazed to learn that the Writer's of the Future Contest can afford to cough up the money to fly an Australian contestant and his wife to LA for a book launching. That's no small hunk of change, maybe as much as the entire royalties paid to authors printed in that volume of WOTF. Frankly, trip to the US aside, I think most of those writers would have preferred it if they could have kept the money for their airplane tickets. But then WOTF exists to legitimize L. Ron Hubbard and through him, Scientology. So when lying down with the devil, one is apt to get up with a few fleas.

Mae Strelkov's article this time was a little easier to follow tho I still have many doubts about her conclusions. I wish the ideograms she bases her conclusions on were a little easier to see/read.

John J. Alderson's comments on the Africanicity of ancient Egypt was most interesting. (But I wonder how reliable was Petrie's observation about the Elam origins of the first pharaohs.) The school board here in Detroit has just refused to let new textbook contracts because none of them have sufficient "African-American orientation". But then, is education supposed to make us feel good about our ancestors or to make us competitive citizens of Western Civilization?

Didn't realize Brian Stableford had rewritten JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE or had written a sequel to it. I long enjoyed his writing and was sad when DAW decided to no longer support his career. Now I just have to find a dealer in NEL books to order them from. (18.2.91)

GLEN CHAPMAN, 29 Janice St, Seven Hills 2147.

For once I thought I would be systematic in a LoC; firstly the front cover of THE MENTOR 69 was sensational, whatever paper was used, it felt different to the touch but I couldn't eyeball what it was.

The story CREW WAITING by Margaret Pearce was a disappointment. The basic premise was worth the effort, however doing it in third person seemed to me to make the whole narrative awkward. I'm sure under the circumstances that the crew would have been suitably repulsed if the captain had told them of his observations. As far as isolation of command stories go it might be worth looking at an old war film, 12 O'CLOCK HIGH, where the narrative jumped to the first person enough for the reader/viewer to understand the commander's reasons while maintaining the conflict with his subordinates.

The other piece of fiction in the issue, SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE, by Maria-Louise Stephens was a real worry. I don't know the author but I can only hope she is a newcomer to science fiction. The idea frankly has been done to death since the mid forties, with Asimov's robot stories being first

to come to mind as well as numerous variations such as the slightly earlier Adam Link series.

To be fair to the author, perhaps the editor is to blame. Surely Ron, you must have encountered this story in the past. The only reason I kept on with the story was that I thought a twist was coming, perhaps something like the two robots shagging each other would be suitable. However what I did like was the author's handling of the human emotion. I hope she intends to write more for the mag, maybe with a fresher idea her talents might surface more clearly.

I said I would try to be systematic in this letter, so I am now forced to comment about the poetry. Sadly I can't, maybe the two contributions are good, I don't know - outside limericks my joy of poetry is zero, [although] I even did a course in it. I understand the mechanics of the type of writing but I still hate it so I'll leave the comments to more competent readers than myself.

Normally I can't find much in Buck Coulson's items to hold my interest but his information about the indians of Indiana was quite enjoyable. I also agree with him about the need for alcohol for people to enjoy activities. I can still remember vividly a day at the cricket when I was young, where four men got into a fight over how many dozen cans they had drunk during the course of the day. From what I could gather they had started with about three hundred cans and, having consumed all but twelve in under five hours, they started with the recriminations over who had drunk the most. Personally after drinking those quantities I'd be more concerned with what planet I was on, or if in fact I was still alive.

THE R&R DEPT was nicely subdued for a change, perhaps the threats are becoming so veiled that I don't see them. Richard Brandt's comments on my article deserve comment. Firstly I didn't mention Heinlein's involvement in PROJECT MOONBASE for one reason, that was that the film to my knowledge has not been seen for some twenty years. Even on release it stiffed quickly and was consigned to the realms of wasted celluloid. So at best it is impossible to judge whether his input caused the failure of the film or it was just an inept piece in the first place.

The other piece, about Dupont, was worthwhile. To be honest I didn't connect him with that Dupont. Subsequent digging has revealed the only reason Dupont was involved was so the backers of the film could get some respectability. Mind you, I hate to think how old he must have been by that stage.

While in THE R&R DEPT I feel John Tipper is getting far more flack than he deserves over his comments about fantasy cinema. As much as people like to argue, it is a statistical fact that over 90% of fantasy films haven't made their money back. A further 8% do cover their costs but don't even make bank interest for the backers.

In Australia we have a very distorted view of this problem. For some reason we are far more responsive to these films than the American market. Two old examples of this are THE WIZARD OF OZ and FANTASIA. THE WIZARD OF OZ was made for a cost of 2.7 million yet only returned 1.5 in the U.S. I don't have accurate figures for FANTASIA but the documentary commissioned by the Disney Studios did make a point that the film nearly finished the studio. Yet in Australia both films did exceptionally well, same situation with NEVER ENDING STORY. It also did well everywhere except in the U.S.

Richard Brandt did raise a fair point about the finances of the Indiana films; however both Spielberg and Lucas have said the films were a celebration of the serial adventures of the thirties and forties, so I think there would be fair ground for the non-inclusion.

Harking back to comments in TM 68 regarding whether modern writers research their material any more than older writers, it is fair to say that good writers do today, by the same token many of the mediocre writers of today don't. Exactly the same twenty, forty or sixty years ago.

Sometimes writers screw up without realising it. David Tansey's story UNDER PRESSURE has a major problem. With the number of "large" moons moving around the planet would cause such an intense magnetic field that our two intrepid Australians would have had brains like scrambled eggs the moment they left the ship. Did David know this? Maybe, but none of the readers picked it up, so who's to say what research is needed and what's not.

Julie Hawkins' comments about castles is a little off beam as well. There is no set way to build a castle, so you can configure it any way you like. Swords are the same, every bastard wields a broad sword in one hand like it was a lollypop. Try it some time - it's a good way to get time off work for a hernia operation.

In answer to John Tipper's query about BEAST FROM TWENTY THOUSAND FATHOMS, you are right. Ron asked me for some art work for the article. The only thing I had was that poster

from a book. The book's text actually discussed how the poster seemed to be talking about another film by the same name.

Lastly, I agree whole heartedly with Brian Earl Brown. The magic of the s-f film seems gone. What did disturb me with TOTAL RECALL was how every conversation ended with one of the participants being shot. It saves on script, I suppose, but not very satisfying. (18.2.91)



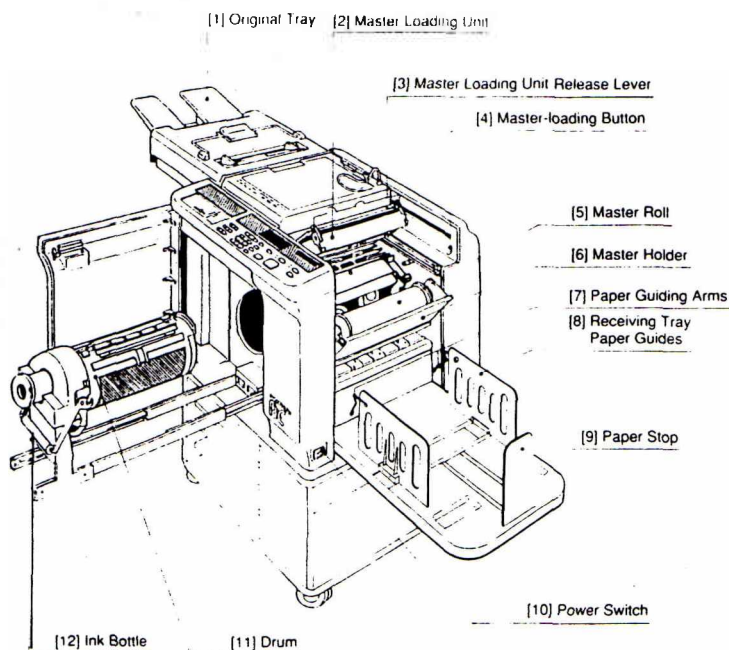
THE HUMBLE DUPLICATOR

by Ron Clarke

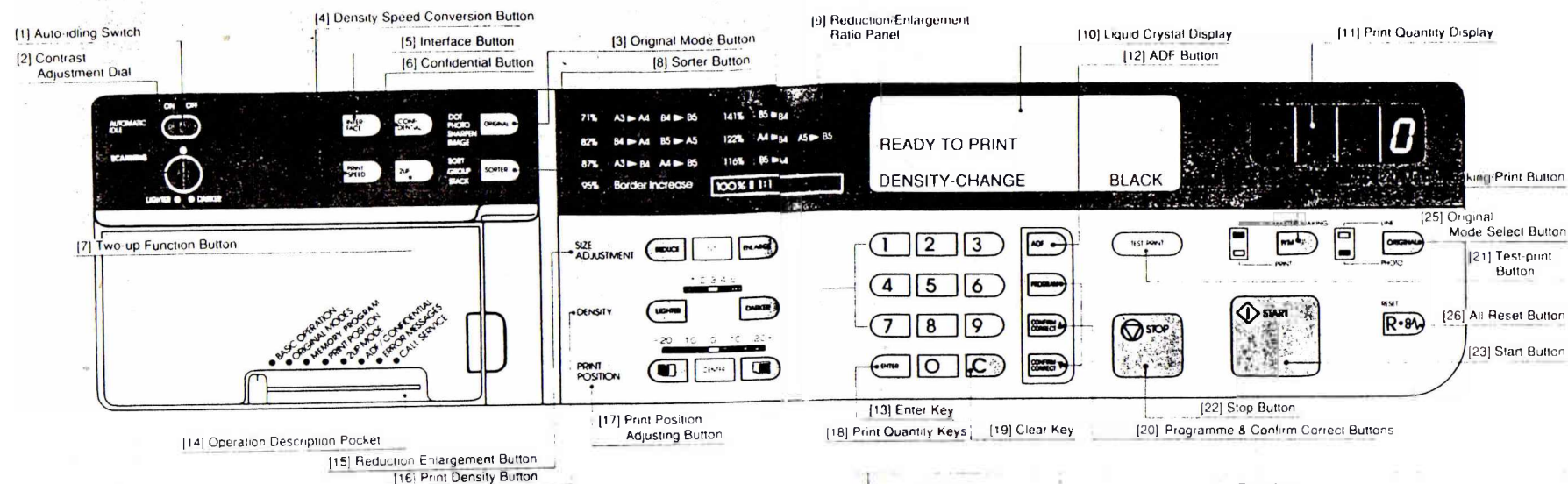
The Humble Duplicator has its roots back in the early days of fandom. In those days the fans often used spirit duplicators to run off their fan magazines. Then a new process - duplicating, or mimeo, came into vogue. In this type of machine a master, usually a waxed sheet, was cut with a typewriter and wrapped around an ink drum, over which passed the "duplicating paper" to make an impression. These sheets were then collated and hey presto! instant fanzine.

The duplicator, with such brand names as Roneo, Gestetner and AB Dick became household names with fans. The use of such machines which began in the late 1930's indeed lasts to the present day, though lately fast photocopying and cheap offset printers have taken some of the creativity away from the duplicator.

If you have wondered what the fans of old saw in these machines and insisted that they were "better" than photocopiers and offset presses, the secret is now to be revealed. Below is a typical duplicator and some of its specifications. Read them and you will realise why certain (now elderly) fanzine fans swore by them:



THE OPERATION PANEL -



Feature	Function
[1] Auto-idling Switch	Prevents light copies after long periods of infrequent use.
[2] Contrast Adjustment Dial	Reduces dark background or enhances light image.
[3] Original Mode Button	Applies "Dot Photo" or "Sharpening" process in master-making.
[4] Density Speed Conversion Button	Converts the print density button to the speed-change mode.
[5] Interface Button	For connecting to a computer.
[6] Confidential Button	For protecting confidential documents.
[7] Two-up Function Button	For printing two pages side by side on one sheet.
[8] Sorter Button	Controls use of an optional sorter.
[9] Reduction/Enlargement Ratio Panel	Displays the selected reduction/enlargement ratio.
[10] Liquid Crystal Display	Displays mode selection and operational advice.
[11] Print Quantity Display	Displays the input print quantity and the number remaining to be printed during printing.
[12] ADF Button	For non-stop operation from master-making to printing on multiple originals.
[13] Enter Key	For selecting printing programmes.

Feature	Function
[14] Operation Description Pocket	Contains brief operation guide.
[15] Reduction/Enlargement Button	Changes reduction/enlargement ratio.
[16] Print Density Button	Changes the density (in the print density mode) or the print speed (in the print speed mode).
[17] Print Position Adjusting Button	Shifts the print position up or down on the page.
[18] Print Quantity Keys	For inputting the print quantity.
[19] Clear Key	For clearing the input print quantity.
[20] Programme & Confirm Correct Buttons	For programming, confirming, or correcting programmed printing.
[21] Test-print Button	For making a sample print.
[22] Stop Button	Interrupts printing or master-making.
[23] Start Button	Starts master-making or printing. Restarts operation after a problem has been eliminated.
[24] Master-making Print Button	Converts "master-making" mode into "printing" mode, and vice versa.
[25] Original Mode Select Button	For selecting "Line-copy" or "Photograph" mode in master-making.
[26] All Reset Button	For cancelling any setting on the panel and recovering the initial setting. For clearing the message display after a problem has been eliminated.

THE LAST HOPE

by Grai Hughes

There is no such thing as self, as definite personality, individuality. There are no parameters to the mutability of the living anima, projected persona. A character defined by a limiting set of characteristics is manifestly unreal; dead.

I go to a party. Do party things. I meet a girl. We dance until we come. Later at my hollow, rising from abstraction, I go through the conversations, all the things I should have said: quiet interjections, enlightened comments, sarcastic coups. 'Your beauty is truly only exceeded by your sharp wit.' Polite laughter, retiring smile.

My cocoon wraps itself around me; temperature, rhythm, as I descend, my eyes close, I....

Wake. I am different. I know I am different. Introspection reveals this: I imagine a universe, a multiverse. It does not fill my mind. I imagine an atom, a diminishing infinitude of subnuclear particles. It does not fill my mind. This is my usual practice upon waking. I cannot imagine a human life or soul; boundless. A recent worry, this.

My cocoon softly unveils me. From within walls are transparent. From without there are no walls, only a merging of pine and maple, blackberry and morning glory. A density of vegetation.

I see people convey past me on discs. Silent though their mouths move; silent though energy is consumed.

I try to consider the essence of my difference as I watch them weave and flit, dappled by leaf shade. I am not malformed, that would be easy. In my mind, green fields and forests, blue lakes and seas, curve around a spinning sphere, extending parabolically into the universe. I cannot conceive the nature of human nature, yet I am different. Putting thought aside I breakfast on fruits.

I shroud myself in a web-white robe, stand upon disc, arms folded, hands hidden in sleeves, and emerge between pine and eucalypt, directing with thoughts barely thought, instantly forgotten.

Again I reflect upon difference, deciding it is a capacity of mind, like the warmth of sun above me, its touch so light, light filtered through the canopy of leaves and arched boughs, yet revealing a weight of earth. Most do not see, or are unconcerned with weightiness. That definition, hardly adequate like all definitions, will suffice, I decide, as coming to an arboreal way, I throw thought to the still, empty air and accept air as thought.

'A'Poll yon!' I am recognised by my penchant for white garb, though I seek anonymity, it is not the fashion.

Melly D'yer discs over, zagging obtrusively as is her way. Fallen leaves, pine needles, blades

of grass remain unstirred by her passing, though many a Tellurian, crossed, is offended or amused by her ingenuousness.

'I saw you at Della's party yester-eve, A'Poll, and meant to talk, a secret, a rumour, about someone close, but was whisked away by Darrek K'la Bar, and you know what he's like.'

She laughs, tossing silver notes and hair, as she spins on her disc displaying wings of black-rust lace dripping like shadow from arms and breast; a dancer, a past liaison.

'The rumour, Melly?' I skim staidly, and do not comment on Darrek K'la Bar's dubious répute, while Melly flits moth-like about.

'So serious, A 'Poll? One would mistake you for a Councillor. Or a mal. But I remember.

"What more to life than a moment's love?
In a glade green that is no more,
Where the very trees once whispered laughter,
As dancing blue in a beam banished night,
Our lovers' ephemeral smiles forgotten,
We tangle, as do they, and after,
What more to life than a moment's joyous laughter?"

'Your voice is harmony itself, my dear, but please no quotations.'

I arch an eyebrow, stinging at the shallowness, the falsity of my earlier work, the same of my present existence.

'Trouble envisioning, A 'Poll? But your latest piece, I heard the reviews. My work is trivial. Something ... escapes it.' Escapes us all.

'But entertaining, and what is of greater import than laughter?' She strikes a pose: pouting lips, sighing eyes, mocking hands. 'Dying Ophelia', a classic.

'A role for me in your next?' I have to smile at the assumed poignancy, the deceitful regret.

'Alas it is near complete, Melly, I go this-morn to the Scarred Lands to capture final background images for it, a tragicomedy without the comedy. "Fools Heroic in Empty Evening". Unsited to the current whimsy.'

'Yes, bleak, very bleak.' She says, pose and poise shattered, taken aback. No one would insult their eyes with crass images of the Scarred Lands, let alone create an envision with such, even a tragic one, for public scrutiny.

'Well, the rumour,' Melly says abruptly. We approach Redwoods, the perimeter, this arboreal way near deserted here, the Scarred Lands ever-present, exerting a subtle influence, beyond.

A mal discs by. Distracted, Melly stares at fishshingle flesh, useless limbs, especially repulsive to her. And what if she knew my hero was a vile, a disc-bound one? Of course, we only remain disc-bound through choice - and decadence.

'You were saying, Melly?' My voice between exasperation and boredom.

'Oh yes,' she giggles, flutters silver lashes, 'Your ex-collaborator, Seb D'ark, has been taken under, to corridors, Councillor Belz M'jo whispered in my ear.'

'But... why? You should have said immediately!' Corridors, realm of death, of non. But a Tellurian? Our tenure is eternal.

'I have no idea why. I must be gone.' Haughty.

'An assignation with the venerable Belz M'jo no doubt.'

She disc spins and skims away, arms wide, leaning forward, a nightwing gliding into insignificance amongst tree shadow. Pretty, petty, false and theatrical, yet sure of her own reality, unlike myself. I must decide. I must think.

I breach the trees, look down from the overhang of the red-rock corrugated cliff. Spreads a valley, a gouge in the earth; its deepest point, where the cliff curves and descends to my right, an oily mire stained with bloated sun.

Scabbing low hills that rise to a desert plain opposite, jut ragged pieces of blackened honey-comb structures, their blackness merging with that of the ground. Skeletons of old-time. I imagine them clothed in glass and steel, but cannot picture those who dwelt there.

When we were young and brash, naive and fearful, Seb and I and others would rim-race, speeding full tilt fast around the oval delineation of the rim, limit of the disc effect, limit of our existence. Laughing, we always averted our eyes from the distant, ruined earth.

Time passes. The sun reaches apogee, begins descent.

I keep the images haunting in mind as I skim back through tree-ways to consult Councillor Belz M'jo. Later I will project the scenery from my mind, embellishing it with misshapen trees, into the slowlight glass envision globe. Merely final background, but shocking enough in itself to aesthetic senses. The subject: genocide and martyrdom. Hero and villain: a vile, a mal. He displays all traits and none. I will be reviled, despised, but no matter. Soft lives are meaningless. Memories are fleeting.

I glimpse Marbik's brown and yellow stripes, tending roses as is his wont, in a copse of willow. Of all our laughter his is the most unforced, the least hyaenaic. I skim over to him, am lightly stroked by branches. He beams corpulence, chuckling. Few know he is a mal, under his tent of robe dropping cone-like from wide shoulders to disc, a fused mound of flesh. It can also be told by his wheezing breath - our breath is unheard - and the string of hair sprouting from an oddly bulging skull. I helped him once when he had fallen - we never fall - he has thanked me for my silence ever since.

'Greetings, A 'Poll, "A man by any other name is still a ghost."' And he laughs mightily.

'Where did you learn so many old-time quotes, Marbik?'

'The source where all true things must be learned.' He says, fleshy hand over heart. 'Your eyes are positively smouldering, A 'Poll, what weighs upon the unfurrowed brow of a Tellurian?'

'Exactly that, our lives are unburdened by any concern but our own pleasure, but that is merely an incidental worry. I'm looking for Councillor Belz M'jo, apparently he knows something of Seb D'ark being taken to corridors.'

Marbik's voice, broken, a whisper, '... and I had dismissed the rumour...' his hand falters in his pruning, beheading a newly blossomed yellow rose, which falls and rests suspended among the tangle of its companions.

Shears, hanging redundant on Marbik's wrist, also fall as his arms drop.

'I noticed Belz M'jo around Broken Oak on my way this-morn, but where he is now...' Shrugging, his head bowed, he turns contraposition, thrusts hand among knotted twigs, clenches fist around rose stem, and pulls back, tearing flesh.

'Seek him at the-morrow's Council meet.'

He stares deep into the layers of overlapping petals. I cannot read his taught face, nor imagine his pain, nor fathom his reasons, yet I tense to the obvious torment of his knowledge.

'You know something more of it, Marbik, speak!'

'I can say naught, but harken to this quotation.' Blood wells between clenched fingers, pools in the curl of thumb and forefinger, runs down the stem, drips... life.

His voice is cracked,

"Methinks I heard the speakers blare, 'Sleep no more!
Techdeath doth murder sleep,' - the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravel'd sleeve of care...
Still they blared, 'Sleep no more!' to all the world;
'Man hath murdered sleep, and henceforth Man,
Shall sleep no more, Techdeath shall sleep no more!
So 'till the wakening death I wait... to sleep."

His fist unclenches; the rose, thorns hooked into his palm, does not fall. His humour also murdered, he weeps as I leave.

Returned to my hollow, having ignored both invitations to parties and more private rendezvous, and causing thereby greater offence with my silence than had I offered a scathing denunciation of their unquestioning acceptance of social ritual, I ponder the quotation of Dwyl y'an Shakeswarhead, my despondency a reflection of the folkbard's and Marbik's despair and resignation.

I resign to my cocoon, am enfolded with airy pressure, empty darkness.

The day's images mosaic in mind, enlaced with those of the quotation. I cannot grasp the significance of either... nor that of my immutable indifference, the rest of me; its antithesis. The-morrow I shall descend to corridors. The drama of action is determined with or without Council's or persona's judgment, advice or consent.

I cannot visualize those empty spaces within, but I shall venture, I shall find Seb, I shall go...

Under the mourning glare of sun filtered through lace foliage, the unseen walls of my hollow, an equal glare behind my eyes, I am projected, bathed and lifted in light from my cocoon. I invest the white glare into the globe of slowlight glass as prelude and finale, accompanied by the Shakeswarhead quotation, somehow it seems appropriate.

I picture absence and presence of light and space, surrounded by weight of dark matter, my abstract image of corridors. Fear is invoked. Seb would have envisioned the minutest detail; trivialities to me, I concentrate the broad scope, the dominant emotive impression. I refrain from breakfast, abstain from expressing a confusion of emotions, seething. I pocket the envision globe. Robe in black. It conflicts with my skin, swept back hair. A symbol of my new demeanour?

Determined, I depart.

As I disc through arbours and arches of green and russet hushed swaying forest, I visualize Seb;

flame curls of hair, face all angles, points, twists, gangling limbs, ice eyes.

Though rivals in all things, opposites in most, though we approach our rare art from polarities - he revelling in what I consider shallow - I love him as a brother, though such blood states have long been myth. We came to duelling once, a joust, I remember, though not the reasons, but gave it up in laughter, wine and jest.

I breeze through a stand of silver birch - gradually they grow leafless, white bark peeling, tattered, reveals yellow trunks, indiscernably weather patterned - towards a barren, cragged knoll. Withered trees haunt the jagged stone circle. Stark, the sun, molten in the crucible between two broken teeth, pours light, becomes a will-o'-the-wisp dancing from tree to tree as I wend my way over earth turned stone.

Through streams of bright, rainbow iridescent people are drawn flowing to this consuming illusion, I hear their babble and laughter and choose a twisting solo path among the dead and dying trees. I am visited by presentiments of moment, of beginnings and endings, of change, yet as I top the premorse ridge, all seems as usual below:

The shallow crater is of an obsidian stone the red nearest black. Uneven runnels flow from its ragged, toothed circumference to the base of the opalescent tree from which the meeting place begets its name: Petrified Omacroklados. The huge tree presents a disturbing symmetry: smooth boughs as thick as a man sprout, arching out from the trunk at twice a man's height, tapering to glowing points. The tree burns with a spectrum of melding, moving brightness, fire and starlight, trapped beneath the transparent thickness of its skin - aurora.

Through the whole dish, including Omacroklados deity-like in the centre, filigree vein-traceries, an oily quicksilver grid, can occasionally be seen.

As the sun explodes through Omacroklados' branches, the already colourful throng is momentarily splashed in a universe of all-hued light.

Down there individuals display their varied art, or merely revel; viniers with discs in tow stack flagon and flask. Wine and spirit of fruit and vine, is drunk. Later, as with all things, they will be judged, the best chosen. Dancers, naked, painted or voluminously robed, writhe and gyrate. Glace fruits, succulent and honey dripping, are tasted; lips and faces, robes and flesh are stained by their juices. Two envisions play: domes of light denser than that surrounding them, inhabited by shadow figures of seemingly greater substance than the entranced, assembled Tellurians. One, the classic "Orfeyus" plays, and the other an abstract by...

I know most of those here but as a crowd their names suddenly evade me. But I recognize Marbik, on the fringe beyond Omacroklados. His bulky silhouette tosses roses high and far into the crowd. But there is a madness, a violence in the way he casts his gifts into the throng; the flowers traverse the sun then fall, lost, a splash the colour and shape of perfection in a sea impure with colour degraded by surfeit. Other mals also stand, jutting shapes, flamboyantly gnarled and grotesque, around the fringe; a strange mimesis of the jagged rock.

Their arts are echoes of old-time: discordant music from instruments as fantastically formed as the musicians, meaningless rhyme, chanting exposition of the forgotten Mathematique, exhortation and oratory that few listen to, on subjects that less, if any, understand. Yet they present their clumsy arts with a vigour and intensity of passion we could never match. Other mals, silent and still, merely listen and watch. Tellurians view these as entertainment by their very nature, and gather round to jibe, but cool eyed and laughing, the mals express no disdain.

They hold a secret this day. I see it in stances of relaxed tension, expected laughter, glances of purpose, and casual movements that are signals amongst them. I know they wait for me, and not just to view my envision which features one of their number.

Beneath Omacroklados' translucent arches repose the septad Councillors and that which arbitrarily empowers them: a being whose name is unspoken, who is absent from thought as it is from actuality. This; the accursed denizen whose cold embrace takes one to corridors at the whim of a Councillor, a whim that has not been enacted in distant memory. Enveloped in hate, a lack of light the shape of a man, it shimmers.

I see Melz M'jo accompanied by Melly. He, Heraclean in form painted bronze, haughty and contemptuous in crimson loin cloth, turns over a disc, crashing a pyramid of flagons. He spits a red stream of wine onto the vinier kneeling in abeyance on disc below him, then removes his loin cloth and pisses on the vinier. There is much laughter.

Intimidation is the art of the Councilors, as is cruelty. Others purvey kinder arts in this feast for empty senses, but the scene is again a blur of colour as anger suffuses me. Soon the crater in its entirety will be awash with changing colour and light, but from where I descend a blade of shadow, a vacant crescent still exists. I see the trceries within it, within me. I burst from shadow, and glimpse the mals disengage from the rock perimeter, swooping down; strange avengers of forgotten gods. I ignore the frivolous left unbalanced in my wake, their greetings and abuse:

'A 'Poll...?'

'Hey, curse you!'

'A 'Poll yon!'

'Denizen take you, fool!'

'Black, A 'Poll, it doesn't suit...?'

'Have a care, A 'Poll!'

'*Fear not the denizen...*' a rasping...

'What, have you envision for us, A 'Poll?'

'Ho! Don't barge so!'

'*It shall not harm you.*' Mal voice...

'A 'Poll...'

'A 'Poll?'

'A 'Poll!'

'*The tree is the entrance...*' A dwarf of horror, fleeting...

'By the furies A 'Poll!'

'... *where the branches fork.*' ... I glimpse.

'Aaaaaaaa 'Polllllllll yonnnnnnnnnnn!'

The mals are behind me, their cry ululates, commands silence as I confront Belz M'jo, his disc conjoined with Melly's, as are their bodies. His bronze paint smears Melly's white, the muscles of his back writhe.

'Yes,' he grunts, buttocks clenching, 'I wish to speak to, unnh, you, A 'Poll. Melly, unnh ahn, told me of your latest envision's, arrnn, disturbing nature, uhh, it shall not be shownnn.' He grins up at me, sharp toothed, neck corded, 'That is all.' Melly squeals to the rhythm of his grunts.

'Belz M'jo, why was Seb taken?' A whisper that I wanted to shout, deep in my throat.

'So that is the, unnnh, thorn that stings you. He caused unnnnh, offence, he, aaahhhh....' He sprawls relaxed on Melly, still quivering beneath him.

'He infringed upon the respect due Councillors, a parody of me, and the other members, in one of his base comedies. As the new prime of the septad I demand respect.'

He shrugs away Seb's life as others would a fallen leaf, and eases off Melly. She giggles. Both stand and robe in crimson, their discs unjoin.

'D'ark went quite voluntarily, but I need not make excuses to you. Begone. Your presence is a bore, the look on your face an insult. Begone, and take with you your vile crew...' he indicates the mals with a flick of a wrist, although his eyes do not see them, '... else you and they will join D'ark.'

'Your existence is an offence to the very rock, Belz M'jo.'

I leap from my disc, my legs crumple under me but I drag myself up; a strength floods me, and an abstract disposition, a consciousness separate from my actions. I realize I have always felt this way. I topple Belz M'jo, startled from his disc. He lays stunned on the obsidian. The mals encircle me; the denizen cuts a swathe through the Tellurians, enveloped they vanish. Melly disappears, her scream cut short, enfolded in emptiness. But the emptiness finds a barrier of mal flesh.

I take my envision globe from its pocket, smash down into Belz M'jo's skull. All is white light glare, echoing words; I am lifted by hands unseen, break the surface of the dome among Omacroklado's limbs, and falling through smooth, colour-smeared space all is darkness consumed...

Assuming corporeality, requiring movement, I drift from the fugue that clouds me and wander the silent, fear coloured corridor. Fractured, bizarre images of bodies, of limbs, of faces, stream subsurface the enclosing wall, rippling.

Behind me the jumbled, fluid forms bend through ninety degrees and rush up the shaft of Omacroklados. A vague order is there imposed. A human order: composed, elongated figures, sinewy and grim, serenely flow. Spirits of those taken, I think; Seb is part of that entrapped writhing. I move ahead, though no perspective of distance is evident. The corridor shrinks to a blood and flesh coloured point.

I know the futility of action, of hope, yet hope I do. There is a significance here, as in all things, that is beyond my comprehension. The images achieve a diffuseness, a mere semblance of anthropomorphosis. My fear is one of fate, my movement of necessity. I wish to scream but fear the possibility of echoes; those entrapped giving voice to their own anguish would tear me asunder.

I feel a chill presence and glance back. There the shadow of the denizen prevails and I run, though seemingly no progression occurs. A drive, like instinct or destiny, compels me on through the futility of instinct and destiny. Through dread.

In panic I find I have broken a painful barrier: a mirror of self smithereens and I sprawl, weakened, on the floor. A drumming as of rain on leaves charges the darkness of the chamber - the darkness of my self in the sanguine swell pulsing for the crystal edged maw of the corridor. The vibration blurs my many broken selves in shards around me. A chill hand touches my shoulder and neck; gently pulls at me. I squeeze my eyes tightly closed...

'A 'Poll,' I recognize that tentative, ever questioning voice. Seb.

'Seb!'

He helps me stand, and we embrace. He looks drawn; a weariness haunts his dangling limbs, sallow skin, cavern eyes.

'You've come at last, A 'Poll.'

'You knew?' Blue ice eyes avert, star glimmer in black holes, head angled suggests... guilt?

'I... expected you, yes.' Whispered.

'The denizen follows me, Seb. And I don't understand, I feel...?' More an emptiness of feeling, a paucity of existence.

'The denizen cannot harm us here, A 'Poll. And I must explain. What do you see, here?' A gesture unseen in shadow, a sweep of arm, twitch of shoulder. His voice so like mine. Tension.

Pillars recede, vanish, base and capital also obscured in thick darkness. Rust and red swirls slow within those pillars, to the rhythm of pulsing barely felt underfoot, a rhythm converging to synchronized thumping.

Deeper, mere possibilities of form, opaqued by liquid light shadow, shapes of...

'Souls within glass pillars trapped. I see their floating movement and know their torment.'

Seb takes my hand, barely felt, and leads me through a forest of the entombed.

'So this is the doom of the taken.' Warped figures within the ruddy glow. Mals.

'No, A 'Poll, these are... sleepers and dreamers, the barren remnants of humanity, of old-time. Their souls wander the surface, projected through Omacroklados, human-kind's final immortal experiment. The Tellurians are the semi-real envision of these millennial dreamers.

'They thought the dreaming would create new profundities of experience and knowledge. These last are dying of their own ruin. Occasionally a sleeper awakens, horribly transformed, and surfaces to find the Experimentalismen have achieved naught but shallow indulgence... they are the mals.

'I? I am the first true human, born of Aderri and Marbik. And you...' we halt by a pillar, mostly black, a heart of blood-light in its centre.

'You are my twin brother.' Tears glint, bloody streams on his cheeks.

'But I have no recollection, I...?' Seb hushes me with a kiss.

'Let me tell you. I intend to wake all the sleepers, though Marbik forbade me. No, let me explain. Marbik and Aderri were newly fertile after their age-long transformation; others here may also be. Their first conceived child died in the womb, the second dead at birth, the third a little longer, then we twins...'

His voice; choked, hysteric, 'I envisioned you in every detail of life, you see? A projection of a projection of a dream. Marbik placed you here when we were born, or you would not have lived. You understand?'

In the pillar, a knotted shape, a wrinkled, hard, embryonic thing...

'I envisioned your life, projected it into you, through these machineries, the master globes, hoping you could create your own as a true Tellurian. But to awaken all, Omacroklados must be turned, and you will die; you see?

'So that all these may live... I tried, I thought that with enough detail you would. But no... without my envisioning you fade as the twilight.'

'I wish to live Seb, I wish to live!'

'For the sake of the new-born race, A 'Poll, for a true life - allow Experimentalisman to live!'

'I have often been weary of life, but now Seb, life's desire consumes me.'

By each pillar envision globes rise, aglow, revealing in detail rapt and multiform dreamers. Close by, descending from the shadow above in a space clear of bizarre caryatids, a globe like a new moon. Heart-beats reach a unified crescendo. The sight of these many who possess the chance of a true life only exalts my desire.

'A 'Poll, your life is inevitably finite, the globes reach conjunction but once in millennia, and I fear all shall assume shapes of unrecognizable transformation. Do you doom all true life for your own false flame, which is not yours but mine, and easily quenched? Help me; envision the many globes darkening while I envision the same of the Omacrolobe. I shall carry you in heart and memory to my true death, A 'Poll.'

Suddenly blooms an understanding of human nature, of soul and self, of the difference between. Because I know Seb, I know self, and self is a desire for perpetual life, a life of self perpetuating cycles of that desire. This is at the heart of man, and even though I am but a projection of dream, I feel this necessity at the heart of being; at the epicentre of universe is universe of self. And understanding this I can envision my self-cycle in aspects broad and fine.

And project.

'Yes.' Subterfuge creases my brow.

'Come then, it must be now!'

Then concentration. I pour dark hatred at them all; they do not fill my mind. The self-globe does. Self does.

I compress my self in mind. A glow of light, I throw self through self, through conception of self, all aspect self. I melt into light, and amid the cries of the awakened open strange, new eyes. The briefest existence is mine but it is true.

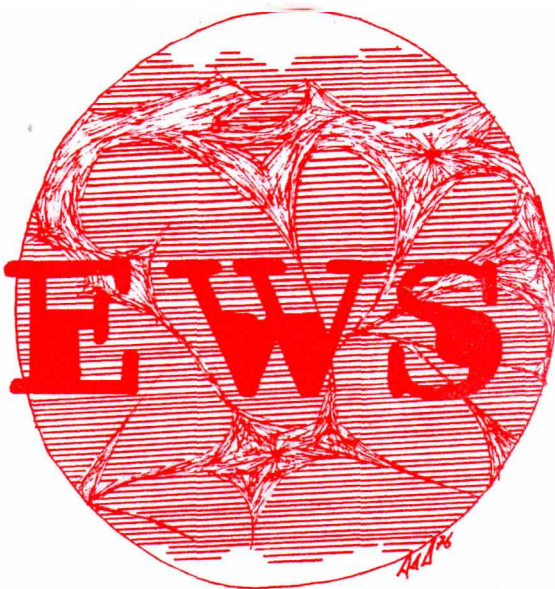
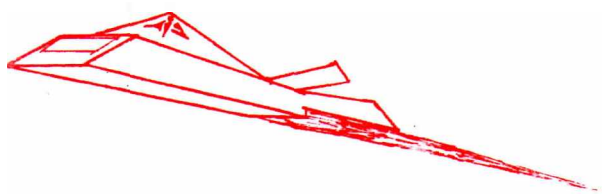
My entirety is thrust in that envision globe; record of testament. Yet also, something apart from entirety, my soul perhaps, exists in a hard dry place; cold, decaying quickly.

Seb picks up the thing that is life, myself, in cupped hands.

'I'm sorry.' As always, as ever, a useless phrase.

He carries me cradled at his breast, through corridors, towards the last green glade, leading a host of the living. I live too, though I am murdered. Moments. There is no I.

No more dreams at least I sleep.



REVIEWS

COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD by Philip K. Dick. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1967. 236pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

One of Philip K. Dick's novels from when he was giving religion a glance. I didn't really give much thought to how much Dick wrote in his lifetime - but there is a two-columned page listing them and his short story collections.

The world Sebastian Hermes lived in is a strange one to most eyes. Some time earlier time started to run backward and the dead revived and lived their lives backward to the time they became tiny and returned to the womb. People re-gurgitated food and place it back in the packets it came in. One went to bed feeling fine and awoke tired and irritable. Men had to past whiskers on in the morning and by the time night came were clean shaven. I hate to thing the things women went through with their periods.

Hermes ran a business that dug up the newly revived dead and sold them to the highest bidder. Events were going normally until they came across the Anarch Peak, a religious leader from the sixties who was due to be revived. Various groups, including the Roman Church, his own religious sect and the Erads (people who ensured that all out-of-date texts were destroyed) were after him. Good Dickian drama. Well worth reading if you haven't read it already.

THE ROWAN by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1990. 335pp. A\$26.95. On sale now.

Some fans I was speaking to the other day said that McCaffrey had written several short stories about the Rowan; I haven't come across them, though. LOCUS is quoted as saying that THE ROWAN is the best McCaffrey novel to come along in years - perhaps the writer meant other than the Pern novels.

The Rowan was a survivor of a mining camp that was wiped out by a severe storm on the planet of Altair. She was only found by accident - she was a powerful telepath and disrupted things all over the planet until she was safe. She was so powerful, in fact, that she was put in training to be a Prime - one of a half dozen in the entire human sphere. The woman training her was a real bitch, though, and the medical team watching her progress had often to help the youngster through difficult phases. When she became a Prime herself she was well able to hand the situation, that is, until an emergency call came through from Deneb, which didn't have a Prime, for help from attacking aliens. That was when the Rowan met her match, in Jeff.

This novel has a flavour all its own - it could almost be written for those undiscovered sf readers in the Mills & Boon market.

SILKROADS AND SHADOWS by Susan Schwartz. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1988. 337pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

Set in Byzantium of old, this novel follows the title quite to the "t". The landscape is of the world of old - with warriors, sorcerers/esses and monsters roaming the countryside. There is a problem, though, in that ancient land. The silkworms upon which depended much of the wealth and well-being of were dying - along with the Emperor. His daughter, Alexandra decided to take the long journey to the fabled land of Ch'in, where silkworms were said to have originated.

The journey is long and perilous, but she reaches Ch'in and obtains her goal. Then the return journey must be taken - and here she finds that the enemies of Byzantium and the Emperor are to make their final stand against her, pitting magic with her basic skills.

Susan Schwartz has already written a trilogy about the Byzantium of this novel - the Heirs to Byzantium Trilogy - and this novel is an entertaining addition to it.

SUNRUNNER'S FIRE by Melanie Rawn. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1990. 479pp. A\$10.99. On sale now..

Book three in the Dragon Prince series, the first two being **DRAGON PRINCE** (reviewed in TM 66) and **THE STAR SCROLL** (reviewed in TM 69).

Melanie Rawn writes a good, well drawn adventure fantasy in these series. **SUNRUNNER'S FIRE** isn't an exception. There is enough adventure for any fantasy reader, and the author's adherents will find this is as good as the other two. In fact the conclusion gives more insight for the reader into the power of Sunlight and Starlight in that universe which the Dragons inhabit. The magic used by the participants is woven into the fabric of the society envisaged and the reader is drawn into that world helter skelter and finds him/herself totally immersed in it. The two different kinds of dragons in the novel - real and magical - are drawn together in the character's minds and magic incantations (as per the Star Scroll and the other spells) and are all interwoven.

There is moral fibre and quickening of the blood for any young person of all ages. Exciting fantasy.

PRINCES OF SANDASTRE by Antony Swithin. Fontana pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1990. 215pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

PRINCES OF SANDASTRE is Book One of The Perilous Quest for Lyonesse. Lyonesse is on the large island of Rockall, the last bastion of the races of the continent that sank some four thousand years before, leaving the high plateau and some other islands for the fleeing populace. The isle of Rockall even in the present day is known for its ability to keep to itself; this was the same back in 1403, when the young Simon Branthwaite's father and elder brother escaped King Henry and bade Simon to follow them.

This present volume reads more like a travel book in the second half of the book: apparently Rockall is a fantasy land that Swithin has been adding on to since he was a child and this series is an attempt to give others an idea of the richness of the land. Unfortunately the large pieces of pure description of fauna, flora and language differences put this reader off a bit - I found myself skimming pages near the end looking for the continuation of the story.

Hopefully the author will become more skillful at including the description of Rockall in his narrative, otherwise this will be a dry series indeed.

GUARDS! GUARDS! by Terry Pratchett. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1989. 317pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

The eighth Discworld novel. This time it's about the City Guards, that group of individuals that the Heroes of novels usually decimates in Chapter three. In this case they are the four individuals that are the remnants of the Watch that guards Ankh-Morpork. Because of the changed circumstances

(thieves and assassins etc are allowed a quota and must work to rules agreed to by the Patriarch of the city) the role of the Watch is a laugh.

When Carrot, a large individual brought up by dwarves and sent off to the city to get rid of him (he was keeping a female dwarf company at times) he joins the Watch. Unfortunately he had been given a book of the Laws of the city and being of dwarf upbringing he took it to heart and tried to uphold them. Add to this a secret society intent on bringing themselves to power using magic to summon a dragon and you have a humorous novel that is well up to Pratchett's previous high standard. An enjoyable two hour's reading.

THE NIGHT LAND by William Hope Hodgson. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1912. 509pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

I hadn't read **THE NIGHT LAND** before receiving this book; I had read **THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND**, but so long ago I've forgotten the plot. The former novel is quite long at 509 pages, and is written in a grammatical style that takes a bit of getting used to: "And in six hours I waked and did eat and did climb downward again to the Gorge, and so unto mine upward journey." (p.400).

The plot itself is of interest: the wife of a man of the present day dies. He loved her so that he pined. Then he had a dream of the far future, billions of years hence. The sun had died and the earth was cold and barren, except in deep places in the crust where vulcanism kept releasing heat and the valleys held the air. It was in one of these that the last hundred millions of humanity had taken refuge in a huge metal pyramid, which towered eight miles into the thin air. Around the base of the pyramid was a ring of force that kept the monsters and evil powers at bay. And then the man in whom the dreamer awakened heard a telepathic call for help from another redoubt that had been feared lost hundreds of thousands of years before, and people planned to mount a rescue mission. For a novel to be kept in print since early this century there must be something going for it - and **THE NIGHT LAND** is well worth reading.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SCIENCE FICTION by David Pringle. Grafton h/c, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1990. 407pp incl author index. A\$35. On sale now.

The subtitle is "An A-Z of SF books". The blurb says that over 3,000 books are listed. What this volume consists of are very short reviews (even shorter than these...) giving comments on each book. The books are cross indexed and the author listing does just that - lists an author's works. I've gone through the book and looked up quite a few of the volumes that are well known and which I remember - and most of them are in here. I'm not quite sure what the reader would use it for - possibly good for a librarian to pick "good" sf (as long as the reader agrees with the author's interests) or for a reader who is not sure how good a reprinted book is - and hasn't access to his or her back issues of **THE MENTOR**.

The book would possibly be a useful gift from the non sf relative to the newly awakened sf reader and would help that reader pick books that would, at least, not be the dregs of the barrel, though some of the books Pringle gives a ** to, would I think, be rated higher by me.

MAELSTROM by Paul Preuss. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C)1988. 268pp incl Afterword. A\$10.99. On sale now.

The second in the Venus Prime series - the first being **BREAKING STRAIN**, reviewed last issue.

The book continued on about the doings of Sparta, the human female who had advanced bio-engineering done on her body, and the agency that was after her to do things for them. In this novel she rescues some scientists trapped on the surface and has her male friend get into hot water. The scenario is well extrapolated and the scenes on Venus are well described. The dialogue is curt, however, and this gives a sense of being in a hurry to the whole novel.

Preuss is, however, creating an excellent background in the series so far and it should create a

following in some of the younger readers, and in some of the older ones, also. Intelligent "hard" sf.

THE WARLOCK ENLARGED by Christopher Stasheff. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1982, 1986. 442pp. A\$15.99. On sale now.

THE WARLOCK ENLARGED starts off with Pope John XXIV saying mass and then reading a letter that had been addressed to him one thousand one hundred and five years before. That event starts off a sequence that has one of the Pope's special envoys setting off for the planet of Gramarye which the letter specifically mentions, and gives the co-ordinates of - in 1954.

The present volume consists of two novels - **THE WARLOCK UNLOCKED** and **THE WARLOCK ENRAGED**. Don't let the backcover blurb "...where telepathy is the most common form of transportation" put you off - the book is as slick and as funny as **WARLOCK - TO THE MAGIC BORN**, which was reviewed last issue.

The novels that are included were first published in 1981 and 1985, and going by the reception these two releases had I am sure that Stasheff will be writing more of the young wizard, his wife, family and the planet Gramarye in the future.

Excellent humorous readable fantasy.

DREAMS OF AN UNSEEN PLANET by Teresa Plowright. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by Collins/A&R. (C) 1986, 1989. 348pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

This is this author's first novel. When I started into it I did it in fits and starts - she writes in a style that smacks a little of the women's magazines (or women's novels...) rather than "straight" sf. When I was partway through the novel, however, the story caught my interest more and I found that the reading went easier. Possibly part of the problem was the woman protagonist and her sub-vocalisation of her problems.

DREAMS... concerns the three human colonies on the newly discovered planet Gaea (a telltale for sure). Though the blurb on the back of the novel says the colony was orbiting the planet, and sometimes the images created by the author seems to support this, the colonies are actually on the surface. Indeed one of the main points is that the colonies disrupted the planet when they bulleted through the atmosphere. The story is about the adaptation, or lack of adaptation, of terran lifeforms to another planet. The novel has a Message which is very blatant; even in the context of the plot it is still so. The writing is a little glutinous, but still is quite acceptable for a first attempt. I would keep an eye out for her next offering.

EARTH THUNDER by Patrick Tilley. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 484pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

Book 6 of the Amtrak Wars. The Sphere News-sheet accompanying the novel says that it is the last volume of The Amtrak Wars. If it is, I'm fairly certain that there will be another series following with Talisman and the Dark Child as they grow up.

EARTH THUNDER is set, as are the previous five volumes, in a world destroyed by a nuclear war. Bands of Mutes roam the above-ground, while the "straits" cower underground. Also above-ground are the Japanese, who have taken over a large part of the former USA. I can't remember the excuse that was given why the radiation didn't affect them... This present volume tells of the destruction of Ne-Issan by the four people who are the forerunners of Talisman, and ends in the birth of Talisman and another. The births are accompanied by a large volcanic eruption and is as the prophecy which had first been spoken of hundreds of years before. Tilley is very good at writing multiple strand novels that don't tie themselves up in knots and lose the reader. It is a fitting conclusion to *this* part of the longer story.

THE TWILIGHT OF BRIAREUS by Richard Cowper. VGSF pb., dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1974. 254pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

TWILIGHT OF BRIAREUS is the second novel of Cowper's I've read, the first being **CLONE**. **TWILIGHT** is almost diametrically opposed to the latter in content.

When the star Briareus went super nova one hundred and thirty light years away and the shockwave hit the earth, most people, including the scientists, thought there would be nights of fierce light displays and electrical interference, and that would be all. That wasn't all. The major occurrence was that the human race went sterile. Just the human race - no other animals. The last baby was conceived in April 1983 when the light of the nova reached earth. There were cyclones and tornadoes and other changing weather patterns - including the shifting of the Gulf Stream so that the UK ended up with extreme winters. Shortly after the time of the nova shockwave, certain humans - girls 16 to 18 and men 25 to 35 - experience radical changes in their behaviour. What happened if one of the men met one of the girls affected was that she became totally compliant to his wishes and when he saw her almost invariably it resulted in him raping her.

These events were actually the tip of the iceberg. I was thinking it was another typical "after the disaster". It is not. Excellent reading.

BERSERKER BLUE DEATH by Fred Saberhagen. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1985. 282pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

The Berserker books by Saberhagen are still well received by most readers, including this one. How humanity and its allies are warred against by the alien death machines makes good space adventure.

In this latest novel the mayor of a colony in a far nebula is giving his daughter in marriage when a message is received that a Berserker is attacking another colony nearby. He races for his ship and blasts off with other ships that were visiting the colony for the wedding. They reach the attacked colony only to find it destroyed. They turn for home and when they get back to their home they find it also destroyed. The mayor goes looking for his daughter and finds her post destroyed and a burnt body, with scraps of body armour and wedding dress scattered around. This, together with the death ten years before of his wife and other two children, affects him so much that he is scarcely human as he vows to destroy the berserker, named Big Blue, or Blue Death, that destroyed the two colonies. The rest of the novel is the story of his quest for the machine that killed his eldest daughter.

The way is long and dangerous and at last he brings the space machine to bay. And that isn't the end... Rousing space adventure.

KAZ THE MINOTAUR by Richard A. Knaak. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 314pp. A\$10.99. On sale now.

The acknowledgements page of this novel has the statement: "The moral right of the author has been asserted". Which sounds interesting, if not clearly indicating something about the author's morals.

Anyway, **KAZ THE MINOTAUR** is the sequel to **THE LEGEND OF HUMA**, which was reviewed in TM 64. In that novel Kaz the wayward minotaur who escaped the destruction when Huma was killed, is journeying around the country telling the local populace the true story of Huma and his struggle against the Dark Queen. Kaz has many adventures, including being captured by other minotaurs intent of bringing him to "justice", when he was set free by a small human female.

There are other monsters in the future adventures when Kaz escapes, dragons and ogres as well as not-so-natural events as earthquakes and quicksand that strain his good luck. A good book for young fantasy fans and those into role playing games.

DRAGON WING by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1990. 430pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

DRAGON WING is volume one of a seven volume series called The Death Gate Cycle. The cycle are independent novels set on four distinct worlds; the series ties them together. The worlds are separated and the only way to reach each of the others is through the Death Gate, and itself is but a legend. In the real of Sky, which consisted of floating islands in the void with the only way to travel between them was by flying dragon. When the world was sundered contact was lost with the other fragments and each fragment developed its own magic - for such was the nature of the Universe.

Arianus was the fragment that was Sky and water was the scarce resource that was fought over by the humans, elves and dwarves. Things were afoot that would change the social structure and would remake the nature of the place. There is evil in many of the people in that place, one of the more outstanding was the Warlord, about who much is told of in this novel and it would appear, in the next (ELVEN STAR).

Adventure fantasy for the young.

ELVEN STAR by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1990. 360pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

The world of ELVEN STAR is the fragment known as Pryan, the real of Fire. The protagonist is again Haplo, whose home is in the labyrinth. This time he journeys into a world of rainstorms and sodden jungle. The inhabitants of this world lived in the enormous trees - the humans and the elves in the canopies and the dwarves nearer the ground.

Not many people ventured onto the groups itself, with its enormous fungus and other creations. Haplo meets other creatures as he travels over the fragment in his boat Dragon Wing. His job was to bring disruption to that world so it would be easier for his master to take over. He didn't have to work much at it as there was much disruption already taking place.

ELVEN STAR is a good sequel to DRAGON WING and those readers who are following the career of both Weis and Hickman will find it engrossing.

THE HARROWING OF GWYNEDD by Katherine Kurtz. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random Century. (C) 1989. 369pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

This is another fantasy series, this time this book is volume 1 of The Heirs of St Camber. There is one interesting thing about the book - all thirty chapters have quoted verses from the bible before each one. Each verse is alluded to by the events in the chapters.

THE HARROWING OF GWYNEDD is quite a long novel - it is about 15 pitch fonts and with the 369 pages it is equivalent to about 500 pages. The plot itself is quite simple - Camber is lying on his death bier - but his children, Evaine and Joram aren't sure at all that he is actually *dead* in the way that he can't be brought back. The Deryni are, as always, in the thick of things - there are many powerful people after their blood and all too soon events are not going their way.

As usual Katherine Kurtz writes adeptly and draws the reader into her skillfully woven web. Her usual readers will find that this is another series they will want to buy.

ANCIENT EGYPT: THE SIRIUS CONNECTION by Murry Hope. Element trade pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1990. 237pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

When I saw this in the February release catalog I thought: "Wacko, just what the readers of THE MENTOR have been looking forward to seeing, what with all the discussion in THE R&R DEPT lately about Egypt and the Sirius Connection.

The Introduction to this book says: "*Ancient Egypt: The Sirius Connection* explores the significance of the binary star Sirius on the early growth and culture of dynastic Egypt.... What I have therefore tried to do is to sever the bonds of orthodoxy and render a picture of Egypt, from archaic times, which concentrates on the origins of its magical beliefs, for there lies the plan of the labyrinth of ignorance from which we must needs escape..."

There is some good stuff in the introductory chapters on Egyptian Background (Origins and

Anomalies, Prehistoric Legacies, The Gods or Neters, etc), but before you actually buy the book I suggest your quickly glance through the Introduction...

WILD SEED by Octavia Butler. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1980. 248pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

I hadn't read any novels of Octavia Butler's until I read her Xenogenesis series. I liked them and when I received this novel for review I thought I would enjoy it. The cover shows a woman's part face, with her right eye human and the left hand side of her face fading into that of a leopard. At least the artist has read the book, though the front cover blurb writer apparently has not.

The plot concerns the centuries long struggle of an apparently immortal woman against an immortal man. The man had already lived through some 3,700 years and in doing so had lost most of his humanity. Mostly because he gained his immortality by taking over the bodies of others. In doing so he killed them. When one body died to automatically took over the nearest body. The woman was found by him in Africa in the year 1690. He tried to break her, as he considered her "wild seed", ie he hadn't bred her line in his breeding villages. She was a shape changer and had already lived some 300 years. She had nearly total control of her body and could fight disease, change her shape (down to cell level) and exert physical force when she wanted to.

I found this book engrossing - I could hardly put it down. *Recommended.

THE PLACE by T.M. Wright. VGhorror. Dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. (C) 1989. 278pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. I will review what I consider outstanding horror novels, such as this one, but they won't get the length sf and fantasy novels get. Circumstances are not beneficial for the King family - they have been kidnapped by a madman, one Harlan DeVries by name. The young eight year old daughter has only one way to escape - into a fantasy world. The fantasy world has a hold over occurrences, though, that said Harlan can *quite* get a grip on...

REVIEWED IN PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE MENTOR:

SORCERESS OF DARSHIVA by David Eddings. Bantam trade pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. A\$16.95. On sale now. Reviewed in TM 66. Garion and his companions are still searching for Zandramas, the Child of the Dark who has captured Garion's baby son. They come close to catching up on them, but it is only towards the end of the book that they have any real hope of reaching them at last.

FATHER TO THE MAN by John Gribbin. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Houghton Mifflin. A\$9.95. On sale now. Reviewed in TM 65. The tale of the investigative reporter and what she unearths when she does some research on a Nobel prizewinning scientist who disappears into the wilds of England into seclusion. The section title are of interest: Exodus, Genesis, Exodus II, Revelations and Genesis II. An engrossing book.

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

HODDER & STOUGHTON.....THE BROKEN WHEEL by David Wingroove
.....THE STORY OF THE LAST THOUGHT by Edgar Hilsenrath
.....SCHOLARS AND SOLDIERS by Mary Gentle

COLLINS/A&R:.....THE FATHER THING by Philip K. Dick

HOUGHTON MIFFIN.....MOVING PICTURES by Terry Pratchett
.....TIME FOR THE STARS by Robert A. Heinlein
.....THE FLIES OF MEMORY by Ian Watson

..... KEEPERS OF THE PEACE by Keith Brooke
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 APRIL RELEASES:

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